



The Children Order series of regulations and guidance consists of the following:

Volume 1: Court Orders and other Legal Issues

Volume 2: Family Support, Child Minding and Day Care

Volume 3: Family Placements and Private Fostering

Volume 4: Residential Care

Volume 5: Children with a Disability

Volume 6: Co-operating to Protect Children

Volume 7: Schools Accommodating Children



PREFACE

This is the seventh volume in a series of regulations and guidance produced in the context of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The regulations and guidance in this series are primarily addressed to Health and Social Services Boards and Trusts. This volume, which is issued jointly by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Education, is also addressed to the managers of schools which provide boarding accommodation to assist them understand the requirements of the law.

THE STATUS OF REGULATIONS AND GUIDANCE

The regulations and guidance in this series build upon the legislative framework of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The Children Order is law and must be complied with. The regulations made under the Children Order include permissions and restrictions as to what may or may not be done and also requirements on what must be done. As with the Order itself the regulations carry the full weight of law. The guidance issued under the Children Order is not law in the way that regulations are. Where the guidance explains the requirements of the Children Order or regulations it is reaffirming the law. Where it goes beyond regulations it conveys the message that “It is highly desirable to” or “Unless there is good reason not to, you should...” rather than “You must”. This is intended to give some degree of flexibility in the application of what the Department considers to be good practice. However, it should be noted that whilst they are not in themselves law in the way that regulations are law it is possible that guidance documents may be referred to in court proceedings and that courts may expect justification for not following guidance.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

- 1.1. Article 176 of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 requires the managers of any school which provides accommodation to safeguard and promote the welfare of children for whom accommodation is provided. It also places duties on the relevant health and social services authority to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to determine whether managers are adequately carrying out their welfare duties. The provisions in Article 176 are supplemented by the Inspection of Premises, Children and Records (Children Accommodated in Schools) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000. These Regulations are set out in the Annex.

Purpose of Guidance

- 1.2. The purpose of this Guidance is to:
- assist managers of schools which provide boarding to understand the requirements of the law;
 - assist Health and Social Services Boards and Trusts in carrying out their duties under the Children Order;
 - promote the establishment of standards to be expected of schools providing boarding facilities;
 - help in the development of social services practice;
 - set out the arrangements for the inspection of boarding facilities and the production of reports.

Meaning of “school which provides accommodation”

- 1.3. Article 176 applies to all schools that provide accommodation for children. In Northern Ireland, the number of such schools is small, comprising voluntary grammar schools with boarding departments, schools for children with special needs and the

preparatory department of one independent school. There are substantial differences in the nature of these schools and in the services they provide. Some of the schools also cater for day pupils with the boarding department forming an integral part of the wider school. Others provide for children with special needs and have a long-standing involvement with social services.

- 1.4. Regardless of their circumstances, this guidance is concerned with the welfare of all children who are living away from home in accommodation provided by schools. All children are entitled to the same quality standards with regard to their welfare. The guidance set out in this document forms part of the wider agenda of the Children Order which is intended to ensure that proper arrangements are in place in all circumstances where children are looked after away from home for any substantial period.

Meaning of “accommodation”

- 1.5. It is necessary to be clear as to whether the residential accommodation provided for a pupil is the responsibility of the school or of another agency. For example, there may be circumstances where pupils are accommodated in lodgings, with members of staff, or in accommodation provided by somebody other than the school. Essentially, if the school arranges the accommodation then Article 176 applies. If it does not, then other provisions of the Children Order may apply, for example Article 177, which relates to children provided with accommodation by education and library boards, or the provisions governing foster care.
- 1.6. Article 176 relates to those children accommodated during term time. Out of term time responsibility for a child’s accommodation will normally lie with parents. Where children are accommodated at school during school holidays for a period of more than two weeks, schools must, under Article 114 of the Children Order, notify the local Health and Social Services Trust (HSS Trust). This must be done at least two weeks before the first day on which any child is to be accommodated during a holiday period. The intention is to allow the Trust to satisfy itself as to the welfare of such

children, who are treated as being privately fostered. Any doubt on the part of the school as to whether Article 176 applies, or any other concern about child welfare matters should be taken up with the Health and Social Services Board (HSS Board) for the area.

Meaning of “authority” in Article 176

- 1.7. The word “authority” is used throughout the Children Order to refer to the social services body responsible for the exercise of powers and duties under the legislation. It is defined in Article 2(2), (3) and (4) of the Children Order as meaning a HSS Board, except where a HSS Trust carries out the function by virtue of an authorisation under Article 3(1) of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1994.
- 1.8. In common with the inspection duties which relate to children’s homes, the functions of an “authority” under Article 176 will be exercised by an HSS Board Registration and Inspection Unit. For the purpose of Article 176, and the associated regulations noted in paragraph 1.1 above, the word “authority” thus means the HSS Board for the area in which the school is situated.

Duties placed on managers of schools providing accommodation

- 1.9. The duties placed on managers of schools extend to any person who is not the manager of such a school but is responsible for it (e.g. Governors). For the purpose of Article 176 a “manager” means the person or persons responsible for the management of the school and those to whom responsibility is delegated by them (e.g. the Principal of the School). A manager is defined as having the meaning assigned to it under Article 2 (2) of the Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and includes:
 - in relation to a controlled school, the board responsible for its management;

- in relation to a voluntary school or a grant-maintained integrated school, the Board of Governors of the school;
- in relation to an independent school, the proprietor of the school.

In relation to independent schools, the term “proprietor” may be construed as including the Board of Governors of the school where a Board of Governors has been appointed.

Child’s welfare and protection from harm

- 1.10. In safeguarding and promoting a child’s welfare, school managers need to be concerned with the health, physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and behavioural development of that child. In addition, they should be concerned with protecting the child against harm or neglect.
- 1.11. All children are entitled to protection from harm. Where children are cared for away from home the arrangements required to ensure their protection depends on many factors. These include the age of the child and the ability of the child to look after himself or herself, the duration of periods of separation from parents and home and any special needs the child may have. Some families of children in boarding schools live overseas and contact between them and their children may be very limited. Even where other, nearer, relatives or guardians can help, special care is always likely to be needed to secure the welfare of the youngest children in boarding schools.

Inspections under Article 176 to be carried out by one Registration and Inspection Unit

- 1.12. The purpose of inspections carried out under Article 176 is for the HSS Board for the area in which the school is situated to determine whether the welfare responsibilities placed on the managers of the school for children accommodated are being satisfactorily carried out.
- 1.13. Article 176 requires the HSS Board for the area in which the school is situated to “take such steps as are reasonably

practicable” to ascertain whether the welfare of children accommodated in the school is being adequately safeguarded and promoted. In practice all visits and inspections will be carried out by one Registration and Inspection Unit (R&I Unit) which will, where the school is outside the area of the Unit, act on behalf of the HSS Board for the area in which the school is situated. It is intended that this will ensure consistency and permit the development of expertise in this area. For the purposes of Article 176(4), the R&I Unit inspector will be the “person authorised” by the HSS Board for the area in which the school is situated.

Frequency of inspections and liaison with the Education and Training Inspectorate

- 1.14. The frequency of R&I Unit inspections is not set out in Article 176 or in the associated regulations but it has been agreed that there will be annual joined-up inspections of all boarding schools. Further guidance on inspections is provided in Chapter 3.
- 1.15. The R&I Unit should establish arrangements for inspections to be carried out jointly with the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI). Although Article 176 places particular responsibilities on social services with regard to the boarding provision, it would be impractical to view the work of the R&I Unit and ETI as entirely separate. The objective should be unified inspection procedures.
- 1.16. Boarding provision is an integral part of the school’s involvement in promoting and safeguarding a child’s welfare. The ETI have recently developed their work in relation to pastoral care in schools. Two publications issued by the Department of Education are of particular relevance in this regard. “Pastoral Care in Schools - Child Protection” and “Evaluating Pastoral Care”. It is important that both the R&I Unit and ETI inspectors apply the principles and standards set out in these documents.
- 1.17. The focus of the R&I Unit’s work will be in relation to the boarding facilities provided by the school. This will cover general issues regarding the welfare of children accommodated

and the particular arrangements made by the school as regards child protection. Many of the issues will be equally applicable to day pupils and should be considered in the context of the pastoral care afforded by the school to all pupils as part of their educational provision. It is not intended that rigid standards be applied to the accommodation provided by schools. The emphasis should be on how the boarding provision contributes to promoting and safeguarding the child's welfare. Attention should be paid to the general ethos of the school and how this contributes to the welfare of the child. The R&I Unit should not be involved in purely educational matters. It should be the aim of ETI and R&I Unit inspectors to ensure that the work of each complements and does not duplicate the other's.

