

Breaking Through

**How boarding schools can transform
the lives of vulnerable children**



A research study by the
Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation





© 2007 Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation.

Reviews and abstracts of this report, quoting the source, are encouraged.

This report has been written by Colin Morrison.

'Breaking Through' is a report of research conducted by the Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation with the collaboration of six schools into the development and outcomes of 97 vulnerable children at boarding school. These children's boarding school education is funded by Royal Wanstead variously with the respective schools and other charities including Reedham Trust, Frank Buttle Trust, Joint Educational Trust, and the Mercers Company.

Royal Wanstead is currently helping to support some 250 children at over 100 boarding schools. It believes that many thousands more vulnerable children from one-parent or no-parent families could benefit from Assisted Boarding.

It believes that some 2,000 of these children could be readily accommodated in existing boarding schools throughout the UK.

You can help us transform the lives of more of these vulnerable young people.
To make a donation or discuss a legacy, subscription or grant, please contact: Sue Rigby,
Director, Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation, Sandy Lane, Cobham, Surrey KT11 2ES.
Director@royalwanstead.org.uk

“An immense difference” for vulnerable children

The Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation has, with the generous help of some very committed head teachers, conducted what is believed to be the most comprehensive research so far into the effectiveness of Assisted Boarding. This research has been conducted into the cases of almost 100 children over a five-year period.

The results are very encouraging because they prove just how boarding at the right school, for the right child, with the right support, can make an immense difference to the child's development. That is the challenge for all of us involved in this work and the reason why I am so pleased every time I hear our current or former beneficiaries talking about how boarding school helped change their lives. Their stories help inspire us.

Assisted Boarding is not, of course, appropriate for every child but the research shows just how effective it can be. It makes the case for Royal Wanstead's work, and for the general encouragement of boarding schools whose pastoral resources can have such great value to so many children of all backgrounds.

Breaking Through sums up the way in which so many hundreds of young people have been able to seize the opportunity of boarding school in order to 'break through' what might once have seemed formidable restrictions on their personal development and happiness.

As Patron of the Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation, I commend this work to all those organisations and individuals who can support us in helping children 'break through'.



**HRH The Princess Royal
Patron
Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation**

Introduction

Many of the UK's oldest and most famous boarding schools have their roots in charity, helping to provide home as well as school for needy children in a way which continues today.

Separately, for the past 36 years, the Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation and our partner charities have been supporting vulnerable children at a wide range of boarding schools throughout the UK. This has not been a case of the odd (but no less deserving) child being placed in an independent boarding school and followed round by TV cameras.

We, our partner charities and the boarding schools themselves have, for the past four decades, been quietly helping literally hundreds of vulnerable, disadvantaged children transform their lives and prospects. Many regard as astonishing the success rate for these children and young people – measured across the range of social as well as academic criteria. But this 'Assisted Boarding' success has been a fairly well-kept secret.

Until quite recently, even Government was outside the 'loop'. Assisted Boarding was described two years ago by the then Department for Education & Skills as "...a hidden alternative care system (in that it is neither known to, nor supported by, local children's and young people's services)."

Rolling back the years

That comment was the very welcome start to what is now the Government's Pathfinder project which aims (with the support of Royal Wanstead, Frank Buttle and JET) to help local authorities apply the lessons of Assisted Boarding for some local authority 'looked after' children.

The irony of that situation is not lost on this Foundation because it is 'just' 36 years since the closure of our own schools – which had housed many hundreds of local authority-funded children (including the writer of this report in the 1960s) before a 1970s shift in child welfare strategy.

Since then, Royal Wanstead has been collaborating with boarding schools throughout the UK to help support vulnerable children who have one or no parents and whose pressured families are frequently living below the poverty line. **These are children at risk, whose capacity for normal, happy development is threatened by seriously adverse home and family circumstances.**

Transforming young lives

The 'evidence' of the effectiveness of Assisted Boarding has always been there for us - contained in our bulging files of school reports, appreciative letters from parents and children, and powerful, moving first-hand testimony at Royal Wanstead conferences.

We *know* just how completely Assisted Boarding has transformed hundreds of vulnerable young lives. That 'evidence' has been enough to catch the attention of government. And Schools Minister Lord Adonis (once an Assisted Boarder himself) has injected government capital into once-forgotten State boarding schools. But this

growing awareness of the existence, and value, of Assisted Boarding has been punctuated by two worrying trends:

- Substantial increases in the number of ‘fractured’ families and in the perceived number of vulnerable children
- Substantial long-term decreases (40% in 20 years) in the number of boarding school places

It may be alarmist to predict the demise of boarding school education in the UK but there is clearly a real risk that the full termly boarding on which Assisted Boarders depend, may become progressively less widely available.

Proving the potential of Assisted Boarding

This “**Breaking Through**” research, therefore, has two key objectives which are at the heart of Royal Wanstead’s mission, viz:

1. To prove that Assisted Boarding – ‘for the right child in the right school, at the right time’ – really can transform the lives of vulnerable children.
2. To highlight the vital social role of boarding schools in a 21st century Britain of fractured families – and not *just* for those of the vulnerable, impoverished children with which we are primarily concerned.

“Breaking Through” should be the start of a new public debate about social and educational priorities. Boarding schools should be regarded as an important pillar of social and education policy.

You have in your hands the proof that Assisted Boarding can and does help transform the lives of vulnerable children. Many of these children thrive at boarding school and a relatively large number become star pupils in every social and academic sense. For many of these children, sharing a uniformly distressing home and family background, such results are astonishing indeed.

Behind the statistics and charts in this book are real children whose achievements inspire and humble us. Now we prove that so many of these once troubled, vulnerable and insecure young people are able to ‘break through’ and change their lives.

Their achievements inject passion into our simple demand:

We MUST give many more children this opportunity.

Royal Wanstead estimates that a further 2,000 needy children could readily become Assisted Boarders within the existing capacity of existing schools – if the money can be found. What are we waiting for?

Colin Morrison
Chairman
Royal Wanstead Children’s Foundation

November 2007



How Assisted Boarding works

Assisted Boarding offers vulnerable children the opportunity to benefit from the high levels of pastoral care, individual attention and structured living at many boarding schools.

Moreover, where vulnerable children are suited to boarding school, the change from day school and living fully at home can help to rebuild many a stressed parent-child relationship: it can enable child and parent to develop their own lives with greater assurance about the welfare of the other. In this way, we believe that Assisted Boarding can help prevent the disintegration of some troubled single-parent families. It is, therefore, highly likely to help prevent some situations where children might otherwise need to be taken into local authority care.

Referrals come from a range of sources including schools, local authorities, medical or legal professionals or other charities, and parents/guardians. Our Trustees' decision to support a 'case' in principle follows satisfactory completion of an initial appraisal, a home visit and references. We work closely with largely 'dedicated' education-oriented trusts (The Reedham Trust, The Frank Buttle Trust, and the Joint Educational Trust), with other charities including the Sofronie Foundation, the British & Foreign School Society, the Worshipful Company of Mercers and the Worshipful Company of Drapers, and with boarding schools themselves to create a 'package' of funding for each child we have decided to support.

The boarding school has usually been chosen by the parent/guardian and the child offered a place early in the process – often before they apply to us for funding. While we have supported children at some 150 different boarding schools, the majority of our grant making involves fewer than 20 schools.

Having decided to help support a child, who has already been offered a place at boarding school, the Royal Wansstead Children's Foundation (and our partner charities) faces the very challenging task of securing all the financing required, with a commitment for the duration of the child's secondary schooling. Total school fees are currently £7,000-25,000 per year, although there are only about 4,500 State boarding places at the lower end of this range. Fees for independent boarding schools are £15,000-25,000.

Working with funding partners means we are able to leverage every £100 donated to Royal Wansstead to raise an additional £500 to pay school fees for a vulnerable child.

