

King's School Junior, Canterbury

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Michael Williams
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	21 February 2005

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About this inspection

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

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

The inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's service is an independent boarding and day school for three to 13 year old boys and girls. It was founded in 1879 as the junior school for its senior school, which is situated in a nearby cathedral city and can trace its roots back to the sixth century. The school moved to its present site, spacious grounds in a village outside this city, in 1929. The school emphasises the value of its Christian foundation, but accepts pupils from all faiths, its boarding community, the quality of its facilities and the opportunities for all pupils to take part in a wide variety of activities. At the time of this inspection, 380 pupils were on the roll. Of these, 63 were full boarders and 14 were weekly or flexi boarders.

Summary

This was an announced, full inspection of all the key national minimum standards (NMS) for boarding schools, conducted by a social care and boarding school inspector. The key findings from this inspection are that in relation to the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children, four are outstanding and one is good. In addition, the organisation outcome is outstanding and within it the promotion of equality and diversity is also outstanding. Outstanding aspects included: the quality of the catering provision; the work of the pastoral committee; the extent of the leisure activities; the numerous ways that boarders' views are secured; the collective calibre of the boarding staff team; and the care of boarders with different needs. These findings were generally supported by comments received from boarders and their parents. Around 60 per cent of boarders surveyed said they 'Always' felt 'well cared for' and 30 percent said they 'Usually' felt like this. The 15 parents' comments received included: 'boarding care is excellent as they are able to provide a friendly, family atmosphere'; 'the pastoral care is exceptional'; and 'our children consider [the school] as a second home'. Parents identified activities, food and care for boarders feeling homesick as particular positives. However, they also identified some specific improvements that the lead inspector anonymously fed-back to the school.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last full inspection of boarding at the school was carried out by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in February 2005. It reported on all 52 NMS for boarding schools and judged that 26 of them were met and that the remaining 22 applicable were exceeded. There were no recommendations raised at this inspection. In February 2007, the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) reported that 'The quality of boarding education in the school has improved significantly since the last inspection [by CSCI] and it is now outstanding.'

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' health is promoted through the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE). In 2007 the ISI reported that the school's effective implementation of a PSHCE programme made 'an outstanding contribution to the personal development of all pupils.' The inspectors were given an overview of the impressive range of PSHCE topics currently taught to the different year groups, both in class and by outside speakers.

Boarders receive excellent health care and first aid when needed. In response to their survey question 'Does anyone help you if you're unwell?' around 70 percent of the boys and girls said, 'always'. The school has a medical centre on one of the boarding floors. It is currently staffed by three registered nurses working shifts to provide a comprehensive service. The resident house assistant has completed full first aid training, and her accommodation now adjoins the medical centre so that she is available in person to boarders when the nurses are not. Boarders are registered with a local general practice and can have an appointment with one of their doctors. Prescribed and non-prescribed medication for boarders is securely stored, regularly audited and administered in line with a comprehensive policy and procedures.

Boarders receive outstanding quality catering provision. In response to their survey question 'Do you think the meals at the school provide you with a balanced diet?', nearly 80 percent of the girls and 60 percent of the boys said, 'always'. Comments from boarders' parents highlighted the excellent quality of the food. There are no outstanding recommendations from the school's last Environmental Health Service inspection in 2007 and all catering staff have up to date training in food handling and hygiene.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are very well protected from bullying. In their surveys, around 70 percent of the boys and girls said 'no' to the question 'Are you being bullied?' Out of those who answered 'yes' to this question, and who the inspectors could identify to follow this up with, only one wanted the issue to be brought to the school's attention, and they were already the subject of an individual welfare plan at the school.

Boarders are very well protected from abuse. The head of the middle school is the designated senior person responsible for child protection. He has received safeguarding training, holds a copy of central and local requirements and procedures on safeguarding, and liaises well with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. He runs child protection training for new staff during their induction and for all staff every two years.

Use of discipline with boarders is exceptionally fair and appropriate. The school operates a system of stars and minuses or stripes for behaviour management, with the accent firmly on rewarding positive behaviour, or 'reaching for the stars' according to a school slogan. The head of pastoral care chairs a pastoral committee that operates a traffic light system for pupils, and especially boarders, causing concern: pupils identified as 'red' have an individual welfare plan that is reviewed weekly. This committee deals exceptionally well with a variety of significant welfare concerns, such as child protection, bullying, medical and behavioural concerns, to make sure that boarders stay safe.

Boarders are very well protected from the risk of fire. The school has a fire officer and an estates bursar who oversees fire safety and health and safety at both the junior and senior schools. The former maintains the school's up to date fire log, including boarding fire drills. The latter carried out the latest fire risk assessment of the school in August 2009 and provided fire safety awareness training to new staff in September 2009. His fire risk assessment was carried out after an updated fire alarm system was handed over to the school by their new external fire equipment contractor. The school has ordered automatic fire release closures for dormitory doors, to be able to more effectively manage both fire prevention and supervision of boarders before and after school.

Boarders' personal privacy is very well respected. The school's boarding handbook includes a privacy policy that is followed in practice. The above improvement to dormitory doors will allow them to be partly open, to facilitate staff supervision of boarders, but also partly closed, to respect boarders' privacy.