Good relationships

- 1.18. Good communication and the conscious development of positive relationships between the R&I Unit, ETI and schools are essential. All should create opportunities to develop such relationships through establishment of joint protocols and standards, meetings, written information and the careful planning of inspections. Each needs to know the key staff involved and the principles and procedures to be followed. The R&I Unit manager should ensure that the Inspector responsible for visiting schools is qualified and trained in child care matters, particularly in the recognition of child abuse. The R&I Unit Inspector should also be trained and skilled in communicating with children with special needs.

Nominated member of school staff

- 1.19. A member of the school staff should be nominated specifically for liaison with the R&I Unit over welfare matters. It would be expected that this would be an appropriately experienced senior member of staff or the Principal of the school.

Special features of boarding schools and the need to develop social care practice

- 1.20. Boarding schools share certain features with other forms of residential provision for children, but there are differences which require special consideration in the overall approach taken by the R&I Unit. In many schools children are placed by their own parents who remain fully responsible for all aspects of their child's upbringing. Schools are very aware of the importance of their relationships with parents and the R&I Unit Inspector will need to consider this in assessing how the school discharges its welfare duties. An important principle is that, although some basic needs are universal, there can be a variety of ways of meeting them. Patterns of family life differ according to culture and community and these differences should be respected and accepted. There is no one perfect way to bring up children and care must be taken to avoid value judgements and stereotyping.
- 1.21. Also, in understanding how the school provides for the child's welfare, it is important to consider the total environment. It is not possible to think only in terms of welfare within the boarding house. The pupil's whole experience in the school is significant to his/her welfare. The R&I Unit is involved because the child is living away from home and must look first at the school as the living environment for the child. However the R&I Unit Inspector must work in partnership with ETI, whose evaluation of the ethos of the whole school and its provision for the pastoral care including child protection, will complement the work focussed on welfare.

Principles

- 1.22. The school's principles underpin the way it arranges to promote and safeguard the welfare of its pupils. It is important that they are clearly set out and that the R&I Unit takes them into account in assessing the provision made. The basic values that underpin quality of life are important to all children living in groups. These basic values can be summarised as:

- privacy;



- dignity;
- independence;
- choice;
- rights and responsibilities;
- fulfilment;
- involvement.

A general framework of this nature can be of great assistance in considering the arrangements in individual schools and in particular schools providing accommodation for children with special needs or those with a disability.

CHAPTER 2: STANDARDS

Statement of Principles

- 2.1. Schools should have a Statement of the Principles on which the life of the school is based. This Statement should describe the ethos of the school and its approach to children's welfare, pastoral care and discipline. The Statement should be available to parents and pupils although they may also wish to obtain further information by direct contact with the school. New staff should be made aware of the Statement as part of normal induction procedures. Where relevant, it should also be made available to any authority responsible for placing a child in the school. The Statement should include a clear set of aims for the provision of boarding.

Guidelines and Procedures

- 2.2. Alongside the Statement of Principles, schools should have clear guidelines and procedures for boarding. These should not simply be statements setting out organisational details, but should be complementary to the school's aims and objectives and should allow the successful achievement of aims and objectives to be assessed. As with the Statement of Principles, each school should ensure that its guidelines and procedures are available to parents, pupils and that they are included in the induction procedures for new staff.
- 2.3. Each school will have a range of policies and procedures that apply to all pupils. These will address issues such as personal and social education (including the development of good relationships with others), child protection, academic development and discipline. It is important that the school strives for consistency in its approach to boarders and day pupils. In addition, guidelines and procedures which apply solely to boarding should address the following:
- the welfare of boarders including the induction of new boarders;
 - the contribution boarding life makes to boarders' personal and social development and its particular role in

preparing young people for the wider world by developing appropriate life skills;

- equal opportunities in ethnic, cultural, linguistic, spiritual, gender and disability matters;
- the contribution that boarding staff make to the health education of boarders and promotion of a healthy lifestyle with particular reference to alcohol and drug abuse, smoking, physical and emotional development and healthy eating;
- management of health care and pharmaceutical issues;
- action to be taken should abuse, of whatever nature, be suspected or allegations of abuse be made (if this differs in any way from the school's Child Protection Policy);
- complaints procedures appropriate to the age groups concerned;
- the school's disciplinary measures which have particular reference to boarding and which are not already addressed in the school's Disciplinary Policy. It would be expected that the school's Policy on Bullying, for example, would apply equally to boarding although there may be some adjustment to the procedures to be followed;
- daily and weekend routines, signing-out procedures and other organisational matters, the location of "bounds", and where pupils of different ages may go unaccompanied, in pairs or in groups during their leisure time;
- services and facilities for boarders and the arrangements for boarders to contact relatives;
- the school's principles and practice in relation to privacy, dignity, independence, choice, rights and fulfilment for pupils.

Staffing - general issues

- 2.4. The successful conduct of any establishment in which children are accommodated away from home will depend on a combination of good management and professional skills. Children living away from their own home need to experience care which substitutes for the loss of the attention which would normally be provided by parents. Schools should do their utmost to provide such an environment through the approach and dedication of staff they employ. When appointing staff who will have particular boarding responsibilities, the school should satisfy itself as to the ability of each member of staff to provide the necessary skills and, where necessary, it should provide training and support. Staffing arrangements should be such that sufficient staff are on duty to ensure the safety of children at all times.
- 2.5. While teachers form the main professional group in any school, other staff, including the school's medical officer, nurses, cooks, cleaners the caretaker and parents running societies often have significant roles to play in the care and welfare of boarders. Principals and heads of house should view the whole range of adults involved as a team unit. The R&I Unit will need to examine staffing arrangements to ensure that:
- the gender of staff involved in the care of boarders is appropriate to the pupils accommodated and sufficient staff are on duty to provide adequate supervision and to take all reasonable steps to ensure safety. The number of staff on duty should be appropriate for the age and range of pupils, types of activity and lay out of the buildings/houses;
 - staff and pupils are aware of and know how to contact the adult in overall charge of the group at all times of the day or night and who gives permission for and knows the whereabouts of pupils who are off the premises;
 - all staff are made aware, preferably through a written job description, of their responsibilities for promoting and safeguarding boarders welfare and to whom they are accountable;

- staff are adequately supervised and supported in their roles;
- if the need arises for specialist activities to take place (e.g. those demanding special skills or knowledge, or entailing specific risks) then outside help may be needed and the Principal should satisfy himself or herself as to the qualifications and suitability of the person involved.

2.6. The managers of the school should ensure that the staff employed can together provide the wide range of skills and expertise needed by the boarding community in the school. They should ensure that appropriate and sufficient staff are engaged and deployed in such a way that all the tasks and responsibilities necessary for the children to be properly looked after and their needs attended to are undertaken. Duty rosters need to be worked out and published in good time and with proper back-up arrangements in place. The ratio of pupils to staff with care responsibilities needs to be appropriate to the age of pupils and their particular needs. Ratios will vary according to the kinds of children accommodated. In a boys' boarding department it is strongly advised that a matron is available to offer maternal care.

