

# Ryde School (With Upper Chine)

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspector</b>	David Coulter
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	21 January 2008

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

Ryde School (with Upper Chine) is an independent day and boarding school. It offers education to boys and girls from the age of three to 18. The school is situated in the town of Ryde on the Isle of Wight and is close to all amenities. The boarding campus is in Bembridge and pupils are transported the five miles to and from the site on a school bus. It is a spacious campus also occupied by an activity centre for children and young people. At the time of the inspection day pupils numbered 703 and boarders 62.

### **Summary**

This is a key inspection covering all of the key national minimum standards for boarding schools.

A significant number of changes have taken place since the last inspection. The increased number of older overseas students have created new challenges. Staff have responded positively and boarding provision now extends over halfterms and exeat weekends. Boarding staff have developed a range of policies, procedures and working practices that ensure the health needs of boarders are effectively met. Young people are kept safe and a number of initiatives, including the introduction of a new recruitment and vetting process, has further strengthened safeguarding.

Boarders are living full and active lives and are achieving a healthy balance between enjoyment and hard work. Boarders are accessing a wide range of sporting and recreational activities both in school and at the boarding site. Boarders are performing well academically and regularly access the study facilities available to them in the boarding department.

Considerable progress has been made in upgrading facilities. The quality of accommodation is now very good and improvements have been made sympathetically and have not impacted negatively on the character of the building. Cool House has now set new standards that staff hope will be replicated across the premises.

Relationships between boarders and staff are extremely good and are clearly based upon mutual respect. New boarders reported they were immediately made welcome into the boarding community and this made it much easier for them to settle in. Staff are extremely good at providing support and reassurance to individual boarders and their families. Evidence indicates that the boarding department is operating effectively with a stable group of experienced staff who provide outstanding care to a diverse group of young people from a range of cultures and social backgrounds.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

During the last inspection the school was asked to provide a handbook to guardians to ensure knowledge of the school policies and procedures to protect young people. The school has provided a guardianship handbook, but the extension of boarding provision to cover exeat weekends and half terms has greatly reduced the need for guardians.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

The concept of healthy living is promoted within the school and pupils are encouraged to eat wisely. Boarders consume breakfast and their evening meal at the boarding department and lunch at school. The food in both settings is of extremely good quality and several main course options are always available. Fresh produce is extensively used to create nutritionally balanced meals with seasonal variations. Catering staff are responsive to the needs of boarders and provide food that meets special dietary needs and cultural preferences. Facilities within the boarding department allow boarders to prepare simple meals and snacks. Cultural festivals such as the Chinese New Year and Burns Night are celebrated with special meals. Boarders talk in positive terms about both the quantity and quality of food on offer. Meals at the boarding site are social occasions and provide opportunities for staff and boarders to eat together within the well appointed dining area.

The health and well-being of boarders is monitored on an on-going basis by boarding staff and the school nurse. There is an effective system that ensures health information on all new boarders is obtained prior to admission. The boarding department benefits from the support of a local general practitioner who provides a health check for all new boarders and holds regular consultations in the boarding department's sanatorium. Boarders are provided with an annual dental check. The boarding department has appropriate facilities for caring for anyone suffering from a contagious illness. Boarding staff are extremely good at keeping parents informed of the health and well-being of the young people in their care. In order to ensure an individual's safety, information about allergies is appropriately shared. Parental consents are obtained for all medical interventions and for the administration of medications.

In order to ensure there is appropriate emergency cover available at all times, all boarding staff are first aid trained. Treatment of minor ailments is carried out by the school nurse, boarding staff or the visiting general practitioner. There are clear policies and good working practices relating to the administration of medication. Systems have been established to ensure that boarders do not inappropriately access non-prescribed medicines. Any boarder wishing to self-medicate can only do so after a risk assessment has determined their competence. It is recommended that any boarder who is deemed responsible to self-medicate, stores their medication within a suitable locked facility within their room.

