

# Worth School

Inspection report for Boarding School

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<b>Inspector</b>	Mike Stapley
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<b>Head/Principal</b>	
<b>Nominated person</b>	Gino Carminati
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	24/09/2007

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

### 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

Worth School is a medium sized school set in a rural area between Crawley and Haywards Heath. The school provides education for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 18 years. Each house has a housemaster/housemistress, who is supported by a deputy, a team of tutors, the Chaplaincy team, and for the boarders, a matron.

There is a wide range of facilities provided including a gym, tennis courts and eight hole golf course.

The philosophy at Worth School is based upon the Benedictine ethos and Worth is the most recently founded Benedictine school in Britain. The school therefore aims to develop a strong moral and spiritual base as well as educational achievement.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At this announced full inspection, all key standards were inspected.

The senior management team at the school have a wealth of knowledge and experience to support the staff and students at the school.

The school is very effective at ensuring that the students who board receive the appropriate support from staff to help them make progress, both academically and personally.

The staff team are very good at updating all of the relevant information needed to make students' time at the school a success. The staff team work successfully at gaining the trust of the students and advocate for them in a positive manner.

There are no recommendations from this inspection and the inspectors have judged the school to be outstanding in all areas.

### Improvements since the last inspection

The last social care inspection of the school, in 2007, resulted in two recommendations. These two recommendations both focused on the management of medication. The school arranged for a pharmacy inspection following the recommendations made at the last welfare inspection to ensure compliance with regulation. Following the pharmacy inspection both of these recommendations are deemed to have been met which has improved the overall quality of care afforded to the boarders.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school is very effective in providing excellent and wide-ranging support to boarders. The comprehensive provision of a welfare service and pastoral care helps boarders to maintain their good health, to develop healthy life-styles and adopt positive ways to ensure their own well-being.

Boarders are appropriately encouraged to engage in physical activities, to develop confidence and to maintain and improve their fitness levels.

The rhythm of prayers, the presence of the monastery and the strong community spirit facilitate a positive and relaxed atmosphere at the school. Boarders are exceptionally well supported to develop mental balance, self-awareness and caring attitudes towards themselves and others.

Boarders receive good information on how to keep themselves healthy and how to develop themselves into responsible citizens, through a comprehensive programme of structured personal, social and moral education. The school provides clear information and age-suitable advice on a number of different subjects. Outside speakers regularly visit the school. Their lectures add more variety to the school's considerable internal expertise in the promotion of health, welfare and social integration. Didactic teaching is complemented by interactive involvement of pupils and extra-curricular activities organised by the school. Reflective workshops, debating societies and special events explore the universal values in the modern world; for example, preservation of nature or ethics and enterprise. The school is successful in fostering a culture of free open enquiries and discussions. Through engaging in charity work, boarders have excellent opportunities to develop their morality and social integration.

The school has clear policies and rules on drugs, alcohol and smoking. Their content is well known to boarders and their parents. The rules are robustly and consistently implemented by staff. Through its own medical department, the school offers a smoking cessation programme to those who need it.

The school has made appropriate arrangements for boarders to receive health care as necessary. At least one qualified nurse is available on the school site at any time day or night. Designated male and female doctors regularly visit the school and are available to provide confidential consultation to boarders. Prescribed and non-prescribed medication is usually administered by the nurses. However, some older boarders who are deemed to be competent through a risk assessment process are given the opportunity to self-administer their medication. This new practice for the school has been recently developed to enable older boarders to develop more independence in managing their own health needs.

Suitable accommodation is available for boarders who are ill, in the school's medical

centre. Ill boarders receive appropriate medical attention and care by the nurses.

The school has excellent arrangements for the provision of first aid. In addition to the constant availability of the nursing staff, many staff across different school departments have received appropriate first-aid training.

The school runs a 'watch' register that clearly identifies boarders and pupils that experience health, welfare or personal difficulties. A 'traffic lights' system signals different levels of their vulnerability. This ensures that boarders receive suitably increased levels of monitoring and support when they need it. In addition, more comprehensive information on how to support boarders with significant welfare needs is available in their individual pastoral care plans. The communication within the school is excellent and staff with different roles, work exceptionally well together. Each boarder's welfare is effectively protected at the time of increased need, as well as at any other time.

The school is very effective in providing a healthy and highly nurturing environment to boarders. The pastoral care of boarders is at the heart of this school.