Staff Training

- 2.7. The managers of the school should review the training needs of staff in relation to the care and protection of children in the school on a regular basis. They should ensure that these needs are met and a record should be kept of all relevant training.
- 2.8. It is important that all staff, professional and others, involved in caring for children are encouraged to develop appropriate skills such as counselling techniques. All aspects of care should be covered in staff training. Ideally, training should be set in the broader context and within a whole-school approach to pastoral care and child welfare. Schools have always appreciated the need for an appropriate balance in the relationship between staff and pupils. While staff may be worried that their concern and physical support for children in distress might be misconstrued, it would be quite wrong for fears about allegations of abuse to prevent appropriately warm

and supportive relationships developing between staff and boarders. It is important that teachers and others new to residential care should have training to help them recognise the fine boundary between what is appropriate support, care and friendship for children on the one hand, and on the other an excessive degree of intimacy.

- 2.9. Schools should ensure that new and inexperienced staff have a planned induction which includes an explanation of the schools Statement of Principles and guidelines and procedures referred to above. These should be incorporated into a staff handbook or similar document provided to all staff on appointment.
- 2.10. All care staff new to boarding need to learn about procedures, timetables, lines of communication etc. They also need to develop pastoral skills and personal qualities which will make for success in caring for young people. It is important that newcomers to boarding realise the difficulties that some children experience when entering boarding and the importance of ongoing support. Staff new to boarding need a sensitively handled and positive period of induction as they begin their work in boarding.

Child Protection

- 2.11. All staff need to be made aware of the indications of child abuse and the procedure for dealing with suspected and actual cases. It is particularly important that those staff with care responsibilities receive special training in these matters. All schools are required to have a Child Protection Policy which will apply to the whole school, including the boarding department.
- 2.12. All schools must accept that abuse, in whatever form, always constitutes serious harm to the child and that any suspicion, belief or evidence of abuse to a child currently or in the past must be passed to a person with the authority to investigate and evaluate the information. The school's procedures for dealing with abuse should be in accordance with the arrangements described in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety Guidance "Co-operating to Protect Children" (ISBN 0 337 37085 0) and in "Pastoral Care in

Schools-Child Protection” published by the Department of Education.

Senior member of staff to have responsibility for child protection and welfare issues

2.13. All schools (whether they have a boarding department or not) are required to nominate a senior member of staff to have responsibility for child protection. This person will have received suitable training and will be fully aware of the guidance noted in paragraph 2.12 above and the legal obligations associated with child protection. He or she should know the circumstances under which social services and/or the police need to be involved. The nominated member of staff, in conjunction with the school management, should ensure that those who have responsibilities for pupils are aware of the school’s Child Protection Policy and associated procedures and that suitable training is provided where necessary.

Where abuse is alleged

2.14. Where abuse is alleged, the school should follow its Child Protection Policy and ensure that:

- a detailed note is taken of the allegation made and the local HSS Trust is informed at once; it is for the HSS Trust and the police to interview or to take any necessary statements from those involved, including the child;
- appropriate arrangements are made with the local HSS Trust for counselling the child, and for the parents, or other person(s) with parental responsibility, to be informed.

2.15. If the R&I Unit Inspector suspects that a child is suffering significant harm, or is likely to suffer significant harm, he or she should inform the HSS Board for the area in which the school is situated and the local HSS Trust. The R&I Unit Inspector should also keep the managers of the school fully informed. In these cases the HSS Trust should consider whether it needs to take action under Part VI of the Children Order, e.g. an application to the court for an emergency protection order.

2.16. Article 176(3) of the Children Order places a duty on HSS Boards to inform the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety and the Department of Education where there has been a failure on the part of the managers of the school to carry out their general welfare duties under Article 176(1). Where an issue is brought to the attention of the HSS Board by the R&I Unit Inspector, it is the responsibility of the HSS Board to inform the respective Departments.

Abuse at School

- 2.17. Abuse at school may occur in the house, in teaching areas, in the school grounds, outside the school, or during excursions and field trips. Principals and other members of staff must be alert to situations where abuse may occur. They should ensure that there are clear guidelines for all staff on the prevention of child abuse, supervision of high-risk situations, avoidance of inappropriate contact with children and the need to be vigilant in spotting and reporting suspected child abuse.
- 2.18. The R&I Unit Inspector will need to be satisfied that the school's procedures for detecting and dealing with all forms of alleged abuse are satisfactory. The school's procedures must cover abuse by adults or other children and should recognise that abuse may be of a physical, sexual or emotional nature, including harassment because of disability, race or gender and various kinds of bullying. Where sexual abuse of younger pupils by older ones is suspected there is need for sensitivity in differentiating between abuse and adolescent exploration.
- 2.19. Schools should be aware of the danger that pupils may suffer physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect either whilst at home or away from school, or within the school itself, by staff, other adults including parents, and other children. Staff should be aware of behavioural and physical indicators that may draw attention to the possibility of abuse. To ensure, as far as possible, that the welfare of pupils is secured, schools should have clearly laid down and recognised procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse. These could reflect the procedures laid down by the local Area Child Protection Committee. The investigation of possible abuse is a matter for the HSS Trust once it has been informed, (unless the procedures state

otherwise: it can for example sometimes be the NSPCC or the police).

2.20. The possibility of abuse by a member of staff must be recognised. Abuse may result from a member of staff developing or being drawn into an unsuitable relationship with a child. Principals and other members of staff need to be able to recognise the signs and conditions under which this can occur. These may include a member of staff:

- spending an inordinate amount of time with particular individuals or groups;
- persistently taking over other colleagues' duties;
- overseeing more than a normal share of activities that involve changing and showering.

2.21. Sometimes high levels of stress or workload can be contributory factors. Staff should be supervised adequately to decrease the likelihood that this may occur. Principals should ensure that all staff with care responsibilities have access to, and opportunities for consultation with, senior and more experienced staff to whom they can turn and who can monitor their approach to boarders.

2.22. The R&I Unit Inspector should ensure that the school has effective procedures for acting when abuse by a member of staff is alleged. These must include provision for:

- immediate action to protect the child and any other children present;
- an immediate report of the allegation of abuse to the appropriate HSS Trust for investigation;
- consideration of whether the member of staff needs to be stood down;
- consideration of the need for a police investigation and the need to contact parents or a doctor;
- consideration of the need for the school's own disciplinary procedures to be invoked.

Investigations into allegations of abuse

2.23. It is very much in the school's interest to co-operate fully with any investigations. Where members of staff or others are under suspicion, managers will need to act in accordance with the wishes of the police and social services investigators in order to ensure that there is a proper investigation and that all pupils are fully protected. This may mean suspending staff from duty and instituting disciplinary proceedings, including the possibility of dismissal, in addition to any action taken by the police. Even where there is insufficient evidence for a prosecution, consideration should be given to the possible need for disciplinary proceedings against a staff member. Additionally, schools should have in mind the need for counselling, by specialist practitioners, for pupils who have suffered abuse and any others closely involved. They should also have regard to the effect on the school as a whole.

Checks on Staff

2.24. School managers will be expected to carry out thorough checks on the suitability of staff, prior to their taking up their responsibilities. This should include the following:

- all staff, volunteers and landladies must be thoroughly checked;
- references, including those from previous employers, should be taken up;
- requests for references should include specific enquiry about any impediment to the person's employment in a position where there is access to children;
- proof of qualifications;
- gaps in CVs to be explained satisfactorily;
- in the case of non-teaching candidates who have been employed in a school in another capacity, the appropriate Education and Library Board, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools or other relevant authority should be contacted;

- the Department of Education should be asked to check its copy of the DHSS & PS Pre-Employment Consultancy register in respect of staff who have significant access to children.

Schools are now legally obliged to request a criminal record check in respect of staff and volunteers who have significant access to children and should observe the procedures set out in the Department of Education Circular 1990/28, “Disclosure of Criminal Background of Persons with Access to Children” (see Appendix 12 of the Department of Education booklet “Pastoral Care in Schools : Child Protection”). The points listed above are consistent with this circular.

Checks on certain others with whom boarders may come in contact

- 2.25. Some schools may have close links with other organisations such as the Scouting and Guiding movements, Air Training Corps, or Sea, Army or Combined Cadet units. In all these cases, boarders will come into contact with adults who are not on the staff, but who are involved in field-days, field-trips, excursions, camping and other residential experiences away from school, perhaps even abroad. The R&I Unit will need to ensure that the school has made all reasonable efforts to carry out appropriate checks and that all necessary arrangements to safeguard the welfare of children participating have been made.

