

# Gordonstoun School School Care Accommodation Service

Gordonstoun Schools Ltd  
Elgin  
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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
14 November 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Gordonstoun Schools Limited

**Service provider number:**  
SP2006008231

**Service no:**  
CS2006117721

## About the service

Gordonstoun School provides independent, co-educational, non-denominational education for young people aged between 8 and 13 years in junior school, and between 13 and 18 years in senior school. The school provides boarding accommodation for up to 540 pupils in numerous houses across an extensive campus beside the village of Duffus, near Elgin.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on Tuesday 5 November, Wednesday 6, Thursday 7 and Tuesday 12 and Wednesday 13 November 2024. The inspection was carried out by five inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with boarding students at Gordonstoun junior and senior schools
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- received feedback via MS form questionnaires from 177 students
- received feedback via MS form questionnaires from 27 parents
- received feedback via MS form questionnaires from 72 staff.

## Key messages

- The school was ambitious for young people with a focus on developing well rounded students with an awareness and interest in the world around them.
- Students had a high level of involvement in the life of the school and in their own care and support. Their views were important.
- Students benefitted from a very wide range of opportunities both in school and in the wider community.
- Significant emphasis was placed on the importance of good physical and mental health, however, medication procedures needed to improve.

## From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as very good, which means the service demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for young people.

The majority of students felt safe and were protected from harm. Most stated that Gordonstoun was a safe place with various ways they could share their views and voice any concerns. Numerous groups and talks centred around values of respect, curiosity and an understanding of others. This promoted a culture of respect and understanding for others.

Staff and students at the school understood the importance of being alert to bullying and continued to develop ways for students to raise concerns, internally and with people outwith school. This included the 'tellmi' app which offered students an accessible way to ask about anything, with external monitoring. Students would benefit from the Board being more regular visitors to the boarding houses offering them the opportunity to share any views or concerns.

There were comprehensive child protection procedures (for staff, students and parents) which had the oversight of numerous external professionals, and which were available to all on the school's website. Staff received regular training and had a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Senior students had completed child protection training and were confident about when to share concerns. Within school there were identified child protection officers who were knowledgeable, sensitive and trauma informed. An electronic recording system supported effective recording and monitoring. Where needed there was effective liaison with external agencies.

In most houses students experienced routine and structure and benefitted from nurturing relationships which allowed them to feel at ease. In some there had been some changes and therefore relationships were developing. The pastoral teams had a good level of insight into the needs of individual students, with each having the information they needed to do this. We discussed the benefit of the pastoral staff completing the NHS training on trauma informed care and ensuring that matrons, or any house staff dealing with food, complete essential food hygiene training. The service's staffing needs assessment should include an audit of professional registration. This would further enhance their ability to demonstrate the pastoral team has the appropriate training and professional registration to care for boarding students. **(See area for improvement 1.)**

The school employed guardians for students who could not go home for shorter school holidays, or who needed time away from school. Appropriate checks were carried out to ensure the suitability of guardians and that their home was a safe environment. All guardians had regular child protection training and had a good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures. Guardians provided a pivotal role to the wellbeing of students and we were impressed by their enthusiasm to provide nurturing care in a warm environment and to ensuring students had new experiences.

The school had an impressive electronic wellbeing system which supported young people's care and safety in a number of ways. Students had a high level of involvement in their own support plans, which were 'straight forward' and ultimately asked the question 'Has this made a difference?'. We saw some very good examples where it had. Plans were regularly reviewed, ensuring that the current needs of individual students could be met. Plans could be further developed to be more descriptive, and where necessary, to be explicit about why the views of a supportive adult and the student may differ, while upholding the schools

wish to keep students at the heart of discussion and decisions.

Students benefitted from a very wide range of opportunities both in school and in the wider community. They had access to a variety of sports, hobbies and interests, recreational, cultural and creative pursuits, with most taking part in these with great enthusiasm and motivation, and developing life skills. The school campus provided high quality facilities and resources and the school made the most of its impressive location, for example, by providing outdoor 'expeditions' both locally and further afield. The physical environment within the houses was very mixed, with the condition and size of some impacted by the age and historic status of the buildings. A long-term development plan was in place and identified the areas of the school (and boarding) which needed to be upgraded to provide the best boarding experience for students.

A series of groups, meetings and opportunities to contribute to the wider school ensured that students were involved in decisions and actions at all levels. Students were encouraged to make their opinions known and we saw examples of their views really making a difference.

Significant emphasis was placed on the importance of good physical and mental health. The onsite health centre met many of students' healthcare needs with a part time counsellor and a recently appointed wellbeing coach supporting positive mental health. There were a number of areas regarding medication which need to improve to reflect good practice. **(See area for improvement 2.)**

Students generally enjoyed their meals. Food was plentiful with lots of choice. The catering staff took pride in ensuring students' needs were met in terms of dietary personal and cultural choices. Menu plans were varied and catering staff worked well with students on the food committee to discuss future options.

Students benefitted from a strong sense of community. The school was ambitious for young people with a focus on developing well rounded students with an awareness and interest in the world around them.

## Areas for improvement

1. To ensure the skills mix, professional development and registration of staff, the service should:

- have an overview of the professional registration of the pastoral team
- access training in trauma informed care and food hygiene.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.14).

2. To ensure safe practice in relation to medication procedures the service should:

- ensure all medication (aside homely remedies) has a prescription label which identifies what the medication is, who it's for and its expiry date.
- have a controlled drugs book which is only used for the recording of controlled medication and is bound and has individually numbered pages.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

### Areas for improvement

#### Previous area for improvement 1

Students who have any additional support needs should have a formal plan of support which is shared with those people key to ensuring that the support is provided.

National Care Standards School Care Accommodations Services - Standard 3: - Care and Protection.

**This area for improvement was made on 6 February 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

All students had a plan which detailed their support needs.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

#### Previous area for improvement 2

Medication systems should be reviewed to ensure they comply with best practice. More frequent external auditing should be introduced to ensure greater safeguards.

National Care Standards School Care Accommodation Services - Standard 7:- Management and Staffing.

**This area for improvement was made on 6 February 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

**This area for improvement is not met and will remain in place.**

#### Previous area for improvement 3

Pastoral staff should have regular 1:1 meetings with their line manager.

National Care Standards School Care Accommodation Services - Standard 7:- Management and Staffing.

**This area for improvement was made on 6 February 2018.**

#### Action taken since then

Pastoral staff received support from their immediate line manager.

**This area for improvement has been met.**

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life	5 - Very Good



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