A well developed personal social health and citizenship education programme provides all pupils with excellent guidance on social and health issues relating to smoking, sexual health, alcohol and drug taking. There are clear rules within the school relating to the use of drugs and alcohol. All pupils are made aware of them on admission and reminded of them at regular intervals throughout the school year. Boarders, like other pupils in the school, are encouraged to be physically active. Evidence indicates that boarders access a wide range of sporting and recreational activities at school and the boarding site.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Drawing upon the school's extensive range of policies and procedures, boarding staff have developed systems and working practices to keep young people safe. Although boarding does

not operate in isolation from the rest of the school, boarders reside within a residential community with its own distinct culture. Staff have created a nurturing environment based upon the twin concepts of respect and support. While boarders do not have to adhere to a large number of rules, staff provide them with clear expectations in regard to issues such as behaviour. The diverse nature of the boarding population has clearly helped create an extremely tolerant atmosphere in which young people of different ages, from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds can peacefully co-exist. Older boarders are empathetic to the feelings of younger members of the boarding community and offer support if they are upset or feeling homesick. Boarding staff know the young people in their care and are extremely sensitive to their needs. Although the school has an anti-bullying policy, staff and boarders reported that bullying is not an issue. The school's peer listening service provides opportunities for individuals to talk to their peers about any personal concerns.

Boarding facilities occupy a designated area within a large site that is shared with Kingswood Activity Centre. The boarding houses are off-limits to all other users of the site and access can only be achieved by activating a key-pad lock. There is excellent security around the site and access is only achieved by reporting to staff at the entrance and signing in. Staff are very aware of fire safety and ensure all steps are taken to protect the young people in their care. The fire alarm system is tested regularly and evacuation exercises carried out. Fire safety equipment is regularly serviced.

Although the number of single rooms has increased since the last inspection, some boarders occupy shared rooms. Within shared rooms each individual is provided with their own designated space that they can personalise with posters and pictures. Boarders reported that their space was respected. Staff respect boarders' privacy and confidentiality and keep personal information in appropriate locked facilities.

Since the last inspection the recruitment of all school staff has been brought together under one centralised system. The new system is regularly scrutinised by the head teacher. All staff have to successfully complete a comprehensive recruitment and vetting process before being appointed. Records indicate that procedures are consistently followed. The boarding department continues to operate with a stable group of experienced residential staff and there have been no new appointments since the last inspection.

Staff throughout the school are well aware of the need to ensure pupils are kept safe. The deputy head is responsible for the implementation of child protection procedures within the school. The school has well established child protection procedures that incorporate local protocols. All staff are provided with a child protection handbook and guidance relating to safe working practices. Staff spoken with were clearly aware of their individual responsibilities in regard to the reporting of any protection concerns. A member of the governing body holds responsibility for ensuring child protection policies and procedures remain fit for purpose.

Boarders feel they are treated fairly by staff and confirmed they are provided with clear guidance on what is and is not acceptable behaviour. Staff reported that boarders are normally well behaved and accepting of guidance. Staff reinforce positive behaviour with praise and encouragement. The academic, pastoral, community and extra-curricular success of each boarder is recognised and celebrated. Poor behaviour is normally responded to by an admonishment by staff. The head of boarding explained that the majority of the boarders respond positively to a persuasive discussion and that staff always explain the relationship between actions and

possible consequences. Sanctions are only imposed as a last resort. There is an expectation that older boarders will act as good role models for the younger age groups. There have been no significant punishments in boarding, such as suspensions, since the last inspection. The interaction between boarders and staff was observed to be spontaneous and punctuated by playful humour. It was evident that young people are relaxed and comfortable in the company of staff. While there is a clear restraint policy and procedure, it has never had to be implemented.

On admission, all boarders and their families are made aware of how to access the school's complaints process. No complaints have been made about any aspect of boarding since the last inspection. It is clear that boarders have no difficulty in reporting any personal worries or concerns to boarding staff or their personal tutors. Boarding staff regularly check on the well-being of each individual. Boarding staff maintain regular communication with parents. It is evident that staff are pro-active in identifying potential difficulties at an early stage and intervene before they develop into major concerns.

Boarding provision has recently been extended to meet the needs of overseas students. Boarders can now reside within boarding over half terms and exeat weekends. Arrangements for holiday periods are good and boarders that stay are provided with opportunities to access social and recreational activities. The extension of boarding provision has resulted in a significant decrease in the demand for educational guardians. However, a number of approved guardians are retained by the school to provide emergency cover.