Listening to children

- 2.26. Schools today place great emphasis on the establishment of good relationships between pupils and members of staff. It is important that there should be clear and accessible avenues for children to alert an appropriate adult of matters that are causing them distress. All staff in schools must be prepared to listen to children. Boarding and other care staff will need to take and to create opportunities to talk with and listen to children. Boarders frequently approach school nurses and matrons for such exchanges. Whichever staff are involved, it is important that this valuable role is recognised and encouraged. Boarders should be able to turn to any of a number of adults

not only the member of staff who has a designated pastoral responsibility for that particular pupil. It is important that boarders know that they can turn to anyone they can trust. This is important for the way in which house staff listen to other staff, who may have important things to say about children, and for the need to include them as appropriate, in pastoral discussions.

- 2.27. The school is accountable for the welfare of pupils and should be able to demonstrate that accountability. There will need, therefore, to be systems of record keeping to ensure that relevant information about the welfare and development of individual children is recorded in sufficient clarity and detail to inform decisions about the child's care and to serve as a record of action taken by staff. Some records may be exclusively concerned with education matters, or contain a mixture of education and welfare information. It would be helpful for schools to demonstrate the overall individual record system.

Equal opportunities

- 2.28. It is necessary to ensure that boarding practice (in common with day school) safeguards and promotes the welfare of any minority groups of pupils within the school, and of those pupils who may not fit into the general pupil-body. Racist remarks and behaviour and any form of discrimination on disability, ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic grounds are unacceptable. The R&I Unit Inspector needs to be alert to instances of name-calling or graffiti which might indicate harassment or discrimination against any individuals or groups within the school.
- 2.29. There should be equality of treatment between boys and girls. The R&I Unit Inspector should ascertain how the school promotes positive attitudes to people of both sexes through its curriculum, for example through a personal and social education course or through tutorial activities, and how this relates to the way boarding is conducted.

Standards of accommodation

2.30. The standard of accommodation in all premises used by boarding pupils should be such as to enable them to live a full life in the school community. The nature of the living space and overall environment will have an important effect on the child's adjustment to living away from home. It should be pleasant, comfortable, safe and geared to the child's needs. Personal space is important to young people's social well-being. Boarders need to be able to:

- personalise those areas which they can regard as their own, such as their study space and around their beds, by displaying posters, pictures, models, toys, ornaments etc.;
- store their personal possessions in their own lockable cupboard or chest of drawers;
- enjoy a degree of privacy. There should be opportunities for boarders to be alone, to read, talk, be quiet or simply do nothing if they so wish;
- withdraw in small groups from the hurly-burly of communal life or, in co-educational schools, from those of the opposite sex; and
- have access to appropriate staff in private.

In particular children with a disability need to be able to access all appropriate parts of the school. Equally, there is a need for common space where larger groups can mix and carry on a variety of more active or quieter pursuits (table tennis, watch TV etc.).

2.31. Good practice in relation to boarding accommodation should include most, if not all, of the following:

- **Bedrooms.** There should be separate accommodation for boys and girls and for older and younger pupils. The bedrooms should be of sufficient space (not crowded) and double bunks are acceptable if this is necessary to create space that can be used constructively for comfort



and for activity (as opposed to accommodating as many children as possible in a room that is too small). Access to their own bedrooms by children is desirable at all times when pupils are in house. Furnishings should include comfortable, well-sprung beds, safety rail on upper bunks, sufficient storage and hanging space for clothes. Towels, flannels and toothbrushes need to be hygienically stored. There needs to be sufficient ventilation and lighting in the bedrooms. There should be a good standard of decoration, cleanliness and housekeeping which sets standards for boarders to emulate. Furniture should be in good condition and should suit the requirements of the room.

- **Common rooms or social or living accommodation.** These should be sufficient in number and size to meet the requirements of all boarders and allow boisterous and quiet activities to be separate and to allow separation of the sexes and of older/younger boarders when they so wish. Where there are mixed houses or both female and male boarders on campus, social accommodation should allow an appropriate degree of mixing. Furniture and decoration should be in good condition and pleasant for the boarders. The school should use its judgement in providing access to basic kitchen facilities (clearly age and the level of supervision required must be considered in this context).
- **Sanitary accommodation.** Separate provision should be made for boys and girls. There should be no health hazards and there should be sufficient ventilation in bath or shower rooms and in areas where there are urinals and WCs. It is essential that all WC doors can be locked from the inside and that showers and bathrooms have proper privacy. Water should be provided at a constant, comfortable and safe temperature.
- **Heating.** This should be provided at a comfortable temperature and there should be ambient heating throughout the living rooms.
- **Grounds.** These are a necessary and valuable resource for large-scale activities and also for allowing individuals

and small groups to withdraw from the crowd. Nevertheless, they cannot be considered as an adequate substitute for indoor space. Again, the principles concerning different kinds of space, suited to age and sex, apply equally to playgrounds, playing-fields and parkland.

- 2.32. Schools are not expected to provide within their own premises all the facilities needed by pupils to allow them to lead a normal life. They should, however, provide reasonable opportunities for pupils to use appropriate facilities in the locality for sport and other recreational activities as necessary.

Health

- 2.33. The state of a child's health is obviously important to his or her welfare. If an R&I Unit Inspector comes across evidence of any health problems, he or she should draw these to the attention of the Principal who should consult the school Medical Officer or other person or agency as appropriate.
- 2.34. The way in which health care is provided will vary according to local circumstances. Schools usually appoint a school Medical Officer, who will usually be a local General Medical Practitioner, who will be responsible to the Principal and/or managers of the school for advising on all matters affecting the health of the school. All children should normally be registered with a General Medical Practitioner and in the case of a boarding school this will often be with the school Medical Officer. Some schools, perhaps because of their size, might not employ a school doctor. In that situation, the pupils should be registered with a local General Medical Practitioner so that every child may have confidential access to a doctor when necessary. The right of 16 year olds and above to choose their own practitioner should be recognised, although practical circumstances may influence arrangements in this regard. Any child might reasonably wish to consult a doctor in whom they have confidence, for example one of the same sex as themselves.
- 2.35. The health care of children living away from their parents requires particular vigilance. Parents who have chosen to send their children to a boarding school have specifically opted for

this form of education. In effect they have charged the school with the responsibility of caring for their offspring and the school, acting “in loco parentis”, must be mindful of the particular needs of its pupils. Schools should consider seeking advice from the school health service or the school Medical Officer or local General Medical Practitioner. Schools should also, if possible, have suitably qualified staff, such as nurses, to deal with health matters. Working in the locality, the school Medical Officer or General Medical Practitioner will have an intimate knowledge of the local services and resources that are available including specialist paediatric colleagues whose expert advice may be sought.

- 2.36. Schools, in conjunction with their school Medical Officer or General Medical Practitioner, should actively encourage children to follow a healthy lifestyle with particular emphasis on a healthy diet, regular physical activity and the avoidance of smoking and excess alcohol. Further advice may be obtained from the Health Promotion Agency and the local Education and Library Board.
- 2.37. An acceptable level of hygiene should prevail in all parts of the school used by children and schools are recommended to seek advice on all matters concerned with hygiene from the local Environmental Health Officer. The local Environmental Health Officer can be expected to make regular inspections of food preparation areas, dining rooms, dormitories, toilets and washing facilities and advise the school accordingly. Where necessary the school or the Medical Officer or both may feel it necessary to seek help from the Environmental Health Service.
- 2.38. There should be a system for notification by the school of deaths, accidents, serious illness or infectious diseases or other serious harm. Notification would be expected to be made to parents or guardians or placing authorities. The local HSS Trust should be advised of all serious harm.
- 2.39. All but the smallest of boarding schools should have their own sanatoria as it is good policy to centralise the provision for sick pupils to allow for supervision by trained staff. There should also be a consulting room, treatment room and a secure, locked room or cupboard for medicines and drugs. If simple medication, such as paracetamol or cough linctus is

administered by non-trained staff in boarding houses, then it too should be kept in a lockable cupboard.