The catering service contributes to boarders' health and well-being by providing a very good range of nutritious and tasty food. Boarders have ample opportunities to contribute to the school's menus and to choose what they would like to eat. For example, a typical lunch from a randomly picked menu for the day includes: roasted red pepper soup with French bread, jacket potatoes filled with coronation chicken or grated cheese and baked beans, parsnip, sweet potato and pepper bake, four cheese tortellini with tomato and mascarpone sauce, roast pork and apple sauce, roast potatoes, mashed swede and green beans as side dishes, a selection of freshly made salads, a selection of seasonal whole and cut fruit or jam sponge with custard for dessert. In addition, the school's café serves lighter meals, such as freshly made sandwiches and soup. The boarders can have as much food as they like. The catering department appropriately caters for any special dietary needs. The meals are very well managed. The boarders report that meals are not rushed. They report enjoying having meals with their friends in a lively atmosphere of the refectory or in a more leisurely atmosphere at the school's café. Boarders can prepare hot drinks and toast in the houses. Vending machines are also available.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are well protected from bullying. The school has an effective policy on countering bullying which is known to parents, boarders and staff and which is implemented successfully in practice. The policy covers measures both to prevent bullying and to respond to observed or reported bullying, and also includes a definition of bullying. There are no 'initiation ceremonies' and this was confirmed by students in discussion groups. Students spoken to do not identify bullying as a problem at the school while students who are being bullied are suitably supported, and students who may bully others are also given suitable help and guidance. The

Benedictine values that underpin the ethos of the school create a strong family and community spirit.

The school has and follows an appropriate policy on child protection which is consistent with the Local Children Safeguarding Board (LCSB) procedures, and is known to staff and as appropriate to older boarders in positions of responsibility. The child protection policy includes procedures for all staff including ancillary staff to consider measures that may be necessary to protect individual boarders. All staff have been given briefing or training on responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse and know what action they should take in response to such suspicions or allegations. A senior member of staff is designated to take responsibility for the child protection policy, to liaise with the social services authority, and to coordinate action with social services and where applicable the police. A senior female member of the staff is currently being trained to share the responsibility.

Senior pupils given positions of responsibility over other pupils are briefed on appropriate action to take should they receive any allegations of abuse. There is a Missing Persons policy known to all members of staff.

The school has a fair and appropriate policy on behaviour, discipline and use of punishments, known to boarders, staff and parents. There is a written and appropriate policy on discipline, punishments and any rewards for good behaviour, which includes a statement of policy on use of restraint, which is available to all staff and parents and made known to boarders. Standards of pupil behaviour are excellent, and boarders identify the school's use of punishments as fair. No unacceptable, excessive or idiosyncratic punishments are used by boarders or staff while any disciplinary powers of prefects are clearly defined. Administration of major punishments is recorded in writing in a suitable book or log, with the name of the boarder concerned, the reason for the punishment, and the person administering the punishment. Overall, the staff within the school are consistent and fair in managing difficult situations. By monitoring records in the new "E" portal the Deputy Head (Pastoral) is able to spot trends or patterns and any causes for concern.

A clear formal complaints procedure is available to boarders and their parents if they are unable to resolve the matter informally. The policy is clear about the initial receipt of a complaint from a parent or third party, in terms of who will investigate and then subsequently if it fails to be resolved. Parents and pupils are also made aware of how to contact external agencies if they remain dissatisfied. Sufficient policies and procedures were in place to protect boarders' privacy. These were being implemented in practice.

The school and house prefect system gives prefects appropriate specific duties and responsibilities, with adequate staff supervision and measures to counter possible abuses of the role. Prefects are selected on the basis of their suitability for the duties and responsibilities of the role. The duties, responsibilities and any powers of the prefects are clearly stated in writing to those appointed, and do not give undefined general duties or powers, or require prefects to substitute inappropriately for staff. Prefects are given an induction into their role on appointment, which includes how to

contribute to the school's anti-bullying practice and how to respond to allegations of serious bullying or abuse. Prefects are regularly supervised and directed in their duties by responsible staff. There are also opportunities for boarders to learn and take on roles of leadership and responsibility through other means, for example the chaplaincy team.