Boarders live full and active lives and are encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities in both the school and boarding community. Staff aim to ensure the safety of young people by implementing a risk assessment policy that requires individual activities to be risk assessed and strategies developed to address any potential concerns. Risk assessments are subject to regular review and updated in response to any incidents. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme has become extremely popular within the school and provides boarders with the opportunity to undertake activities in a number of different environments. A senior member of school staff is responsible for approving all off-site activities and ensures that all high risk activities are supervised by qualified staff. Adventurous activities undertaken at the boarding site are supervised by qualified Kingswood staff.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

An excellent pastoral system provides boarders with support from teachers, tutors, boarding staff, peer listeners and an independent listener who visits the boarding department at regular intervals. Boarders are also provided with contact details for a range of organisations outside of the school that offer support and advice. Communication between boarding staff and tutors is good and any issues relating to individual boarders are raised and discussed.

Boarders access an extremely impressive range of social and recreational activities in the school and at the boarding site. Boarders participate in all aspects of school life and are well represented in the school's sports teams and extra-curricular activity groups. Transport is arranged so that boarders can attend after school activities. As part of the school's agreement with the Kingswood organisation, regular access is provided for boarders to their facilities and activities. Kingswood instructors are available at half term and weekends to provide activities such as go-karting, climbing and caving. The site is close to the beach and surrounding countryside. Within the boarding house boarders can access a large number of recreational activities including pool,

table tennis and computer games. Parental consent is sought for all adventurous activities. Boarders feel that access to Kingswood activities adds to the boarding experience and as one boarder put it, 'there is always something to do'.

There are a number of well appointed social and recreational areas within the boarding department including a large lounge, library, games area and recreation room. Prep rooms and study areas are equipped with computer stations with internet access. The computer system has appropriate safeguards. Recreation areas are open to all boarders. Boarders are clearly at ease in each other's company and enjoy the social interaction of living in a communal setting. Staff ensure there is a good balance of free and organised time. Staff recognise the academic pressures many of the senior boarders experience and as a consequence no longer expect them to undertake supervision duties. However, most freely offer support in assisting those in the younger age group. School trips and extra-curricular activities are arranged so as not to impinge on pupils' time prior to exams being taken.

Boarders are clearly aware of the demands of living in a communal setting and of the need to appreciate difference. The current boarding community contains males and females of different ages from a number of different countries. The advent of the International Baccalaureate has increased the number of extremely able sixth formers and has, according to boarding staff, created a new dimension. Cultural diversity is celebrated and special meals are organised to celebrate national festivals. Such activities provide boarders from different countries opportunities to introduce their fellow boarders to new foods and traditions. Boarders of all ages were observed eating and interacting freely together. Both boarding and school staff reported that issues relating to discrimination based on race, religion or sex have never been reported. Overseas boarders reported that they have been made to feel very welcome and that staff have been extremely kind.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a well established admissions process that is effective in identifying each individual's educational, health and social needs. New boarders are provided with a range of documents prior to admission that detail the nature of boarding provision. At the start of each academic year, staff develop an activity programme with Kingswood staff. This 'ice-breaker' programme provides an opportunity for boarders to settle in and establish relationships with others.

Boarders are regularly consulted by staff about all aspects of their lives within boarding and their ideas and suggestions are appreciated. Boarding staff endeavour to respond positively to reasonable requests and for example, a new area has been created for those wishing to play computer games. Staff maintain regular communication with boarders and mealtimes provide some of many opportunities for exchanging information. Boarding staff make themselves available without being intrusive and provide space for young people to congregate and socialise together. Although boarders' meetings can be convened, most discussion takes place informally. Boarders feel the present informal system works well and boarding staff can be approached at any time. The headteacher and senior staff visit the boarding house regularly and consult with boarders on an individual and group basis.

Boarders are encouraged to maintain regular contact with their families via the phone and e-mail. The boarding handbook contains contact numbers for boarding staff. There are also



numbers for parents in different countries who are willing to act as go betweens or interpreters. This is particularly helpful for parents of new boarders who can talk to someone in their own language about the school. Evidence indicates that boarding staff are excellent at maintaining contact with parents and provide regular progress reports. Parents are welcome to visit and are invited to special events. Overseas boarders' families are often met when the headteacher and head of boarding undertake their regular marketing trips abroad.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Boarding facilities continue to be up-graded and are now of very good quality. Eight new bedrooms have been created since the last inspection. Improvements have been made in sympathy with the character of the buildings. Six of the new rooms are currently providing single accommodation for senior male boarders. All are bright, airy and appropriately furnished. Shared rooms are specifically designed to create as much space and privacy as possible. A room never accommodates more than three boarders. Bedrooms are well appointed and every boarder is provided with a wardrobe, desk, chest of drawers and storage space. Although each boarder is provided with a lockable facility, these are currently not large enough to house valuable items such as laptop computers. Boarders reported that beds are comfortable and mattresses regularly replaced. Male and female boarders are accommodated in distinct areas that are accessed separately. Staff areas are completely separate and are off-limits to boarders.