Safety

- 2.40. There should be regular fire practice drills and fire alarm tests. The Fire Service will carry out fire precaution inspections every 5 years, or earlier in the event of the completion of new buildings, a change in the use of accommodation or a complaint. A record should be kept of the date, time, duration and description of such exercises. These should be carried out at various times, including at night. Managers and Principals should ensure that the staff and pupils are aware of the school's health and safety policies and practices.

Contact with parents / relations / visitors

- 2.41. There should be recognition of a child's right to privacy when visited by parents or other relations or visitors. There should be a general expectation that children's mail is private to them. With older children, where in exceptional cases, there is a need for the staff to be aware of the contents of letters, this should be achieved by the children opening mail in front of staff. For very young children it may be necessary, in the interest of the child and with the parents' agreement, for mail to be opened by staff before being handed to the child - for example where parents are separated. There should be facilities to ensure that children can maintain contact with parents, relatives and friends in privacy e.g. by suitably located pay phones.

Religious and cultural ethos

- 2.42. Schools should be sensitive to the religious, cultural, racial and linguistic background and beliefs of children. Schools should provide a statement about these matters in their prospectus, which should be available to the R&I Unit Inspector.

Personal relations and discipline

- 2.43. It is important that in looking at boarding in schools a broad view is taken of discipline, which should be based on good personal and professional relationships, and be consistent with the approach adopted in normal school life.
- 2.44. The maintenance of good discipline is of paramount importance for the growth, welfare and development of pupils, particularly so in boarding schools where pupils have to co-exist and grow up with peers who may exhibit varieties of behaviour. Success in producing a pleasant and well-disciplined atmosphere will depend upon the complex interaction of a wide range of factors. These factors include:
- the quality of relationships between boarders and staff. There needs to be mutual respect and understanding between boarders and staff;
 - the quality of relationships and need for mutual respect between boarders. Where senior pupils have a degree of authority over others, the boundaries of this authority should be clear both to them and to the other pupils and it must be clear that there is no exploitation of one pupil by another. Such arrangements should be carefully structured and monitored;
 - having sufficient staff on duty during evenings, weekends and other “out of class” times to permit the necessary contact between boarders and staff in order to allow good relations to develop and provide support and guidance in relation to their educational, social and emotional needs;
 - the nature and quality of the environment and the nature of the space available to boarders. Crowding in dormitories, lack of withdrawal space, poor state of furnishing and poor sanitary and other provision can lead to friction, poor behaviour and even vandalism;
 - the levels of responsibility and participation in decision-making offered to boarders in respect of their living space, activities and everyday organisation; how senior pupils are used to assist staff in maintaining discipline;

- the organisation of the boarders' day and the extent to which there is a proper balance between controlled and free time available to boarders; and
- the nature of the population of boarders themselves, for example:
 - whether it is single-sex or mixed boarding;
 - the ethnic and cultural mix;
 - the age range and balance between age groups;
 - the presence of children with emotional and/or behavioural problems.

2.45. Schools should have a clear policy on what standards of behaviour are expected of pupils, how these standards are to be maintained and how unacceptable behaviour is to be tackled. Schools should ensure that parents are aware of their policy on behaviour and discipline and should aim to secure parents' support for putting it into practice. This information should also be made available to the R&I Unit Inspector and to other interested parties on request. The R&I Unit Inspector will have regard to the principles and practice regarding control and discipline contained in the Children's Homes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1996.

2.46. It is important to appreciate the value of praise and commendation in the discipline and development of pupils. Pupils usually respond very well if they feel that they are being valued, but there are occasions when it may be necessary to apply suitable sanctions for the good of a pupil. Such sanctions might reasonably include, temporary removal of privileges, mild or moderate verbal reprimand, additional household chores and restriction of leisure activities. Sanctions which are unproductive, e.g. writing out lines, or which involve the use of educational activities, such as essay writing, should be avoided as a means of punishment. In all instances sanctions need to be applied fairly and consistently, making the distinction between minor and serious offences clear, yet at the same time allowing a degree of flexibility for individual circumstances.

2.47. In deciding how these criteria are to be applied some allowance needs to be made for the cultural ethos and declared policy of the school. Schools will be aware that corporal punishment is prohibited in grant-aided schools. It would seem appropriate that this ban should extend to all aspects of boarding at the school. While corporal punishment is not prohibited at independent schools these schools may wish to consider following the same principles in order to discourage such practice. Any such sanction must conform to the European Convention on Human Rights, i.e. it should not be inhuman or degrading. The imposition of sanctions by prefects or teachers is permissible providing that these punishments are reasonable and are included in the schools guidelines and procedures. Sanctions administered or imposed should be recorded stating clearly the nature of the transgression and the nature of the sanctions, and be subject to monitoring by a senior member of staff who is concerned with care of children within the school. The record relating to their own children should be available to parents.

Complaints procedure

2.48. It is important that there should be clear and accessible avenues for children to alert an appropriate adult when something is causing them distress. Children in boarding accommodation do not have the same daily access to their families as day pupils, and it is important that schools have an effective means by which children's concerns or complaints can be heard. It is to be hoped that a pupil with a concern would feel comfortable approaching a member of staff and would feel confident that the matter would be handled in a sensitive way. Such a procedure should not replace the school's normal daily arrangements for dealing with minor problems. The aim should always be to identify and resolve issues before more formal action becomes necessary. The procedures established by the school may use terms other than "complaints" or "complaints procedures". This is acceptable provided they are consistent with this guidance.

2.49. It is necessary to take into account the ages of the children when considering what arrangements might be appropriate. However, a clear and simple procedure should be available to

all children to enable them to raise concerns which cannot be dealt with informally. Information about the procedure should be given in writing, or in another appropriate permanent form, to all children and staff as well as to those with parental responsibility. It is important that provision is made for contact with an adult outside the school's structure. This includes telephone Help Lines as these ensure an additional element of confidentiality or independence which is necessary in certain circumstances e.g. a bullying problem.

- 2.50. At the first "informal" stage, the aim should be resolution at source or, failing that, through mediation, which could include advice, information, discussion and explanation. This stage need not necessarily involve a written submission but the complaint should be recorded as well as the action taken in response. A distinction needs to be made between this and a formal complaint, which should be in writing if possible (not necessarily by the child who is the victim of the action or inaction complained of) and which should always trigger a formal response.
- 2.51. Complaints should always be dealt with speedily. A time limit should be set for the written acknowledgement of complaints, including oral (and telephoned) complaints. A suitable senior staff member should have responsibility for the complaints procedure and a staff member possibly, but not necessarily the same one, should have responsibility for acknowledging and responding to questions and complaints, both informal and formal. Complaints should be dealt with confidentially and investigation of formal complaints should always involve someone independent of the school.
- 2.52. It is hoped that most complaints can be satisfactorily dealt with by the school, but it is desirable for there to be arrangements for children to register complaints in confidence to a person not on the staff of the school or connected with the running of the school about any matter pertaining to the welfare of the child as described in this guidance. Sometimes the school doctor or chaplain may be able to fulfil this role very well but it will be a matter for judgement in each case whether or not the person concerned is appropriately distanced from the running of the school.