The successful completion of each 'package' of financial support for a child usually depends on a substantial bursary from the chosen school including, in many cases, support from the school's own charitable foundation.

SUMMARY

The research was conducted into a sample of 97 vulnerable children funded by Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation, their schools and other charities to attend six boarding schools (five independent and one State maintained).

Before admission to boarding school

Children 'at risk' in disrupted and deprived families

- Before they were admitted to boarding school, almost 50% of the children were in the care of a single parent with a mental (38%) or physical (11%) illness
- 30% of the children had been exposed to violence, abuse or threatening behaviour in the family or home environment
- 13% of these children were themselves believed to be 'carers' of parents or siblings
- Most (71%) of the children were in the care of mothers, with 53% of them having had no recent contact with the father

With the structure, security and stimulation of boarding school

Once-troubled children climb to the top of the class

- 39% of those who has been Assisted Boarders for at least three years (3+) became 'star performers' in their schools on a range of social, emotional and academic criteria within that time – almost three times the number of Assisted Boarders predicted to achieve that at the time of admission.
- 57% of these 3+ children achieved or exceeded the average of their peers within three years
- Of the 73% of the 3+ children assessed on admission to boarding school as being 'at risk' of failing, almost half were rated as on or above their peer group average within three years.
- 85% of the 97 vulnerable children were assessed as being at or above the average of their peers within three years of going to boarding school

The vital role of boarding schools in a society of fractured families

More children can 'break the cycle of family disadvantage'

- Boarding school is proved to be highly effective in helping the 'recovery' of the vulnerable children in this study. Boarding school helped most of these children achieve the social skills, self-esteem, coping ability and academic performance of their peer group within 2-3 years.
- The fact that 39% of these vulnerable children from deprived backgrounds became 'star pupils' within three years proves the anecdotal evidence which has indicated that many of these needy children grasp their opportunity with a determination that helps make them above-average achievers in all respects.
- The boarding schools involved in this research have high levels of pastoral care and individual attention and unparalleled experience in Assisted Boarding with Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation for the past 36 years. Royal Wanstead believes this proven work could be expanded substantially at a time of rising numbers of 'fractured' families and (it is believed) vulnerable, troubled children.

Background

‘Assisted Boarding’ describes the process whereby charities fund boarding education for vulnerable children at schools of their choosing.

This is the report of research into the development of almost 100 of these vulnerable children who have been Assisted Boarders at the following six boarding schools:

- King Edward’s School Witley
- Kingham Hill School
- Lord Wandsworth College
- Reed’s School
- Royal Alexandra & Albert School
- Royal Wolverhampton School

This research has been conducted into cases partly funded by the Royal Wanstead Children’s Foundation. Royal Wanstead works variously with other charities including Frank Buttle Trust, Reedham Trust, Joint Educational Trust, the Mercers Company, the Sofronie Foundation, the British & Foreign School Society, and the charitable foundations of the schools themselves to provide the opportunity of boarding school for vulnerable children who have one or no active parents. Royal Wanstead has helped support some 1,700 children at over 120 boarding schools throughout the UK in the 36 years since the closure of its own schools.

Context

At a time of substantial increase in the number of ‘fractured’ families, Royal Wanstead has been promoting the welfare role of boarding schools. It has called for the wider application of Assisted Boarding especially by local authorities some of whose ‘looked after’ children could benefit from boarding in exactly the way that our own beneficiaries do. Royal Wanstead has proposed that ‘foster boarding’ might, in some cases, help ease the acute shortage of foster carers by attracting working couples who might be able to take on the commitment for children in their holidays from boarding school. Royal Wanstead with Buttle and JET is also collaborating with the Department for Children, Schools and Families’ Pathfinder project through which some local authority ‘looked after’ children will benefit from Assisted Boarding.

Assisted Boarding helps vulnerable children benefit from the high levels of pastoral care and individual attention in ‘regular’ schools with a spectrum of children, most of them *without* serious problems. These are ‘normal’ schools where our beneficiaries are helped to develop normally. It is, therefore, important that boarding schools are encouraged generally and able to expand. The more overall boarding places are available, the more vulnerable children can be accommodated within those suitable schools. Given the downward trend in boarding places in recent decades, this is clearly a major challenge for us.

During 20 years of substantial increases in the size of the whole independent school sector, Royal Wanstead estimates there has been a decrease of some 40% in the number of *boarding* places. This ‘marginalisation’ of boarding schooling in the UK, which may be partly due to rising costs and to the increased ‘competitive’ demand for independent *day* places, coincides with what we believe is an era of increasing numbers of ‘fractured’ families.

We assert that boarding school has a vital welfare role to play in a society where increasing numbers of children may be victims variously of marital breakdown, parental ill health and seriously adverse home circumstances including poverty.

Our work shows what can be achieved by some of the most vulnerable children in our society if they are given the opportunity. This should prompt the Government to become increasingly involved in boarding both in the independent and Stat maintained sectors. Boarding should be viewed as a core part of the schools system, needing to be ‘managed’, maintained and encouraged within the context of social and educational policy.

If not Assisted Boarding... the risk to these children

Given the way that governments in many other countries help to finance independent schools in general, it does not seem unreasonable to expect the UK Government to provide some assistance and/or incentive just for boarding schools to expand their support for vulnerable children. Alternatively, some of them risk becoming ‘looked after’ children in the care of local authorities with all that means for children, families and the public purse.

The message of Assisted Boarding is that local and central government must get much more involved in boarding schools. Assisted Boarding is not, of course, the only way to help change the lives of vulnerable children and their families. But it is *one* way – and, for some children, a very effective way indeed.

The **Breaking Through** project provides an objective view of Assisted Boarding outcomes, and has been conducted by the Royal Wanstead Children’s Foundation with the co-operation of the head teachers of the six boarding schools.

These schools together account for some 40% of the children supported by the Foundation, and are, therefore, regarded as the most experienced ‘practitioners’ of Assisted Boarding. Each of these schools has a charitable foundation which helps support vulnerable children in addition to those supported by Royal Wanstead.

Case study

When C’s parents divorced, she and her sister lived with her mother, while her two brothers went to live with their father. She then suffered a serious accident which left her deaf in one ear and unable to cope in a large classroom. At the same time C’s mother had to have extensive and debilitating treatment for cancer which caused significant facial disfigurement.

C needed the stability and support of boarding school – even more necessary when her mother subsequently died.

Her boarding school head teacher says: “C was very angry and unsettled after her mother died and questioned authority. She is now a friendly, helpful and caring young lady – highly regarded by staff. She is enthusiastic and hardworking and perseveres in subjects she does not find easy. She has a warm personality and her refreshing attitude to life in general is inspiring.”

The research

- The research sample comprised 97 Assisted Boarders
- They were assessed 'at home' and on admission to boarding school
- Most of the children were outside the 'net' of local authorities

This research was conducted into the cases of 97 vulnerable young people who were Assisted Boarders part-funded by Royal Wanstead at five independent and one State maintained boarding school, as at July 1, 2006. A total of 49 (51%) of these children had completed at least 3 years at boarding school.

None of these children was 'looked after' children in the care of local authorities. Fewer than 15% of these children were reported to be 'known' by local authorities.

Of the sample, 61% were boys. Average age was 13 years 11 months. All but four of the children were over 11 years of age at the 'survey date'. Some 15% of the children completed their boarding school education in July 2006.

The research was conducted in two parts:

1. **Child Risk Assessment** of each child's family, home and day school situation at the time they applied to Royal Wanstead for a grant to attend boarding school. The Foundation seeks to help support school-age children (usually with one or no parents) whose normal development is compromised or threatened by adverse home circumstances. Many of these children are affected by poverty and serious shortfalls in parenting capacity (though not necessarily parenting ability) through serious illness and/or poverty. These assessments were conducted by Royal Wanstead.
2. **Child Development Assessment** detailing the child's progress at boarding school according to a range of criteria agreed with the schools. These 'annual' assessments were conducted principally by the respective head teachers.