The school has an integrated fire detection system. Boarders know the emergency evacuation procedures from sleeping and living areas in each boarding house and fire drills are carried out regularly in 'boarding time' at least once a term. Emergency lighting, fire alarms and fire fighting equipment are regularly tested, and this is detailed in the appropriate records. There are no significant recommendations of the Fire Service outstanding beyond any timescale set by that service for their implementation.

The school does not normally accommodate any children from outside the school. Therefore this standard is not applicable.

Identifiably high-risk activities provided for boarders are competently supervised and accompanied by adequate and appropriate safety measures. Risk assessments are carried out, and recorded in writing, in relation to identifiably high risk activities for boarders including activities or instruction the school arranges to be provided by outside agencies, and reasonable measures are taken to minimise unnecessary risks. Identifiably high-risk activities are instructed or supervised by adults holding the relevant qualification from the appropriate national governing body or association for the sport or activity concerned, and the school can demonstrate that reasonable steps have been taken to confirm that those supervising or instructing such activities are competent to do so. Written parental permission is obtained in advance for boarders to participate in identifiable high-risk activities run by the school or arranged by the school with other groups or organisations. Where the school takes boarders to a centre providing activities requiring licensing under the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations, the school can demonstrate that it has checked that the centre is so licensed.

Staff supervision of boarders is by appropriate and sensitive patrolling.

Recruitment of all staff including ancillary staff and those on a contractual basis includes checks through the Criminal Records Bureau checking system, with a satisfactory outcome. There is a very robust recruitment process recorded in writing. For all adults who live on the school premises but are not employed by the school, there is a verifiable Criminal Records Bureau check. Where 'gap' student staff are recruited from abroad, usually Australia, the school obtains a 'certificate of good conduct' or equivalent from the relevant authorities of the student's home country where such facilities are available. The school has taken reasonably practicable steps to carry out Criminal Records Bureau checks on taxi drivers booked by the school to drive boarders unaccompanied by staff.

The school does not allow any member of staff including ancillary staff and contract staff to work unsupervised with boarders unless that member of staff has been

satisfactorily checked with the Criminal Records Bureau. All adults visiting boarding accommodation, outside delivery and maintenance personnel are kept under sufficient staff supervision to prevent their substantial unsupervised access to boarders or their accommodation. All possible steps are taken so that boarders are not entrusted to adults who have not been checked through the Criminal Records Bureau for journeys, by taxi for example, which involve giving such adults substantial unsupervised access to boarders. There is a written agreement between the school and any adult not employed by the school but living in the same building as boarding accommodation.

Boarders' sleeping and living areas are for the exclusive use of boarders other than by the reasonable invitation of the pupils designated to use those areas. There is a clear school policy restricting access to school premises and boarders by people from outside the school, which is implemented in practice. Suitable and adequate security measures are in place to prevent unauthorised access by the public to boarding houses and other school buildings used by boarders; key pads, security locks, restrictors on vulnerable windows. Reasonable measures are taken to prevent or deter unauthorised public access to the school grounds. Any use of closed circuit television cameras or security patrolling of school buildings or grounds does not intrude on boarders' privacy. Any public use of school or monastery facilities does not establish substantial and unsupervised access to boarders, or boarding accommodation while occupied by boarders, by members of the public.

Sleeping, living and recreational areas, indoors and in the school grounds, are free of significant hazards therefore ensuring students safety. The school has a policy implemented in practice for controlling or supervising boarders' use of, and access to, high-risk areas within the school buildings and grounds including areas such as sports hall, science laboratories, workshops, storage areas, and car parking. Boarders know which areas and activities are out of bounds. The school has a very thorough health and safety policy, available to all staff and also has an effective system of risk assessment, with written records including consultation with boarders to identify and reduce risk to boarders from inherent hazards in the school buildings, activities or grounds.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The boarders talk very warmly about the school and their experience of boarding. When asked what they think about the school, very often, the first thing they say is: 'I love it.' Many have made comments about how the school has 'made' them grow into being a better, happier, more mature person. A boarder described the school as a conduit, the other one as a catalyst to becoming more confident and kinder individuals. One boarder said: 'This school grows happy pupils, organically.' The boarders gave examples of some children who were expelled from other schools, but were doing really well academically and in terms of behaviour and personal development, at Worth.

The boarders themselves rate the welfare support they receive as outstanding. They describe the school as being really great. Many say that coming to Worth has been the best experience in their lives. They say that the best things about it are the people and the sense of being a part of a loving community.

