

Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School

Welfare inspection report for a boarding school

DfE registration number	332/6000
Unique reference number for social care	SC025000
Unique reference number for education	103876
Inspection dates	26/11/2012 to 28/11/2012
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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Elmfield School is situated in a campus, close to the centre of Stourbridge. It is an independent school where pupils follow the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, currently on roll there are 215 pupils. Education at the school places an emphasis on personal responsibility and social awareness through a balance of academic, artistic and practical activities. The majority of the pupils are day pupils. However, the school also welcomes a small number of pupils, usually from other Steiner schools, for term or yearly placements. These pupils are usually from overseas, but sometimes include pupils who have moved from other British Steiner schools. Accommodation is provided in the homes of host boarding families. The majority of these families include a member of the school's teaching staff. There are eight pupils boarding at the school during this inspection.

The school was last inspected in March 2009.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for boarders	good
Quality of boarding provision and care	good
Boarders' safety	good
Leadership and management of boarding	good

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the boarding inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the school's boarding provision is good. At the last Ofsted inspection on 30 March 2009 the school was judged as satisfactory for boarding.
- Equality and diversity is integral part of the school's operation at each level and informs planning, management and engagement of boarders. This helps to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination.
- Boarders benefit from experiencing good quality care and support. The school takes boarder's development seriously. Boarders learn to be mature, socially responsible and to be independent learners.
- The safety and well-being of boarders is given a strong priority. Boarders are acquiring the confidence, maturity and social skills to reach their full potential. As a result, they learn to develop independent judgment and moral responsibility. Boarders say that they feel safe.
- The host boarding families provide good quality experiences for boarders. They are experiencing another cultural setting and this enriches the lives of the boarders and families.
- Families receive good communication from host boarding families. Contact is regular and consistent.
- Leadership and management in the school are good. A strong collaboration exists between all staff who are working towards the same ethos and approach. They are strongly focussed on achieving good outcomes for boarders. They set good ambitions and regularly review areas for development.

- All of the national minimum standards are met.

Outcomes for boarders

Outcomes for boarders' are good. They are progressing well in terms of their development. They enjoy relationships with staff that are based on mutual respect through a positive learning environment. One staff member commented, 'We welcome overseas students and see them as part of an integrated and inclusive environment.' Boarders develop good socialising skills through participating in organised extra curriculum activities. This allows them to increase their network of friends made at the school.

Boarders behave very well, they show care and consideration. They are good at listening to each other and respond in an intelligent and mature manner. Boarders consistently uphold high standards in relation to behaviour, maturity and self-direction. There are no incidents related to poor behaviour from boarders. This is testimony to the high standards achieved.

Boarders enjoy their boarding experience at the school. They are mostly staying for a minimum of one or two terms. One boarder commented, 'It is a great opportunity to experience boarding in another country and still have the consistency of my Steiner education. It is very friendly and a positive community to learn in.' As a result, boarders make progress during their time at the school. They are well-prepared for their further education.

Securing boarders' views and opinions are at the heart of boarding life. They are meeting weekly during timetabled sessions so to strengthen contact between school and boarding. In addition, all boarders are encouraged to complete a written review so that their feedback helps to influence and improve boarding further. For example, boarder's suggestions to improving heating have been acted on. As a result, boarders experience positive outcomes which are given a clear focus.

Boarders' health and well-being is well supported. All boarders are encouraged to have any dental, optical and medical checks completed before arriving at the school. Boarders have direct access to appropriate medical treatment as the circumstances arise. In addition, boarders help to keep themselves fit and healthy through regular physical activities such as, archery, drama and basketball. Consequently, this helps to foster their talents, skills and interests.

Quality of boarding provision and care

The quality of boarding provision and care is good. Overall, boarders are feeling involved in the school community. Teaching staff and pastoral staff interaction is good and they look out for the welfare of boarders. There are strong structures that support this including the boarding house committee, tutorial support meetings and

pastoral support. There is good cooperation between these groups to effectively support boarders.

Boarders enjoy a good range of purposeful and enjoyable activities which are wide-ranging. This includes boarders self-organising trips during their weekend. One boarder commented, 'During my short time here, I have visited many cities in the UK. It has been fun and interesting.' Another boarder commented, 'We have a pizza night on a Friday evening where we all get together to share in the buying, baking and enjoyment of having the meal.' As a direct result, this is helping boarders' personal and social development.