The refurbishment programme has included the upgrading of a number of bathroom and shower areas. These areas have been upgraded to a very high standard. There are currently adequate showers and baths to meet the needs of the current boarding population. The central heating system is effective and sleeping areas are warm and draught free. A new water supply system now ensures that showers provide hot water at an appropriate pressure. Communal areas are bright, welcoming and appropriately furnished. Records indicate that the buildings receive regular maintenance and there is a rolling programme of redecoration and refurbishment.

Staff provide opportunities for boarders to access shops and the Friday night visits to a local supermarket are extremely popular. Many of the older boarders are able, with permission, to access shops in Ryde during school breaks. Although most boarders now hold their own bank accounts, staff will assist younger boarders to manage their funds. Boarding staff always hold a stock of toiletries and stationery.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has produced a range of high quality publications and a website that details the nature of educational and boarding provision within the school. The publications include the views of present and past pupils. Publications are regularly updated to reflect changes and developments.

The boarding department operates with a group of experienced and well motivated residential staff. Staff are provided with a general job description and a staff handbook that details specific roles and responsibilities. Permanent staff receive additional support from two gap students who assume limited, well defined responsibilities. The head of boarding provides extremely effective leadership and is widely respected by both staff and boarders. The school benefits greatly from the development of clear unambiguous policies and procedures. Within boarding

these have been translated into highly effective working practices. Staff access regular training opportunities and are provided with an annual appraisal. Boarding occupies a significant position within the school and its importance is clearly recognised by the headteacher and his senior management team, who are committed to its further development. A member of the school's governing body monitors boarding provision.

Although the boarding house operates in a relaxed and informal manner, daily routines provide a clear and consistent structure. As the boarding site is situated approximately 5 miles from the school, boarders require regular transport. Each morning boarders need to ensure they are in the right place, at the right time with all the personal belongings they will need for the day. Such demands require each boarder to develop self-discipline and organisational skills. Staffing rotas ensure staff are available when boarders are resident. There are always at least two members of staff on duty at the same time and on-call facilities available at night. All external activities are subject to a risk assessment process to determine appropriate staffing levels.

The boarding department, like the rest of the school, operates within a risk management framework. The bursar is responsible for health and safety matters and checks health and safety policies relating to the boarding site. His work is monitored by a committee of school governors. The school is not risk-averse and pupils are encouraged to participate in adventurous activities. However, all such activities are appropriately assessed and are managed by suitably qualified leaders. Response to emergencies and the staff cover are determined as part of the planning process. Many of the boarders participate in school trips including, Combined Cadet Force training, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, skiing trips and sports and music tours. The school has an excellent crisis response policy to deal with emergencies and serious incidents. The effectiveness of the policy was recently tested when bad weather disrupted the travel arrangements of many boarders returning to school. With transport chaos a number of boarders found themselves stranded and unable to reach the island. Staff did a remarkable job in ensuring all were accounted for and made arrangements that ensured all were kept safe.

The promotion of equality and diversity within the school is outstanding. The school is non-selective and provides education for a wide range of young people with a range of academic abilities. All pupils are treated as individuals with their own specific needs. The school community is one in which respect for others is promoted. The school has a disability plan and changes have been made to the environment to facilitate pupils with disabilities. The achievements and successes of all pupils are recognised, regardless of their academic abilities. Extra support is available for those for whom English is an additional language. The multi-cultural composition of the boarding population provides a unique opportunity for young people to gain insights into different cultures. The excellent personal social, health and citizenship education programme challenges pupils to consider the circumstance of others including those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils are made aware of how discrimination manifests itself in sexism, homophobia, racism and religious intolerance.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Statutory requirements**

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

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Standard	Action	Due date
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### **Compliance with national minimum standards**

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to

- provide boarders keeping and administering their own medication with suitable lockable storage in their bedroom (NMS 15.11).