These assessments were prepared during the period September 2006- May 2007 from contemporaneous records and reports made by Royal Wanstead and the schools.



The Findings

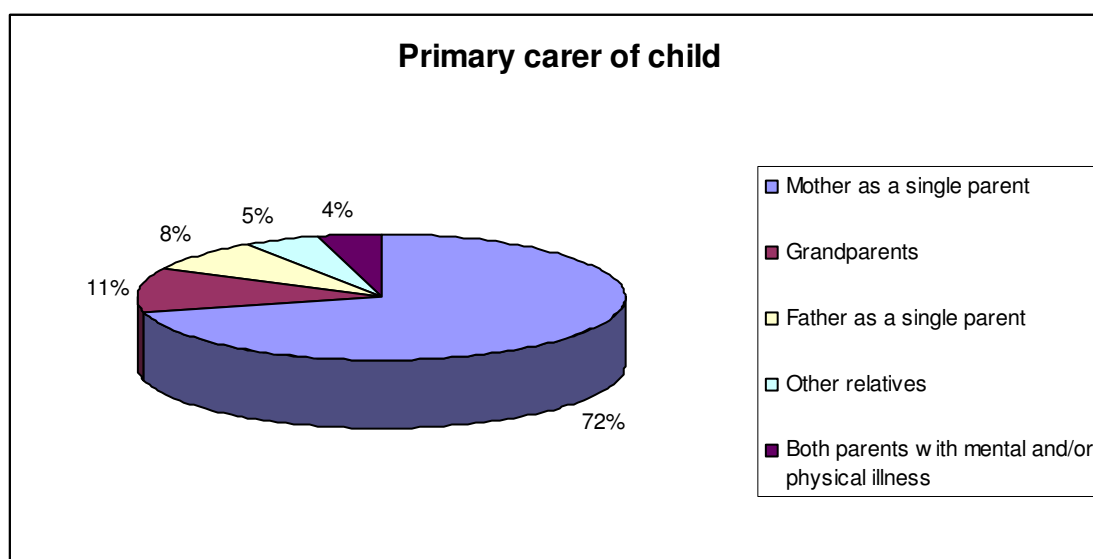
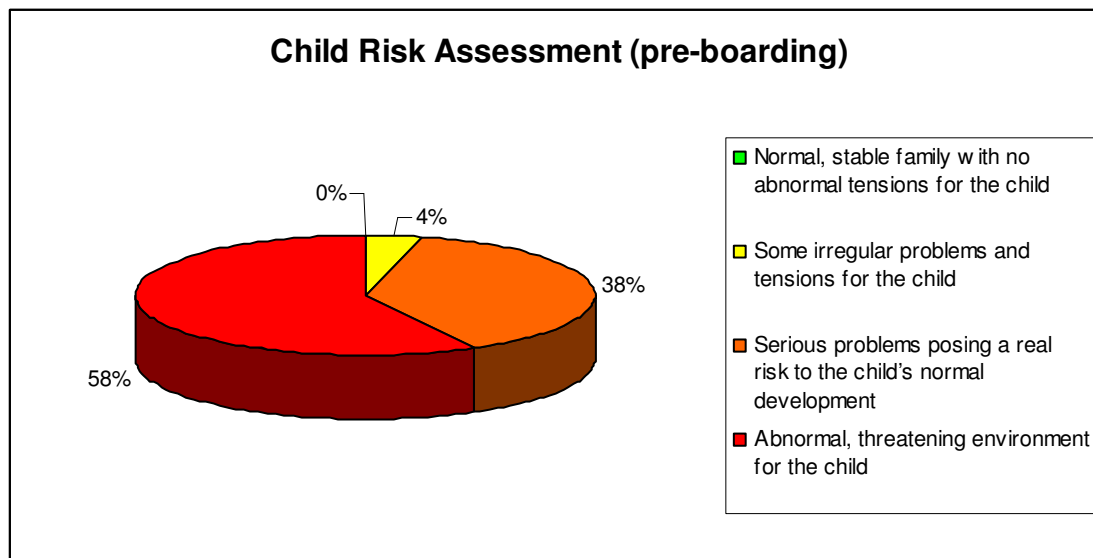
Before

Children at serious risk in the family, home or day school environment

- 60% had been exposed to abusive, abnormal or threatening behaviour
- Most 'primary carers' were mothers; most fathers have no contact
- 49% of primary carers have a mental or physical illness
- 13% of the children are themselves carers of their parent or sibling(s)

The Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation undertook an assessment of the child's home, family and day school before the child was funded to attend boarding school.

Of the 97 children in the sample, 59 (61%) had been exposed to abnormal, threatening or abusive conditions in the family or home environment. A total of 93 (96%) faced serious problems and risk to their normal development.



72% of the primary carers of these vulnerable children were single-parent mothers

Key points

- 37 (38%) of 'primary carers' (35 mothers and two fathers) were reported variously to be suffering from some form of mental illness. A further 11 (11%) were reported to be suffering from a chronic or terminal physical illness.
- 29 (30%) of the children were reported to have been exposed to some level of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse in the family or home environment.
- 11 (11%) of the children had some reported learning difficulties
- 13 (13%) of the children were 'child carers' for their parent or sibling(s).
- Of the 92% of the families in which the father was **not** the primary carer, 52 (54%) of the children had no current or recent contact with their father.

The above analysis is based on written reports and assessments from various sources including teachers, solicitors, children's services, GPs, and charities.



Case study

J's father became moody and violent after his birth, losing his job and home and sleeping mainly at airports. He attempted to snatch **J** on the street and from his school, and the family had to install metal grills and other security in the home. **J's** behaviour began to deteriorate and he was referred to a child psychologist. Now at boarding school, his head teacher says: "He has worked very hard ... to achieve his potential at school, and many people have commented on his renewed enthusiasm. There has been a significant maturing of attitude and effort over the last two terms. He has learnt tolerance of others and is becoming much more socially aware. He is making very rapid progress."

After

Vulnerable children and the 'boarding school effect'

On admission to boarding school

- 40% of the children are rated as being 'at risk' of failing at boarding school
- Over 70% had significant social or emotional problems
- Just 27% were rated as at or above the average of their peer group

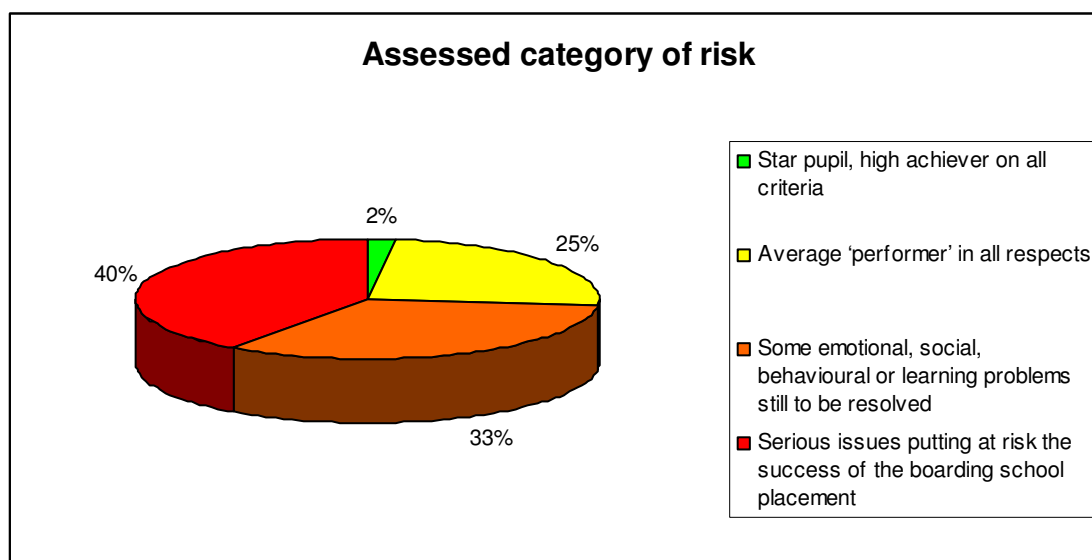
The average age of the 97 children was 13 years 11 months at the July 1, 2006 'survey date'. Most were admitted either at 11+ or 13+.