There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff working with boarders. Inspection of the recruitment records of a number of different staff recently recruited to work with boarders, showed that they included all the checks required, by both the relevant NMS and Safer Recruitment in Education that came into force in 2007. The personnel officer based at the senior school maintains the central recruitment record for both schools that the latter guidance requires. The school is very well placed to meet the additional requirements that will imminently apply to the recruitment of staff in boarding schools.

Boarders have their own accommodation that is secure from public intrusion, and they are protected from unsupervised contact with adults who have not been subject to the school's recruitment checks. The school recently employed a new security manager who is currently auditing their range of security measures. The boarding privacy policy states that, 'no unauthorised adults can enter the boarding house without signing the visitors book and being accompanied by an adult member of staff'.

Boarders are very well protected from safety hazards. A junior school health and safety committee meets regularly, and feeds into the overall health and safety committee for the junior and senior schools. At their meeting in June 2009, they received feedback following a visit by the external safety and risk management consultant they employ. The school has an effective system of risk assessment, with written records.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have access to an extensive range and choice of activities. Boarders' weekday early evening activities make good use of the 85 acres of countryside the school is situated in and the school's facilities. Activities include an 'open house' in the residence of the head of boarding and his family, for boys and girls wanting some family time, and 'free time' for boarders not wishing to do anything in particular. On the weekends, numerous trips are organised for boarders. Activities were identified by boarders and their parents as one of the highlights of boarding.

Boarders receive excellent personal support from staff. Each boarder has a number of different staff they can turn to for personal guidance, ranging from: resident boarding staff; teachers doing regular boarding duties; 'gap' assistants; their personal tutor; and the school's independent listener, chaplain, and counsellor.

Boarders do not experience discrimination. The care of boarders is very sensitive to different needs, arising, for example, from linguistic background, academic ability and disability. The school has 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL) and 'Additional Educational Needs' policies that are very effective in practice. Recently, a special EAL assembly had been presented to the whole school, and an individual welfare plan had been written by a school nurse for a boarder with a disability. The latter's parent wrote to the head teacher about 'the transformation' this was having.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school. Boarders commented that they feel listened to and that what they say is acted upon if possible. Boarders have a number of different ways of regularly making their views on boarding known, either in person, through representatives on different councils or at different meetings, or anonymously through their suggestion box.

Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families. They can do this through telephone and email at permitted times, through the school's tradition of writing a letter home on a Sunday, and through parental visits. Staff contact parents when necessary, for example, if their child is ill or having a detention.

New boarders are enabled to settle in. Prior to their arrival, new boarders are given a handbook welcoming them to boarding at the school. On their arrival, they are allocated a dormitory with other new boarders and appropriate 'buddies' for as long as they need. Boarding staff are very aware of homesickness, particularly among the youngest boarders and boarders from abroad, which they effectively address both individually and through group activities.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders' possessions and money are protected. This is achieved through a combination of boarding practice in this area, the lockable storage space available to boarders, and the mutual respect and trust prevalent between the boarders.

Boarders are provided with good boarding and sleeping accommodation and toilet and washing provision, that has been made homely and is well maintained by the school's maintenance team. However, if the school's main building plan is implemented it will increase the amount of boarding accommodation available, that could be used to improve the resident housemistress accommodation, and the dormitory and medical centre space available.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available to parents, boarders and staff in their respective 2009-10 handbooks.

The school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare. Boarding is organised on two separate floors for boys and girls within the main school building, and on each floor different sized dormitories are arranged by age as far as possible. While there are more resident boarding staff on the boys' floor than the girls' floor, the girls' housemistress is now supported by deputy house parents, and boarding operates as one community rather than as separate boarding houses. For example, 'open house' in the residence of the house parents on the boys floor is open to boys and girls.

School record keeping contributes to boarders' welfare. Different senior members of the school's staff regularly monitor the school's records of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents to identify any issues requiring action. In addition, the school maintains a record of

major incidents, including incidents of bullying, of which there have only been nine in the last four years.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. As already reported, boarders do not experience discrimination. Boarding notice boards clearly display the different parts of the world that boarders come from, and following a boarder's suggestion the school now has a celebratory meal each week from one of these countries. The school has composed 'The boarders' anthem', based on words that boarders told them described their experience, and its first line is 'We are one'.

Boarders are excellently supervised by staff. A team of boarding staff together provide an exceptional level of supervision for boarders, in terms of their number and competency. Primarily, this team is made up of the resident boarding staff, teachers doing regular boarding duties and duty 'gaps', who form a duty rota that is made clear to boarders. In addition, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the chaplain and their wives provide additional support with the supervision and welfare of boarders.

Boarders are looked after by staff with specific boarding duties, excellent induction and continued training, who follow clear boarding policies and practice. The school has a current boarding handbook, and separate handbooks for boys' and girls' boarding that include job descriptions for the different boarding staff. Boarding staff receive induction training when newly appointed and thereafter refresher training, including training in child protection, fire safety awareness and emergency aid. Boarding staff receive informal and formal appraisal. For example, the head of boarding, now in his fourth year, and the housemistress, now in her second year, have both recently received formal appraisal.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

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

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

There are no recommendations.