CHAPTER 3: GUIDANCE ON INSPECTIONS AND REPORTS

Introduction

- 3.1. The R&I Unit should develop procedures and standards for inspection in consultation with Principals of schools with boarding departments, ETI and other relevant agencies. It is important that Principals of schools are aware of the statutory requirements and know in advance what aspects of the school and the detail of boarding practice are to be assessed through inspection. The R&I Unit in collaboration with ETI should inspect all aspects of the school's practices which have a bearing on the children's welfare. Procedures should be developed which reflect the particular role and responsibility of each Inspectorate and pre-empt duplication of action.
- 3.2. Article 176(4) of the Children Order provides that an "authorised person" may enter any school covered by Article 176 at any reasonable time. An R&I Unit Inspector exercising this power will be required, under Article 176(6), to produce a duly authenticated document showing his or her authority to do so, if asked.
- 3.3. The normal frequency of inspections is set out at paragraph 1.14, although more frequent visiting by R&I Unit and ETI inspectors may be necessary to ensure that the school's welfare and pastoral care, including child protection responsibilities are being carried out. Inspections should normally be notified in advance. Occasional unannounced visits may also take place.
- 3.4. Where a school makes use of lodgings to provide accommodation for a child, special considerations will need to apply. The school should be provided with information on its responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of boarders in lodgings and the standards that have to be satisfied before placement. The R&I Unit will need to examine the school's arrangements for vetting and selecting the lodgings used to provide accommodation for its pupils. Attention must also be given to the arrangements for maintaining effective oversight of the safety and well being of the children in that setting. A useful starting point for considering what is appropriate would be the regulations governing the placement of children in private foster homes.

Planning inspections

- 3.5. Whilst the R&I Unit and ETI Inspectors should not hesitate to visit without prior announcement, where they believe this to be needed, most inspection visits will require some advance planning. This provides an opportunity to identify the procedures to be followed. An early informal pre-inspection visit for staff to meet each other and to give first-hand information about the school and its layout may be particularly valuable.
- 3.6. Inspections should be supported by appropriate data about the school, gathered in advance. This should include the school prospectus and written policies, details of staff and pupil organisation and numbers, the number of children placed in lodgings, any staff handbook or manual, and a description of the accommodation available in different houses.
- 3.7. Unless there is reason for an alternative plan, inspections should always conclude with a meeting with the Principal and the teacher in charge of boarding to provide immediate impressions and to report orally on the main conclusions reached. This process will enable facts to be checked and will assist in the formation of a balanced view of the provision offered. It will also enable urgent recommendations or concerns to be dealt with immediately and these should be given to the Principal and teacher in charge of boarding at the meeting.

Inspection methodology

- 3.8. The inspection method may cover the following areas:
 - pre-inspection information checklists;
 - pre-inspection visits to meet pupils/staff and parents (where practicable);
 - meetings with groups of pupils/groups of staff; groups of parents (where practicable);

- attendance at assembly (with the agreement of the school);
- interviews with key staff, for example, the Principal, House Masters and individuals responsible for child care protection issues;
- check on records;
- use of anonymous questionnaires to pupils and staff;
- early morning, late evening and weekend observation in houses.

3.9. The whole of the school's arrangements for the daily life of boarding pupils in different houses may be reviewed, including all meal times, homework arrangements, after-school activities, opportunities for private activity or withdrawal from group activity. The process should take into consideration the needs of individual pupils for privacy and the avoidance of disruption to the routine of the boarding department. Bedtime routines, rising and bathing are especially sensitive activities which should always be included. Their inspection should be handled sympathetically. As much as possible of the school accommodation should be seen. Boarding accommodation is clearly relevant. Spaces used for dual purposes or solely for teaching should not be excluded. Many school practices will extend across the whole life of the school; the happiness and contentment of a pupil who is separated from his family may depend as much on the way he is treated in the classroom as on any other factor. However, it is not the R&I Unit's role to assess pastoral care in the context of the school's educational provision. In most cases R&I Unit Inspectors will be solely or mainly concerned with the living arrangements of pupils.

Records of visits

3.10. A written account should be prepared of each visit which includes any significant element of inspection. The R&I Unit Inspector's view on the welfare of children should usually be recorded in this account. These documents should be shown to managers and Principals in draft form for factual correction before being finalised.

Handling of reports

- 3.11. The over-riding aim of the R&I Unit must be to ensure that schools promote and safeguard the welfare of children accommodated. The R&I Unit should agree with ETI how the various reports of inspections are to be handled. This will cover how any composite ETI / R&I report is produced, how copies are to be distributed and any detailed arrangements for liaison with schools prior to publication. In all cases copies of the published reports should be made available to the Department of Education and the HSS Board and HSS Trust for the area in which the school is situated.
- 3.12. These arrangements are designed to ensure that the HSS Board or HSS Trust can take action in cases where there are concerns about a child's welfare. The R&I Unit Manager should also, in accordance with Article 176(3), bring to the attention of the Department of Education and the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety any significant failure to comply with the welfare duties imposed on the managers of a school.
- 3.13. The report should comprise two parts:
- A summary of main findings, including the main judgements, the most important issues and major recommendations. It should indicate how far the school is conforming to good practice.
 - A report elaborating on the main findings.

Drafting and editing

- 3.14. An early draft of the report should be shown in confidence to the Principal and manager and an opportunity given to them, preferably in a meeting, to point out any factual inaccuracies. It will need to be made clear to schools that the evaluation will be changed only if the factual inaccuracies affect it. The R&I Unit and ETI Inspectors would be well advised, however, to note any evaluations which emerge during the meeting as likely to be contested by the school.

- 3.15. The process of writing reports is eased if, during inspections, inspectors have adopted the habit of “reporting (orally) as you go”. This is especially important where something has been seen that is likely to lead to an adverse report. As far as is practicable the school, usually the person most concerned with the matter under inspection, needs to be made aware during the inspection of critical judgements. Though the final report is not negotiable, the opportunity for the school to comment on and discuss the interim judgements made by the inspectors is most likely to enable the latter to refine, and even to modify, their initial evaluation or for the school immediately to redress the deficiency. Furthermore the school is much more likely ultimately to accept critical judgements in the report if it has had the opportunity to make its position known, whether or not these affect the judgements made in the report. At the end of the inspection there should be an oral report on the main findings. While this may contain more detail and discussion of issues than appears in the written report, the latter should contain no major issues which have not been discussed with the school.
- 3.16. As far as is practicable the format of reports should be the same for all schools with boarding and should be agreed with the schools beforehand.

Non-compliance by school with Article 176

- 3.17. Where the R&I Unit forms the opinion that a manager is not safeguarding and promoting the welfare of a child provided with accommodation at a school it should inform the relevant HSS Board. The HSS Board is under a duty, under Article 176(3), to notify both the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety and the Department of Education. Any report submitted under Article 176(3) should be clearly identified as such so as to distinguish it from a normal report of visits. HSS Boards should copy such notification and supporting reports to the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety and the Social Services Inspectorate. If notification is being considered, HSS Boards should generally seek first to discuss their concerns with the schools and with the Department of Education. Unless the circumstances require urgent action, HSS Boards should, where possible, seek to resolve any problem informally.

Taking action where there are serious deficiencies in a school

- 3.18. The Children Order does not provide for specific legal action to be taken against schools for non-compliance with Article 176, with one exception. Article 39 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (complaints with respect to schools) is amended by paragraph 129 of Schedule 9 to the Children Order to provide as an additional ground of complaint a failure by a proprietor (or the Board of Governors) of an independent school to safeguard and promote the welfare of any child provided with accommodation by the school. Action by the Department of Education under Article 39 can ultimately result in a school being struck off the Register of Independent Schools. However, managers have a right of appeal to the county court. A complaint must state the grounds on which it is made.
- 3.19. Although Article 176 does not itself make provision for action to be taken against a school it may trigger other proceedings (for example an application for an emergency protection order). Schools should also be made aware that reports of inspections will be published. However, as indicated above, there will be consultation with the school beforehand. In all cases the school should be aware of its rights to complain to the Ombudsman.

CHAPTER 4: OBSERVING PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS

Introduction

- 4.1 This chapter is concerned with boarding practice and what the R&I Unit should look at in its contacts with schools which provide boarding. It includes matters previously referred to. Although all are important, in reality any school is likely to be performing better in some respects than in others. The R&I Unit will need to arrive at a rounded judgement of the school's overall performance.
- 4.2 As a general context in which to set assessments of individual issues, the following questions may be useful in terms of standards to be applied and against which the school will be measured:
- Do the school's arrangements promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils?
 - Taking account of its particular circumstances and especially the extent to which children remain in effective contact with their own families, does this school contribute appropriately to the child's upbringing and development as a person?
 - Is the environment one in which children can be and are happy and healthy?
 - Does the school have and implement appropriate procedures which aim to protect children properly from harm?
 - Are there effective procedures for the school to identify and respond to any possible abuse of children?
 - Do the children have sufficient opportunity to discuss any matters of concern to them with an adult in whom they wish to confide?