The boarding schools assessed the performance of each of the children as at admission and then for each subsequent academic year, according to the following six developmental criteria.

- Social skills and peer relationships
- Relationships with teachers and adults
- Ability to adapt to the school structure
- Capacity and willingness to learn
- Academic progress and achievement
- Self-esteem and morale

At the point of admission, these children were rated as follows:

Initial Child Development Assessment (at boarding school)



Although this Child Development Assessment (on admission to boarding school) was quite separate from the Child Risk Assessment (conducted as at the time of initial funding application to Royal Wanstead), there is, perhaps, a predictable congruence.

In their home situation (pre-boarding) , there were a total of 93 children rated as facing serious problems and risk to their normal development. In the schools' own Child Development Assessment (after boarding school placement), the 'high risk' categories

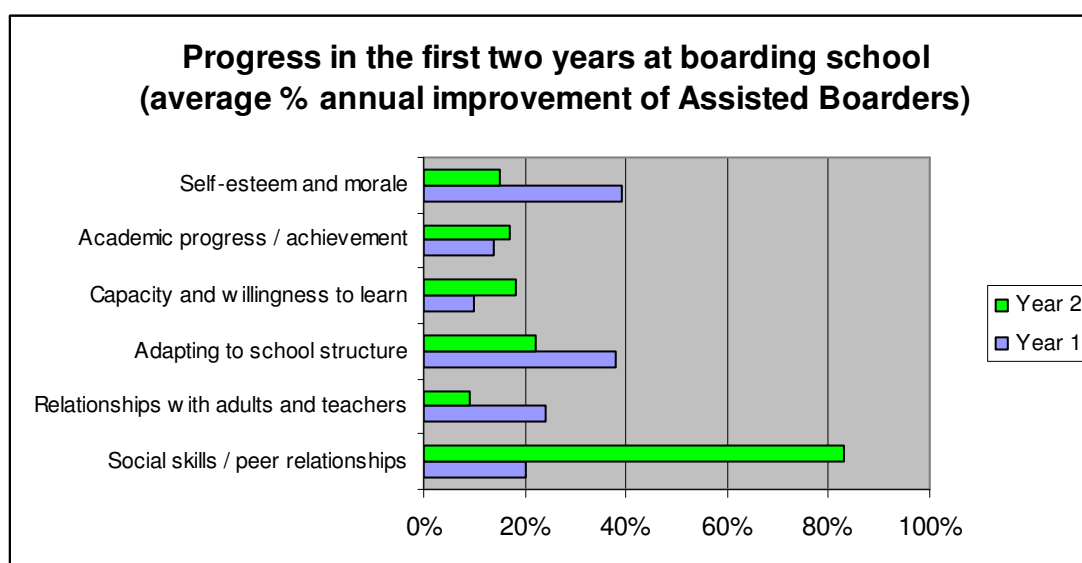
accounted for 71 children – 100% of whom had been rated ‘high risk’ by Royal Wanstead in the Child Risk Assessment (before boarding school placement).

It is important to note that the highest risk category (61%) in the (pre-boarding school) Child Risk Assessment would include some children whose apparent exposure to abnormal behaviour, or abuse or violence in their home environment **may not** have directly affected them – hence their ‘progress’ from the ‘high risk’ to more ‘normal’ ratings on admission to boarding school.

That being so, the relatively small reduction between the two can, of course, be explained by the fact that many of the more seriously troubled children do ‘carry’ the emotional scars from difficult home lives. While some children can be seen very quickly to ‘bloom’ in their new environment of boarding school (perhaps because they are latently “good”, say, at sport, making friends, academically, or just at settling in), most take longer to shed the emotional burden of a troubled home and family life.

The fact is, though, that most (ie 76%) of the most challenged children in their home situation were also rated as facing serious problems on admission to boarding school. While this might be unsurprising, it helps validate the research.

The key, then, has been to measure the progress these children made in each subsequent year at boarding school across the range of social, emotional and learning categories.



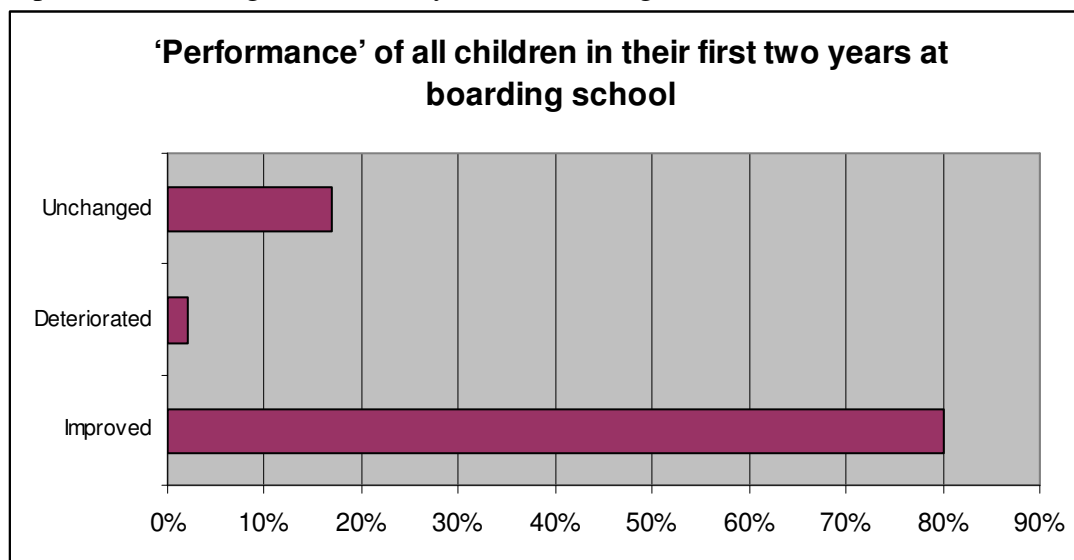
Average % annual improvement of Assisted Boarders	Year 1	Year 2	% improvement Years 0-2*
1. Social skills/ peer relationships	20%	83%	64%
2. Relationships with adults and teachers	24%	9%	30%
3. Adapting to school structure	38%	22%	49%
4. Capacity and willingness to learn	10%	18%	26%
5. Academic progress/ achievement	14%	17%	28%
6. Self-esteem and morale	39%	15%	50%