They describe the school staff as truly wonderful and genuinely supportive. They say that Worth School is a very special place. They appreciate each individual's contribution to making it this way, including the contribution of their peers. Many expressed the view that it is the monks in particular, who set the tone of the atmosphere at the school, as one of love and positive social engagement.

Boarders benefit from having the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of life and to engage in regular communal worship, lectio divina (prayerful pondering on the Scriptures), Christian living classes and in personal prayer. Boarders also engage in numerous compassionate voluntary service activities that enable them to enrich the lives of others and to learn about different life experiences.

Boarders have formed close friendships and bonds amongst themselves. They enjoy having good times together. They are also committed to listening to and supporting each other in difficult times, such as in the time of bereavement.

Boarders have formed strong trusting relationships with adults at the school. In addition to the house staff, tutors, the other school staff and the monks, boarders also have access to the school counsellor who they can contact directly for confidential and safe individual support.

Staff know boarders in their care, well. They are very much aware of each boarder's uniqueness, including their individual strengths and weaknesses. The school gives boarders extensive opportunities to engage in a wide range of educational, art and sport activities in order to develop their talents and fulfil their potentials. An effective system of academic merits, behavioural commendations and academic endeavour awards support and celebrate individual achievements in whichever field they happen to be. Pupils receive excellent learning support that thoughtfully and thoroughly addresses their individual needs. They perform well at public examinations and the vast majority of previous students have gone from Worth to the university of their choice.

The school has an active performing arts centre. Boarders have been recently involved in the staging of 'The Master and Margarita' by Bulgakov, in the 'Battle of the bands' and in a range of classical music concerts. Photography is popular and pupil's artwork is appropriately displayed to enrich the school's visual environment.

Different sports also play an important and integral part of the life at the school. This includes many disciplines, such as rugby, hockey, football, netball, cricket, fencing, basketball, tennis, athletics, golf, cross-country running, swimming, water polo, skiing and horse riding.

The school's extensive internal sports, arts and educational facilities are

complemented by frequent visits to the local community and the trips further afield, including those to countries on different continents.

There is a good balance of structured programme and free time given to boarders that they can choose how to spend their time.

International boarders report being warmly welcomed. The school appropriately supports them to integrate and play an active part in the life of the school.

The introduction of girls to what had previously been a boys only school has been extremely positive and enriched the daily life of the school.

The school actively embodies the anti-discriminatory attitudes and promotes equal respect to each individual, effectively.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Most boarders are of the opinion that there are a number of ways in which they could contribute their ideas about day-to-day life in the school and the boarding houses. There are formal opportunities through various school councils, meetings and surveys for boarders to express views on relevant aspects of boarding provision, either directly or through representatives. The main School Council has its own budget. There are also many informal opportunities for boarders to express their views. These views are taken into account in the development and practice of boarding.

There is a clear policy and practice that boarders may take a personal or welfare concern to any member of staff in the school, not solely their designated house or tutor staff, and including staff of both genders. The tutor system functions effectively and enables boarders to use tutor contact as appropriate for discussion of personal and welfare issues as well as academic or administrative matters. The school ensures that there is easy access to this person.

Boarders have access to a telephone to contact parents in private at reasonable times without having to seek permission from, or inform, staff. There is a sufficient number of telephones to meet the needs of the boarders. Boarders are able to write and receive letters and emails from home. None of the boarders expressed concerns regarding contacting their parents.

Staff contact parents about any significant welfare concerns relating to their child at school. Boarders are provided, either in writing or on notice boards, with one or more appropriate helpline or outside contact numbers to ring in case of problems or distress.

There is an excellent process of induction and guidance for new boarders. The four-day induction programme in September for new boarders is most impressive.

Boarders have access to information about events in the world outside the school, and access to local facilities which is appropriate to their age. Community service activities by boarders outside the school are suitable and suitably supervised with acceptable levels of safety. Boarders have access to newspapers, television or other suitable information media at school.