The following sections provide a checklist of issues relevant to the school's arrangements to promote and safeguard the welfare of children and which the R&I Unit will wish to consider.

Statement of Principles

- 4.3 The statement should include a clear set of aims for the provision of boarding. There should also be clear guidelines and procedures for boarding that are not just statements of details of organisation. They should be consistent with the school's aims and objectives and to its pastoral guidelines, and should allow the successful achievement of aims and objectives to be assessed. The guidelines should be made available to parents, pupils and all staff, and should be included in the induction procedures for new staff. The guidelines and procedures should address the matters set out at paragraph 2.3 above.

Complaints

- 4.4 The R&I Unit should ascertain that there is an established procedure for making formal complaints and for arbitrating any apparent injustices fairly. Such procedures should have been made clear to both boarders on joining the school and to parents or those with parental responsibility. The system needs to be well understood by pupils and should explain how boarders may seek confidential advice and raise matters of serious personal concern such as bullying and abuse. It is important that the arrangements should allow for complaints to be made on behalf of the boarders by parents or staff. The procedure should also outline the stages of a complaint and how it will be responded to. The procedure should also make clear how minor grievances are to be handled.

Independent Listeners

- 4.5 Wherever possible the school should have adults to whom a boarder can turn in privacy. These adults, independent of the school, have a role as independent listeners or counsellors and in the complaints procedures. There is a delicate balance to be struck; they should not be complete strangers to the boarders yet they must be seen to be divorced as much as is possible from the school hierarchy. Finding people who fulfil both parts of this specification is likely to be difficult and a degree of flexibility will be needed to identify who best can do

the job. It may be possible for a chaplain, a school nurse, or a school doctor to fulfil this role, or for interested parents or other persons who have a professional interest in counselling or pastoral work. In all instances, those fulfilling the role will need to be checked before appointment, in accordance with the procedures for appointing staff set out in the Department of Education Circular 1990/28, Disclosure of Criminal Background of Persons with Access to Children. The R&I Unit should satisfy itself that those appointed are made aware of the action they should take when any serious allegation, or one which concerns the manager or senior staff of the school, is made to them and they should be briefed on the relevant standards regarding child protection and allegations of abuse.

Use of Telephone

- 4.6 The R&I Unit Inspector should check that all boarders have the facility to telephone out of the school in privacy. It is not satisfactory for boarders to have to ask permission to use a staff phone nor for the telephone to be placed in a busy corridor or in such a position that pupils have to queue alongside. There is a difficulty with young boarders who have not yet learnt to use a telephone, but this is a skill that ought to be taught within the school. It is not appropriate that schools should prevent even young boarders from telephoning home from school in the belief that this will exacerbate home sickness. Where there is close and warm support for boarders and plenty of activities this is rarely a long lasting problem and all boarders must have the freedom and privacy to make phone calls.
- 4.7 The introduction of help lines is a significant development and it is important that schools advertise and explain these to both boarders and those with parental responsibility. Even in the best run houses, where boarders are known well by staff and there is a warm atmosphere, there are times when individuals may wish to contact an unseen and friendly voice to share concerns and discuss problems and worries, which may or may not have their roots in the school. The R&I Unit Inspector should check that the telephone numbers of appropriate services are prominently displayed near to the telephone.

Contact with parents

- 4.8 It is important that the school positively encourages contact between boarders and their parents and other members of their families. The R&I Unit Inspector should explore the arrangements for writing home and maintaining contact with parents and family by telephone, fax or e-mail. Neither should be hindered or censored.

Guardians

- 4.9 The R&I Unit Inspector will need to enquire about the arrangements for guardians. Some children may have legal guardians with full parental responsibility, but it is common practice for families living abroad to appoint guardians in this country to keep an eye on their children while at boarding school. Such guardians do not have parental responsibility and do not have legal status and cannot give permission for medical treatment. Guardians are usually there to take a general interest and deal with minor administrative matters. Such an interest may include weekend visits to school, and arranging to have the boarder and perhaps friends home for half-term. Where schools are involved in making arrangements for guardians, they must be selected with the same care that would apply to the selection of a member of staff and the same checks carried out.

Separation of Parents

- 4.10 Divorce or separation does not sever parental responsibility and, as with day pupils, the school should recognise this in its dealings with the parents of boarders. This may mean, for instance, being willing to provide reports and information on request to a separated parent. In such cases, the school should take reasonable steps to satisfy itself that the person concerned does have parental responsibility. Where there is doubt on this point, or any disagreement between the parents, the school may need to seek its own legal advice as to how to proceed. Where parents are undergoing separation or divorce proceedings, children in boarding are likely to be subject to a high degree of stress and may be worried about conditions at

home. The R&I Unit will need to be aware of the degree of sensitivity with which schools handle the effects of separation of parents on boarders. Although children may exhibit a superficial air of confidence, there is often an effect on work at school and perhaps on behaviour in the house. House staff need to be especially aware of changes in mood and behaviour and need to be sensitive to the need and afford the opportunity for the children to talk through their feelings and worries about home and themselves.

Bereavement

- 4.11 Similar problems may be found following bereavement. It is important that staff have the ability to counsel individual boys and girls, and their friends, when there has been a death in the family, or of a friend at home, or even in school. The use of a fully trained counsellor may be appropriate and is most useful where there is a high counselling and support need.

Co-operation between House and School

- 4.12 Close co-operation between “school” and “boarding” staff is important. The school’s boarding and pastoral care guidelines need to recognise the complementary nature of care in both the house and school at large. They should foster good communication and record keeping and give guidance on any action that needs to be taken in the interests of the children involved.
- 4.13 The R&I Unit should check whether there is a difference in the standards of behaviour required of boarders between day school and in boarding. Staff in boarding departments also have a role in feeding back to the school any issues concerning individual boarders that come to light.

Records

- 4.14 The R&I Unit needs to be satisfied that there is an efficient and well-maintained system of record-keeping in tune with that of the school as a whole. It will also need to see whether the

records are used in a proactive manner to promote and safeguard the welfare of the children.

Discipline

- 4.15 The R&I Unit should check that there is a policy with regard to discipline, that parents have been made aware of its existence and content and that its provisions are applied fairly. The level of discipline should be such that it encourages the growth of individual personality and yet allows for the creation of a well-ordered atmosphere for all members of the community.
- 4.16 The R&I Unit should consider the way school staff use rewards and sanctions in the house and school generally. This may best be done by discussion with staff and with boarders. Records of the more serious transgressions need to be made and the punishment book must be inspected. Sanctions are likely to be necessary and parents will be made aware of the value of sanctions at the time of enrolment of their children.
- 4.17 The R&I Unit Inspector will need to enquire particularly carefully about punishments that might involve restriction of liberty. Restriction of liberty, by which a boarder is confined to a particular room or area of the school, is a serious step and its use is inappropriate within the setting of a school. It is recognised that parents will expect pupils to be in school or the boarding department at appropriate times and as advised to parents. Parents will not expect pupils to be permitted to leave school without permission to attend unauthorised out of school activities.

The Role of Senior Boarders

- 4.18 In some boarding houses there is a system in which older boarders take on specific duties towards younger children. This can be an excellent way of promoting growth in taking responsibility for others. Wherever possible, all senior boarders should have the opportunity, as of right and as part of their personal and social development to take on some duties within a house. Responsibilities should be appropriately limited, however, and some selectivity exercised so that the position of

senior pupils who may not wish to have extended responsibilities, particularly for pastoral duties, is recognised. In all cases there is a need for monitoring to ensure that responsibility is exercised properly. Where control of younger pupils is an element of senior boarders duties, the R&I Unit Inspector should check that it is exercised sensitively and that senior boarders are appropriately briefed, including written guidelines, regarding the limitations of their responsibilities.