* Year 0 is at admission to boarding school

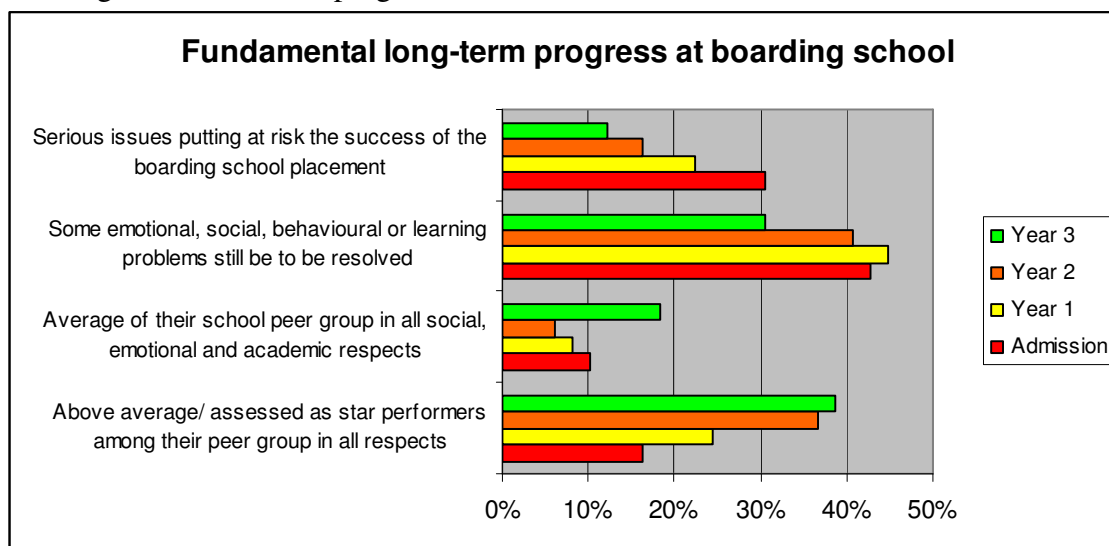
This shows substantial progress in each of the first two years. Average ‘improvements’ across the two years for each category range from 26% for ‘capacity and willingness to

learn' , and 28% for 'academic progress to 50% for self-esteem and 64% for social skills and peer relationships. Although the overall progress overall is very positive, it is encouraging to note, given the backgrounds of these children, that the largest gains are for the social, emotional and behavioural categories.

These quite dramatic improvements in average performance by the children at boarding school are underlined by the actual number whose overall assessments show improvement during the first two years in boarding school, as follows:



A total of 49 of the children in the survey had completed three or more years at boarding school and their progress was assessed as follows:



Case study

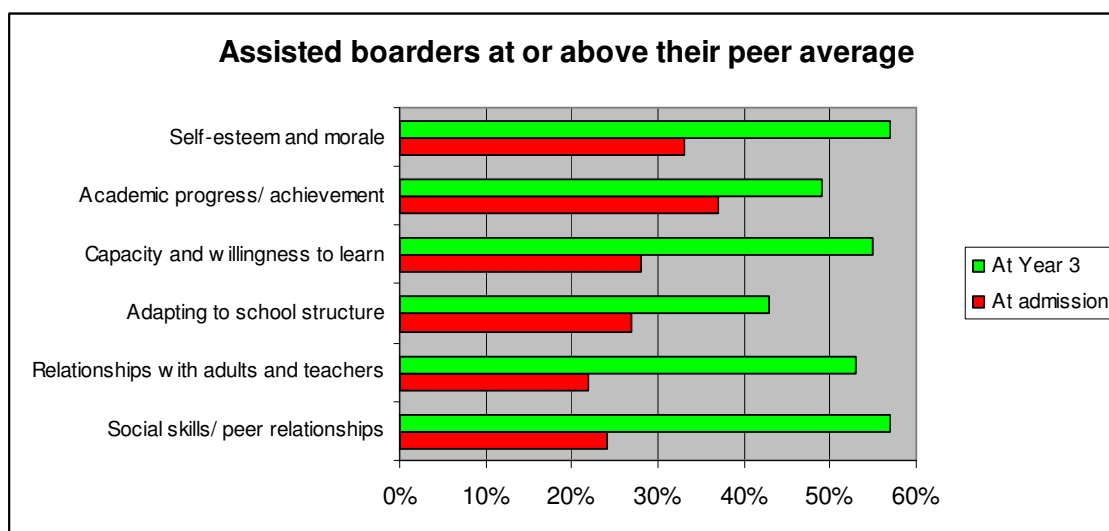
F's mother suffered from chronic depression. Her elderly grandparents supported her severely disabled brother in their home, and she constantly worried about them. Home was about to vanish - the flat belonged to mother's abusive partner, in a relationship that had broken down. Her head teacher at boarding school comments: "F has overcome some challenging circumstances to become a confident, sensible and committed member of our community whose integrity is respected. She is conscientious, determined and is seen as calm, sensible and unassumingly committed. She has served as a House Mediator – a pastoral role assisting other pupils."

	Admission	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Above average/ assessed as star performers among their peer group in all respects	8	12	18	19
Average of their school peer group in all social, emotional and academic respects	5	4	3	9
Sub-total: Average/ above average children	13	16	21	28
Some emotional, social, behavioural or learning problems still be to be resolved	21	22	20	15
Serious issues putting at risk the success of the boarding school placement	15	11	8	6
Sub-total: Children with serious problems	36	33	28	21
Children who had completed at least three years in boarding school	49	49	49	49

Of the 19 (39% of those who have been boarders for three years or more) ‘star performers’ at the completion of Year 3, 11 (22%) had been considered unlikely to be at or above their peer average performers on admission. Of that 11 (22%), a total of 8 (16%) had been assessed as having social, emotional or behavioural problems on admission to boarding school.

Of the 6 (12%) who remained at ‘serious risk’ of failing at boarding school, three had shown marked improvement in the three years with one becoming an ‘academic’ star pupil but still having emotional/ relationship problems, one becoming an ‘average’ pupil in all non-academic respects and one a ‘below average performer’ in all respects. Of those 6 ‘serious risk’ pupils, 5 did score highly at Year 3 on ‘self-esteem and morale’ having scored very low on admission.

The following table shows how 49 Assisted Boarders who completed at least three years at boarding school substantially improved their ‘performance’ in all areas during this time:



The 'Breakthrough' column (below) records the number of pupils 3+Assisted Boarders who achieve or exceed their peer group average having been assessed (on admission to boarding school) as below average.

- 57% of 3+ boarders are at or above their peer group average within three years, compared with 24% on admission to boarding school
- The biggest 'gains' ('Breakthrough') in that three years are achieved in Social Skills, Relationships with Adults, Capacity/ Willingness to Learn, and Self-Esteem/Morale.

Assisted boarders (3 years+) at or above their peer average	At admission	At Year 3	
	Total	Total	Breakthrough
1. Social skills, peer relationships	12 (24%)	28 (57%)	16 ((32%)
2. Relationships with adults and teachers	11 (22%)	26 (53%)	15 (31%)
3. Adapting to school structure	13 (27%)	21 (43%)	8 (16%)
4. Capacity, willingness to learn	14 (28%)	27 (55%)	13 (26%)
5. Academic progress, achievement	18 (37%)	24 49%)	6 (12%)
6. Self-esteem and morale	16 (33%)	28 (57%)	12 (24%)
Children at or above peer group average after three years	12 (24%)	28 (57%)	16 (32%)

Key points

Boarders who have completed 3 years (49 children)

- Of the children who completed at least three years of Assisted Boarding, a full (19) 39% became 'star' performers – 11 of whom were assessed below that on admission. A total of 28 (57%) became average or above average in all respects – more than twice the number who were assessed on admission as being likely to achieve that.
- Of the 36 (73%) who were assessed on admission as having problems, 15 (30%) became average or above average during their first three years. Of the 15 (30%) who, on admission, were considered to be at 'serious risk' of failing to settle, succeed or even survive in boarding school, just 6 of them (12%) were still considered a 'serious risk' three years later.