All boarders are living with individual host boarding families. They join in family life and are involved in cooking, cleaning and taking responsibility for their laundry. All have their own room which they can personalise during their stay. Boarders say they feel comfortable and relaxed in their boarding family environments. Boarders feel confident with raising any issues because the school always takes positive actions.

Boarders' safety

Boarders' safety is good. There is a good system in place for recruitment and checks of staff which are completed. Staff working with boarders are judged as suitable and fit to work with children. Child protection and safeguarding is rightly prioritised by the school. Staff are able to refer to clear policies and procedures and are suitably trained and know and understand how to act on a concern. Consequently, boarders' welfare is protected.

Positive behaviour management is a key cornerstone of the ethos of the school. Boarders unanimously say no bullying behaviours are experienced or accepted at the school. Although, an area for improvement includes increasing the visibility of the anti-bullying policy to help develop parents and carers awareness related to its effectiveness. Boarders are provided with a clear structure to support their education and social development. So for example, punctuality, homework and dress code are given sharp focus. Boarders develop a positive attitude of cooperation and goodwill. This leads to boarders developing positive relationships.

The management of health and safety is good. All of the host boarding family houses are maintained to a reasonable standard of decoration, cleanliness and safety. There are annual visits to check on safety and standards. Staff are equally attentive to the health and safety of the school site. So for example, all appliances are serviced and checked. Routine risk assessments are reviewed and updated. All these actions show the school's commitment to promoting the welfare of boarders.

Leadership and management of boarding

The leadership and management of the school are good. The school implements its aims successfully. It is an environment where boarders enjoy their time and have opportunity to learn as overseas students. Equality and diversity is recognised and valued in its broadest sense. Overseas boarders are a great asset to school life and make valuable contribution through their different ideas and perspectives. They are able to make friends and gain good memories of their time at the school. One host boarding family commented, 'They are welcomed to our family as a member of our family. They reciprocate this by showing respect to our family and way of life.'

The school delivers good boarding experiences for boarders and has taken action in respect of previous recommendations. Good progress has been achieved with its behaviour policy which was consulted on widely. Safeguarding has been strengthened through updating staff training and making improvements to safe recruitment practice. Fire safety has improved because the school now completes an annual risk assessment consistently. All host boarding families are provided with written agreements and visited annually to ensure quality. This illustrates the school's commitment to providing good quality practice that promotes and safeguards boarders' welfare.

Host boarding families receive good support. For example, they have regular meetings and also receive excellent guidance from the council boarding committee. In addition, host boarding families are included in any in-house training which takes place at the school. The majority of host boarding families receive an annual appraisal, although, non-staff do not, and this is an area that the school is addressing. This is administrative issue and does not detract from the good outcomes that boarders are achieving.

Contact and communication with the school is good. Parents and carers readily identify that they can easily contact staff. They know and understand the progress that their child is making because of the regular contact with host boarding families. This was echoed in the parental view results. Although the school's valuable information about academic progress is not always consistently communicated. This is an area that the school is addressing. It does not diminish from the good relationships that boarding host families develop and sustain with parents and carers.

The leadership and management of boarding are good and this is corroborated by the parental view surveys. There are well defined roles and delegated areas of responsibilities. The cohesion between the academic and boarding staff is good. The school's development plan is being effectively implemented. The school has completed a self-audit of boarding to track impact and progress being made. As a result, the school knows and understands its areas of good practice and where it wants to seek further improvement.

National minimum standards

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

What should the school do to improve further?

- Improve parents and carers awareness of the anti-bullying policy content and purpose so that they know about the effectiveness of the policy.
- Ensure all non-teaching staff receive an annual appraisal
- Improve the sharing of the school's valuable information about academic progress related to the boarding experience.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26/11/2012

Boarders

Inspection of Elmfield Rudolf Steiner School

I visited the boarding provision recently. I was really pleased to spend time with you and to hear and see how much you are enjoying your boarding experience.

You told me that staff look after you well and look out for your best interests. You say that you feel safe at the school and with your host boarding families. Many of you have had opportunities to travel around the country to see different cities which you have particularly enjoyed. You told me also that the school is providing enough activities to keep you entertained after the school day.

Thank you for letting me spend time with you and for talking to me about what it is like to live at the school.

Overall, Ofsted have judged the boarding provision as good.

Yours sincerely,

Martha Nethaway