- 4.19 The initiation of new boarders may be a tradition in many schools. Staff and prefects need to discourage such practices. These pranks can be traumatic, particularly for younger children and children who have emotional problems or health care needs.

Relationships

- 4.20 The R&I Unit Inspector should observe relationships between staff and boarders carefully in and around the boarding department, at meals and in their various activities. Good relationships between staff and boarders are essential to maintaining a high standard of welfare. Nevertheless the boundaries of what is acceptable without being over-intimate need to be clear to staff.
- 4.21 Relationships between boarders are equally important as is behaviour in and around the house, at meal times, in classrooms and around the school, in queues for meals, at play in the playground and on the field, in common rooms and at bedtime. Where there are good relationships between staff and pupils there are likely to be good relationships among boarders.

Relationships between Younger and Older Boarders

- 4.22 The relationships between younger and older pupils and the level to which older boarders are prepared and encouraged to keep an eye on the younger and offer support when needed are further indicators of the quality of care. Where there is a broad age range (e.g. 11 to 16 or 18) the role of older pupils may be an important element in the well-being of the boarding

house. The R&J Unit Inspector will need to be aware of both informal and formal relationships between pupils of different ages and the need to ensure that younger children are not abused by older pupils.

Bullying

- 4.23 Bullying is a form of child abuse. It may take the form of verbal, physical or emotional abuse or harassment on disability, racial or gender grounds. It can amount to criminal behaviour such as extortion or physical violence. The victims may be younger, weaker or in some way perceived as being different from the crowd. In many cases they are isolated from the main peer groups.
- 4.24 The R&J Unit Inspector should enquire about arrangements for the detection of and response to bullying in the house and school, whether the school has a clear policy on how it identifies, minimises and deals with bullying, and whether there is guidance in the boarding guidelines. During the course of a visit, the R&J Unit Inspector will also need to talk with both staff and boarders about the incidence of bullying. The R&J Unit Inspector will need to check staff duty rotas and to observe the level of interaction between staff and boarders.

Equal Opportunities Issues

- 4.25 Where there are both boys and girls, there should be no inappropriate, enforced segregation in public areas such as common rooms and playgrounds. On the other hand the R&J Unit Inspector should be satisfied that boys and girls both have the opportunity to withdraw from each other's presence and relax in single gender groups. The R&J Unit Inspector should set aside plenty of time to talk with groups of boarders and staff as well as observing relationships and behaviour around the house and school.
- 4.26 Where there is mixed boarding, both male and female R&J Unit staff will be needed during visits. Where the school has a significant black or minority ethnic group, it is important to ensure that the cultural and linguistic needs of individual pupils are met when appropriate.

Contacts outside boarding

- 4.27 The R&I Unit Inspector should enquire about the possibilities for boarders to make friends outside the house. Where the boarding department is a part of a day school, there are many opportunities for boarders to develop friendships with day pupils, and boarders should have the opportunity to visit friends' homes with parent's (or others with parental responsibility) permission. Where the school is more completely boarding, such opportunities do not so easily exist. Nevertheless, where circumstances permit, making friends in the community should be encouraged. It is important that boarding houses and the school develop contacts with the local community where appropriate.

Standards of accommodation

- 4.28 The R&I Unit should review the living accommodation for boarders and premises in which they work and relax. Both should be sufficiently varied to provide boarders with appropriate spaces in which they may play or study in small or large groups; to be alone and quiet or gregarious and noisy. Open spaces outside provide emotional space for children living a close and communal life. All the facilities should be free from health and safety hazards.

Common Rooms

- 4.29 Common room space should be sufficient for the age and number of boarders present in a house. It is important to have a range of rooms (in the house or close by and accessible in the school) for boarders to relax and follow a variety of indoor activities. The R&I Unit Inspector may need to consider commenting adversely if boarders are unable to pursue quiet activities, in reasonable comfort and in small groups, away from boisterous activities and television. Furniture and accommodation should be in good decorative order and rooms should be clean (if not always tidy). The R&I Unit should check whether boys and girls, in mixed houses, can separate when they so wish. On the other hand accommodation should allow the mixing of age groups or boys and girls as appropriate, in as natural an atmosphere as is possible. All pupils should have

access to snack and hot-drink making facilities (commensurate with ability, maturity and supervision).

Bedrooms

- 4.30 Bedrooms should be warm and comfortable and not overcrowded. Beds should be comfortable and in good condition. Boarders should always have space to store personal possessions in their own lockable cupboards or chests of drawers, and space which they can personalise. Bedtime routines and the use and management of dormitories should recognise the possibility that children are sometimes abused by other children.

Dining Rooms

- 4.31 The R&I Unit will need to check that dining rooms and kitchens are clean and free from health and safety hazards and whether the school's Medical Officer (see paragraph 2.34) visits to advise. Where there are specific problems it may be advisable to approach the Environmental Health Officer. The R&I Unit Inspector may need to spend time with boarders at meal times to assess whether dining rooms are comfortable and civilised places, and that meals are pleasant social occasions. Menus should be varied and designed to provide and promote healthy eating; there should be provision for vegetarians, for diverse cultural needs where appropriate and for those who require special diets.

Sanitary Accommodation

- 4.32 The R&I Unit Inspector should check all sanitary accommodation and see that it is free from health and safety hazards; they should also enquire about the role of the school's Medical Officer or doctor in checking and advising on health matters. In schools where there are some bathrooms with baths or showers that lack privacy, the R&I Unit Inspector should check that there is alternative provision, easily available, for boarders who wish to bath or shower in private. Older boarders should not be expected to use bathing facilities where

privacy is lacking although communal showering facilities in sports areas are usually acceptable. The R&I Unit Inspector needs to be sure that boarding staff are sensitive to the feelings of older or more mature boarders and to the feelings of younger or less physically mature boarders about matters such as communal showering after games.

Health matters

- 4.33 The R&I Unit should ensure that the school has an active policy to promote the good health of the children and the development of a healthy lifestyle. The policy should be integrated with the teaching of health education in the school.
- 4.34 There are important medical welfare matters, such as the onset of asthma and bed-wetting, which may have their roots in problems in school. The R&I Unit Inspector should ensure that both medical and house staff are aware of the significance of persistent bed-wetting or of asthma attacks and there should be effective, close and sensitive liaison between them and with teachers in school.

Medical Arrangements

- 4.35 The R&I Unit should be satisfied that:
- there is a school medical officer or that boarders are registered with a local General Medical Practitioner;
 - boarders have access to a doctor of the same sex as themselves should they so wish and that the school recognises that if they are 16 or over they have the right to give or refuse consent to medical examination or treatment and to choose their own medical practitioner. Children under 16 have the same right if they are of sufficient understanding: it is for the medical practitioner to assess the child's ability to give consent;
 - boarders are able to consult with their chosen doctor in complete privacy;

- medication is always dispensed by a member of staff except where a child is able to be responsible for their own medication either because they are over 16 or if younger are of sufficient understanding to be so responsible;
- all medicines are kept locked in a medicine cabinet in a locked room when a matron or nurse is not on duty;
- there is provision to isolate boarders who are ill and to have appropriate supervision at night;
- there are adequate arrangements for dealing with incidents of bed-wetting in a manner that causes minimum embarrassment to the boarders concerned, and that appropriate action is taken through the school's medical officer for those who are persistently enuretic.

4.36 Where some boarders are responsible for their own medication, because of the nature of boarding, the R&I Unit Inspector should be satisfied that there is sufficient supervision to ensure that medicines are locked away when not being used to protect other boarders.

Health and Safety

4.37 An active health and safety policy to safeguard children from harm complements the measures taken to promote good health. The R&I Unit should be concerned to identify health and safety hazards and bring them to the schools attention. It should check whether staff and boarders are aware of the school's policies and procedures for safety. There should be evidence of regular fire drills, carried out at different times including during the night, and of visits from the fire officer. Where the R&I Unit encounters uncertainties, it may need to take advice from the Health Officer, the Fire Officer and the Health and Safety Executive.