Assisted Boarders in total (97 children) in the first two years

- In spite of the fact that 95% of these children were assessed as seriously challenged at home , 27% of all the children – on admission to boarding school - are rated at or above the child's peer group 'average' on the social, emotional and academic criteria.
- The greatest improvements are seen in the area of 'social skills and peer relationships' and 'self-esteem' which , together with 'adapting to school structure' may be seen as crucial to settling down satisfactorily in boarding school
- While the two academic/learning categories are those which show the least rapid improvement, this might be expected from children many of whom have had their studies disrupted by a troubled home and day school life – or might even be

- operating to their academic potential with their social/emotional skills most affected by their pre-boarding experiences. Even so, those academic “improvement” scores of 26% and 28% still show considerable progress in the first two years.
- 28 (40%) of all the most challenged children (pre-boarding) achieved the average (or above) of their peers within two years of admission to boarding school.
- **A total of 85% of all the vulnerable children in this study achieved or exceeded the average of their peer group on all social, emotional and learning criteria within three years of admission to boarding school.**

Note: Royal Wanstead Children’s Foundation estimates that some 4-6 of its Assisted Boarders leave boarding school prematurely each year at the request of the child or their parent/ guardian. During the period 2004-7, a total of 16 Royal Wanstead-funded children left their boarding school through being unhappy or unable to settle. This equates to about 1-2% of all our boarding placements.

Case Study

“I grew up with my parents and sister who is three years younger than me. I only really remember my father with a bottle of cider and a packet of ‘rolly’ cigarettes (as he called them) by his side. Consequently, his extensive drinking, smoking and, I suppose one could say, stubbornness caused his health to plummet. He suffered from many life-threatening illnesses, which I never really appreciated, including cancer of the throat; cirrhosis of the liver; hepatitis; a ruptured stomach ulcer; peritonitis and, the illness that killed him at the age of fifty-one: pneumonia. I remember, I was near to my eleventh birthday, and I had, just days before, been with my mother and sister to visit him in hospital. In the early hours, I was woken by my tearful mother and little sister who uttered the words “Daddy’s died,”; words I would never have imagined I’d hear from a seven year old. At the age of eleven,, still numb from my situation, two days before the start of term, I was offered the chance to go to boarding school .

“My sister and I had always grown up knowing our mother was different; however, after our father’s death she was never quite the same again. She had always been spontaneous and diverse, but became much less the ‘mummy’ we’d idolised in the days, weeks and months before. At the age of twelve, when the notion of a job was a ‘novelty’ to me, I began filing for my grandmother occasionally in return for a nice five-pound-note, and one particular day, I remember coming upon a letter, a job application, written by my aunt, who lived nearby, on behalf of my mother. Unknowingly, I began to skim my eyes across the page and came to one particular phrase that stuck in my mind: “I have been diagnosed with drug-induced-schizophrenia”. I interrogated my grandmother for details, and she, rather half-heartedly, explained.

“As time went by, our mother went from bad to worse; extreme irrational outbursts; suicide attempts and general overreaction to everything made my little sister understandably worried (as she managed to worry for the both of us, and I did the exact opposite). It was becoming routine for me to have to call our unbelievably selfless aunt, at all hours to ask for help. Our ‘overnight stays’ became increasingly frequent, and after some time, it was decided that she would apply for guardianship to keep us out of harm’s way – from our own Mother.

“Although my life has so far only been 15 years long, within that, it has been transformed a thousand times over. Living with our aunt, for one thing, has been an incredible act of generosity, but as she is a full-time businesswoman, it would be impossible for her to be at home seven days a week, which is why my boarding school, and, of course, The Royal Wanstead Children’s Foundation have enabled me to go to a place to learn, achieve and make friends for life within a safe and friendly atmosphere. My academic performance improvement cannot go unnoticed either, nor my sporting involvement, but the fact that I am offered opportunity after opportunity and have learnt to take each one, has made me a different person. I noticed the slogan for ‘The Royal Wanstead’ says: ‘transforming young lives’ – I can stand for that as living, breathing evidence and am eternally grateful for that. Thank you, Royal Wanstead. “

Conclusions

Most of these vulnerable children assimilate quickly

1. Boarding school is proved to be a highly significant contributor to the 'recovery' of the vulnerable children in this study. It helps many of these children quickly achieve or exceed the social skills, morale, and coping ability of their peer group average.

Many of them become school 'stars'

2. The selection of the 'right child at the right school at the right time' creates the opportunity for relatively quick assimilation. This study shows that many of the most vulnerable children in Assisted Boarding make quite dramatic early progress. A full 40% of these children achieved or exceeded their peer group 'average' (on social, emotional and academic criteria) within two years, and 85% did so within 3 years. A full 39% of those who had been boarders for at least three years became above average ('star') pupils during that time.

Boarding may prevent some children needing to be taken into care

3. Assisted Boarding can clearly make a greater contribution to: the 'recovery' of vulnerable children; to the 'mending' of 'fractured' families; and, perhaps also, to preventing the future need for some of these children to be taken into local authority care.
4. The pastoral care and structure of boarding schools clearly has a significant role to play in child welfare

Boarding schools 'save' young lives

5. These conclusions should point the way towards social-oriented policies that would seek to maintain an 'adequate' level of boarding school capacity. These schools are seen to be so much more than a 'home from home' for some of the young victims of fractured families in 21st century Britain.

Boarding helps to break the cycle

Boarding school will never be appropriate for *all* children, whether vulnerable or not. But the Breaking Through research proves that, for *the right children, at the right schools, at the right time*, Assisted Boarding can and does transform hundreds of vulnerable young lives.

In a 21st century Britain marked by perhaps hundreds of thousands of vulnerable young people, Assisted Boarding can help thousands more of them break the cycle of 'family disadvantage'.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the country which gave the world a boarding school tradition must now maximise its potential – and those of its vulnerable young people – in an era of fractured, deprived families and erratic parenting.

Time for action

The Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation Annual Report 2007 calls for the Government and Opposition parties to agree on policies to encourage the expansion of boarding schools after years of decline. We advocate a policy along the following lines:

- A long-term plan to make State boarding a **significant** part of State education provision (rather than just the c4500 places it currently represents)
- Financial incentives for independent schools to expand boarding capacity, and subsidies for schools which provide the remedial/mentoring/pastoral support necessary for vulnerable children.
- An Assisted Boarding Places Scheme to provide means-tested grants for lone-parent children who *need* to attend boarding school

The above list underlines, of course, the steepness of the task in seeking to persuade politicians that the country which gave the world a boarding school tradition does desperately *need* to revive it in a 21st century of fractured families and disaffected children and young adults.

This is a wider cause than simply Assisted Boarding, but Royal Wanstead's work depends on being able to place children in boarding schools which have boarders from a spectrum of backgrounds and experience. Whether an individual school sees Assisted Boarding as a possible 5% or even 10% of its total boarding capacity, a healthier sector with more boarding places will give the opportunity to help accommodate vulnerable children.

It is a powerful social and educational cause for 21st century Britain and one that is vitally important to the Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation, to the hundreds of children who depend on our support, and the thousands of others whose lives could be yet transformed by boarding school.

For many more vulnerable children and young people, Assisted Boarding represents a proven way of helping them "break through".

“Assisted Boarding close to my heart”

**The text of a speech by Lord Adonis, Parliamentary Under Secretary
of State for Schools , at the Royal Wanstead 2006 conference**

It is a great pleasure to join The Princess Royal and so many distinguished guests in paying tribute to the outstanding work of the Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation. Royal Wanstead has every reason to be proud as it celebrates this latest chapter in its history: 35 years of funding disadvantaged children with boarding need to attend boarding schools.

Your cause is close to my heart. I myself was funded by Camden social services to attend Kingham Hill School, a boarding school in Oxfordshire with a foundation dedicated to the welfare of disadvantaged boys – and more recently girls. I owe more than I can possibly say, or ever repay, to Kingham Hill and to those who supported me while I was there. It transformed my life, and I recognise from personal experience the eloquent testimonials we heard earlier from foundationers, as they described the difference that Royal Wanstead has made to their lives.

The academic achievements of those children are for the most part outstanding. But just as impressive are the social skills they have developed, and – in due course – the contribution they stand to make to society in their turn.

I was particularly moved by one testimonial in Royal Wanstead's latest Annual Report, from a mother whose daughter is now at university, training to be a doctor: “I shall never be sure if Royal Wanstead is of this world, or a piece of heaven manifest upon earth.”