There are very sound staff and boarder relationships. The general view of boarders is that staff look after them well and fairly, and that communication between staff and boarders is positive. There is no inappropriate favouritism of staff towards individuals or groups.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

All of the boarding houses were found to be acceptably clean, facilities are generally of a high standard and furnishings are of good quality. Like in any boarding school the boarding houses and furnishings suffer from wear and tear, however, overall the facilities for the students could be described as 'better than average'. However, there was some concern expressed by a small number of students about the quality of the mattresses. It became apparent in discussion with the school bursar that there had not been any complaints about the standard of the mattresses and replacements are freely available. The school has a robust programme of refurbishment and development and each house is well heated and lit.

All of the male year thirteen students are accommodated in Gervase House which is a separate purpose building for those students in their last year at Worth. The house is so designed that students begin to accept far greater responsibility than in the other houses. It is an excellent facility and one that justifiably the school is very proud of. All of the students have their own single study/bedroom while communal accommodation is very spacious and welcoming.

The overview of students throughout the school was that they were generally very happy living in their respective houses and most of them spoke highly of the house system.

There are sufficient toilet and washing facilities. However, some of the students commented that the water pressure to some of the showers was low and that the water was not very hot. In discussion with staff and senior pupils it was noted that this only occurred when all of the showers were used at any one time and that the temperature could be regulated to ensure a plentiful supply of hot water.

All students who board at the school have suitable facilities for changing by day. The school has excellent sporting facilities and a well-equipped gym. There are suitable changing facilities for the students to use when changing for games and other sports.

All students who board at the school can make use of the school shop to purchase

personal items or stationery. In addition, students can access a wide range of shops in the nearby town.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Worth School is a Roman Catholic School. Its underpinning philosophy is based upon the Benedictine ethos and this is evident in the spiritual richness and culture that is very much part of day-to-day life at the school. The school exists to provide a first-class education for young people in a caring Christian environment. Each student is inspired to reach his or her potential in mind, body and spirit. The school welcomes young people from alternative religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and gives all of them the opportunity to develop their own spirituality. This prepares them for life when they leave the school.

The school has a suitable statement of boarding principles and practice that is available to parents, boarders and staff. This is contained in the school prospectus and the parents' handbook. The parents' and staff handbooks are updated on an annual basis. Both of these documents cover the aims, admission criteria, and facilities on offer at the school and welfare support services to support students. The principles and practice of the school are also contained in other documents such as pupils' guide. These documents relate well to policies and procedures and accurately reflect practice within the school. The school achieves its intentions as set out in these documents and has a solid foundation on which practice takes place.

The senior staff at the school were all interviewed during the course of the inspection. All of them are very knowledgeable and very experienced.

The organisation of boarding is very good with regular monitoring of records carried out by senior staff. The school has a good system of quality assurance that includes regularly seeking the views of boarders through questionnaires, house and school counsel.

The school has not had to face any major crises for a considerable time. There are well formulated policies and procedures in place regarding pupil welfare, accidents and fire, to name but a few. In conversations that were held with boarders, it is evident that there is a good understanding of what to do in the event of fire and who to contact in case of any other kind of emergency.

An excellent process of risk assessment is in place to address trips and outings away from school which is extremely robust and useful. When boarders are taken on trips outside of school they are accompanied by an appropriate number of staff. When specific outdoor activity trips take place, suitably trained staff are deployed who have the necessary qualifications and experience.

All staff who undertake boarding duties are provided with induction training. Additional training is provided through in-service training days with key boarding

staff being encouraged to pursue Boarding Schools Association (BSA) courses.

Regular senior staff meetings take place and boarding staff receive appraisal on a regular basis. They are provided with detailed policies and procedures, including guidance on meeting the individual needs of all students.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Reference has been made earlier in this report to the inclusive ethos that runs through all aspects of school life. Boarders were unanimous in their views that the school makes every effort to recognise their individual needs and value their differences.

A number of email comments were received from parents. They were in the main extremely positive about the boarding at Worth. Like in any large community there were some negative comments but these mainly related to the boarding accommodation that has yet to be updated. Overall the positive feedback from parents and students alike far outweighed the relatively few negative comments. Their comments included, 'A great strength of Worth School is the extremely high level of pastoral care they give the students and this is borne out in the boarding houses where students like our son have been able to flourish and develop into confident, caring young people'. Another commented, 'Boarding is a very positive experience for my son and he very much enjoys being a student at Worth School. In particular, I am sure he enjoys the perceived freedom that he wouldn't have if he lived at home with me'. In addition, other parents praised the school for their excellent pastoral care and for helping them through difficult circumstances.