Let me add a further testimonial from a senior official in my own Department for Education and Skills. A foundationer himself, he sent me an unprompted message after hearing that I was to be here today, and has given me permission to quote from it:

“The Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation funded me to go to Lord Wandsworth College in Hampshire. When I arrived, aged 10, from a Hammersmith council estate, the college was simply awesome. I'd scarcely seen countryside before and now there were 1,200 acres. The teachers were always around; the boarding school provided a family environment with proper pastoral care. There was no visible difference between those on the foundation scheme and those who weren't. Every afternoon there was sport or music and I quickly started learning the piano and clarinet. Without Royal Wanstead, I doubt I'd have had the opportunities and security as a teenager which enabled me to get on in life.”

“Opportunities to get on”

Britain has changed in many ways since Royal Wanstead's founder, Andrew Reed, established the Infant Orphan Asylum in 1827. But though much changes, much abides. The social dislocation is still there, and so too the children with unstable or non-existent families, whose lives are as fragile as they ought to be valuable to our society at large. We all have duties in this matter, and Royal Wanstead is one outstanding example of social responsibility extending across successive generations. Your work today is every bit as valuable, and as relevant, in 2006 as it was in 1827; and I don't doubt that the same will be true in another hundred years' time.

Government, of course, has duties too, as the representative of society at large, and I would like to take this opportunity to dwell on the value of boarding schools within our education system, and the Government's policy for their expansion within the state-funded system.

For some parents, particularly those on large incomes, choosing a boarding school for their children is essentially a matter of lifestyle and educational preference. Whether or not the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, no one doubts the historic role of the ancient public schools, including the continuing prevalence of boarding at the more expensive end of private education.

However, it is a common misconception that successful boarding schools are all exclusive public schools, and that they only serve the needs of the rich. For many children – as I hardly need say here – boarding education is not so much an individual preference as an individual imperative to provide a secure environment in place of an unstable or non-existent family home.

As for the boarding school sector, in addition to the public schools there is a thriving State boarding sector, and there are also many successful private boarding schools with essentially charitable missions. Both of these groups – the State boarding schools and what I term the “foundation boarding schools” – work in partnership with Royal Wanstead to support disadvantaged children with boarding need, and we are keen to explore whether their role can be extended further in partnership with Government and local authorities.

Let me say more, then, about the state boarding sector and the extension of boarding opportunities for vulnerable children.

There are 34 state boarding schools in England, educating nearly 5,000 boarders.

If you'll forgive me for inflicting just one piece of educational jargon on you this morning, the aim of our national education policy is to achieve “personalised learning” for all. All children should be able to benefit from an education which develops their individual aptitudes and talents to the full, and achieving this is a social and economic necessity for the next generation.

The number of boarding pupils will always be small. Nonetheless, State boarding schools will, I believe, have a greater part to play over the coming years to make education built around the needs of the individual a reality, and not merely an aspiration. I say this, because boarding schools are at the forefront of personalising teaching and learning, not least because their pastoral systems are, of necessity, more central to their work as schools – and because they are 16-hour-a-day institutions operating for at least six days a week, if not seven for many pupils.

We ought therefore to be looking to a progressive expansion of boarding places within the state sector, and to be learning the lessons from boarding schools more widely in state day schools, as we seek to extend the school day and pioneer a more personalised education for all children. We need also to consider ways to extend boarding opportunities for vulnerable children, where it can provide them with the combination of educational, residential and pastoral support lacking in existing family or care settings.

Expansion of State boarding

I know that the State boarding sector has the will and expertise for these tasks. School after school comes to mind from my own experience alone. Last year, I opened a refurbished junior boarding house at Royal Alexandra and Albert School in Reigate. With almost 400 boarders aged seven to 18, the Royal Alexandra is one of the larger schools in the State boarding sector. Thanks in large part to its own charitable foundation, it provides places for many vulnerable children. I recently read of a girl who entered the care system aged nine, when her single mother was hospitalised. This was a child who had her first ever birthday party aged 16 when the Royal Alexandra and social services arranged a celebration for her among her school friends. This same girl became a prefect and an outstanding role model to her peers. She is now in the third year of a law degree. What an inspiration. Other State boarding schools are pioneering innovative educational approaches, enhanced or made possible by boarding. I recently visited Hockerill Anglo-European College in Bishop's Stortford, which offers the International Baccalaureate Diploma in the 6th form. Its bilingual teachers and boarders from across Europe enable all its pupils to receive exceptional language tuition through complete immersion.

For the first time, the Government is releasing specific funding for State boarding schools like Hockerill and Royal Alexandra, which are seeking to expand the number of boarders they accommodate or to improve existing facilities. Last year, funds from the initial round supported three schools. Among them were the Lancaster Royal Grammar School, whose new building will increase boarding provision by 25 places, and Brymore School in Somerset, which received £3.4 million to create an extra boarding house and modernize existing facilities. We are keeping the investment needs of boarding schools under review, and expect to announce our capital programmes covering 2008–11 around this time next year.

As State boarding provision expands, I'm also keen to see our new breed of Academies develop boarding within their future plans, where appropriate. Academies are independently managed schools

within the state-funded system – many of them sponsored by foundations akin to those here today – and we intend to see at least 200 established by 2010. The mission of academies is to transform educational standards and opportunities in areas where the status quo in secondary education isn't good enough.

Turning more specifically to vulnerable children and boarding, the Government launched a national Pathfinder scheme earlier this month.

The Pathfinder scheme brings together the Government, a group of local authorities, and schools, to pilot greater use of boarding for vulnerable children, with the local authorities concerned ready to make appropriate placements in conjunction with the schools themselves. I am grateful to Royal Wanstead, and to the JET and Buttle Trusts, for their highly constructive contribution to the work of the Pathfinder steering group; indeed, it is your success with boarding provision for disadvantaged young people over the decades which was the inspiration for the scheme in the first place.

Through the Pathfinder, the social services teams of the local authorities concerned have agreed to consider boarding school placements among the range of possibilities when assessing the needs of families and children whom they serve. Poor health, marital break-ups, a child requiring full-time care – there are a whole range of circumstances where boarding may represent a significant improvement on the status quo for the child and family concerned. Consideration will be given on a case-by-case basis, in conjunction with schools.

Ten local authorities are participating in the pathfinders, together with 53 boarding schools, including nine state boarding schools. The Government is closely engaged in monitoring the pathfinder programme, and I would like to take this opportunity to commend and thank all of the local authorities, schools and trusts concerned. I should add that this is one radical way in which local authorities can integrate their educational and social care functions more effectively than in the past, which was the central purpose behind the recent reform of local authority structures: to create integrated children's services departments uniting what were formerly separate local education and children's services administrations.

Local authorities are 'positive'

Let me be absolutely clear that we expect boarding only to be feasible and appropriate for a small minority of looked-after children. Boarding is not remotely a cure-all. Nor are we expecting local authorities to make any decisions which do not have the full approval of all parties involved – and that includes the child. But the fact that local authorities in the pathfinders are willing to entertain the idea of boarding school placements is a positive development. I have every confidence that boarding schools will demonstrate their ability to provide the highest quality of care for vulnerable children, and that many parents and carers will welcome this. I know that Royal Wanstead and other trusts will bring their expertise to bear in advising schools and local authorities on these issues.

Furthermore, as local authorities come to recognise the value of boarding schools – not least their cost-effectiveness compared to much other provision within the care system – they could become significant financial allies to the trusts, and thereby ease the pressure on your finite resources.

In conclusion, let me say this. The education and care provided by the boarding sector as a whole is better than ever. I believe it has significant further potential to help children in need – and not just the growing numbers of fee-paying students from home and abroad who appreciate its quality.

Our mission, together, is to enhance the role that boarding can play to create an opportunity society – for the disadvantaged as much as the advantaged. And there is no more propitious time to be doing so. The coming together of the various partners I have described – trusts and foundations, central and local government, state and private boarding schools, parents, carers and children – can achieve a fundamental transformation of policy in this area.

All this lies in the realm of fact. Move to fiction, and a certain Hogwarts school has convinced a whole generation of children that boarding offers a magical experience. For Harry Potter, Ron and Hermione, read the thousands of children you support – for whom the magic does not stop at King's Cross, platform 9³/₄, but continues into jobs, higher education, families and society beyond.

Acknowledgements

The Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation wishes to thank the following head teachers who have devoted a substantial amount of time, energy and inspiration to the Breaking Through research project:

- **Kerr Fulton-Peebles**, Headmaster, King Edward's Witley
- **Martin Morris**, Headmaster, Kingham, Hill School
- **Ian Power**, Headmaster, Lord Wandsworth College
- **David Jarratt**, Headmaster, Reed's School
- **Paul Spencer-Ellis**, Headmaster, Royal; Alexandra & Albert School
- **Tim Waters**, Headmaster, Royal Wolverhampton School

Assisted Boarding contacts

	<u>Location</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Web site</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Boarding schools				
King Edward's	Witley, Surrey	Mr Kerr Fulton-Peebles	www.kesw.surrey.sch.uk	01428 686735
Kingham Hill	Oxfordshire	Martin Morris	www.kinghamhill.org.uk	01608 658658
Lord Wandsworth	Hants	Ian Power	www.lordwandsworth.org	01256 862201
Reed's	Surrey	David Jarrett	www.reeds.surrey.sch.uk	01932 869044
Royal Alexandra & Albert	Surrey	Paul SpencerEllis	www.raa-school.co.uk	01737 649001
Royal Wolverhampton	West Midlands	Tim Waters	www.theroyalschool.co.uk	01902 341230
Charities				
Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation	Surrey	Sue Rigby	www.royalwanstead.org.uk	01932-868622
Frank Buttle Trust	London	Gerri Macandrew	www.buttletrust.org	020 7828 7311
Reedham Trust	Croydon	Jean Watkins	ww.reedham-trust.org.uk	020 8660 1461
JET	London	Julie Burns	www.jetcharity.org	020 3217 1100
Mercers Company	London	Joanne Grimshaw	www.mercers.co.uk	020 7776 7247
Sofronie Foundation	c/o Sue Rigby @ Royal Wanstead 01932-868622 (as above)			



Leveraging financial support to transform young lives

The Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation is a registered charity which helps support school-age children (with one or no parents) whose normal development is threatened by seriously adverse home or family circumstances. These are young people at risk, and frequently living in poverty and in threatening and abusive circumstances.

During the 36 years since the closure of our own schools, we have helped support more than 1,700 children at over 150 boarding schools throughout the UK.

Royal Wanstead works with partner charities and the boarding schools themselves (the principal six of which have collaborated on Breaking Through) to provide funding for these children, usually for the duration of their schooling. The "Breaking Through" research shows this is charitable work that really has an impact, helping to transform the lives of hundreds of vulnerable children. But there are thousands more who need our help and who want that same opportunity to break out of the cycle of 'family disadvantage', caused by marital breakdown, illness, or poverty.

Royal Wanstead supports children at existing boarding schools where these vulnerable children are able to assimilate into a 'normal' environment and, as Breaking Through proves, often become their schools' most successful pupils. This is practical, proven and highly effective work which we must expand. Royal Wanstead believes that an **additional 2,000 vulnerable children could be accommodated within existing facilities at existing schools** – eight times the number of children we currently support and still only a fraction of the number of needy children who would want the opportunity of Assisted Boarding. That is why we are fighting to increase the funds available for this work.

Our 'syndicated' funding is a very efficient way of funding boarding school care for these children. It means that, for every £100 donated to Royal Wanstead, the Foundation 'leverages' it to raise an additional £500. Here are some examples of what your gift could help us to achieve for a vulnerable child:

£1,000 could help us to pay for boarding school for a vulnerable child for a whole term

£3,000 could help us to pay for boarding school for a vulnerable child for a whole year

To make a donation or discuss tax-effective ways in which you could help us support these needy children, please contact: Sue Rigby, Director, Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation, Sandy Lane, Cobham, Surrey KT1 2ES. Tel:01932-868622. Email: director@royalwanstead.org.uk

Current beneficiaries of Assisted Boarding grants

As at 31 July	2006/07	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04
No of beneficiaries	240	221	228	251
Total grants	545,880	£468,200	£424,463	£453,951
Average grant per year	£2,368	£2,085	£1,770	£1,663

Profile of Royal Wanstead beneficiaries (as at 31 July 2007)

No of pupils 11 and under 22 (18 in 2006)	Pupils 12-14 years 98 (81 in 2006)	Pupils over 14 120 (122 in 2006)
	Boys 140 (142)	Girls 100 (79)

Principal partner schools

The following schools account for almost 50% of all Royal Wanstead beneficiaries. Six (*) of these are schools with charitable foundations which help fund these children – and which collaborated in the **Breaking Through** research.

	No. of RWCF-funded children at these schools	
	2006/07	2005/06
King Edward's School, Witley*	34	30
Royal Alexandra & Albert School*	25	23
Kingham Hill School*	13	12
Reed's School*	12	11
Lord Wandsworth College*	12	10
Royal Wolverhampton School*	4	7
Framlingham College	5	3
Old Swinford Hospital	4	3
De Aston School	4	3
Cranbrook School	4	2
Total RWCF beneficiaries at these schools (% of all beneficiaries at year-end)	117 (49%)	104 (44%)

What they say about Royal Wanstead

HRH The Princess Royal

Patron

"Royal Wanstead's case studies show just how valuable are boarding schools as a welfare resource for many more vulnerable children than the Foundation can yet support. We see time and again just how the right choice of boarding school for the right child at the right time can truly help transform a young life. I commend the Foundation to all those who want to support vulnerable children and help to give them a much better life after a troubled start."

Lord Adonis

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

"Your cause is close to my heart. I myself was funded to attend boarding school. I owe more than I can possibly say, or ever repay, to that school and to those who supported me while I was there. It transformed my life and I recognise from personal experience the eloquent testimonials I have heard as former pupils described the difference that Royal Wanstead has made to their lives. The education and care provided by the boarding sector is better than ever and I believe it has significant further potential to help children in need. Congratulations to Royal Wanstead for all it has done for these vulnerable children and this great cause."

Senior civil servant

Department for Children, Schools & Families

"Royal Wanstead funded me to go to boarding school. When I arrived, aged 10, from a Hammersmith council estate, the college was awesome. I'd scarcely seen countryside before and now there were 1,200 acres. The teachers were always around; the boarding school provided a family environment with very good pastoral care. There was no visible difference between those supported by the Foundation and those who weren't. Without Royal Wanstead, I doubt I'd have had the opportunities and security as a teenager which enabled me to get on in life."

Sir Cyril Taylor

Chairman, Specialist Schools & Academies Trust

"I applaud the Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation for its work on behalf of some of the most vulnerable children in our society at a time when so many children from broken homes and families need so much help. Your work ensures that boarding school can provide a secure, stable environment in place of an unstable or non-existent family home. Royal Wanstead is an excellent charity."

Dr Rowan Williams

The Archbishop of Canterbury

"I applaud the Royal Wanstead Children's Foundation for the very distinctive contribution it makes in using residential education to provide the emotional and economic stability that is needed to help children grow up normally in a world of soaring rates of divorce, rapidly changing domestic circumstances, and the pressure of poverty and debt."



**Charity no. 310916
Established 1827**

**Sandy Lane, Cobham, Surrey KT11 2ES
Phone: 01932 868 622. Fax: 01932 866 420
Email: director@royalwanstead.org.uk
Web site: www.royalwanstead.org.uk**