



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

BOARDING SCHOOL

Prior Park College

**Ralph Allen Drive
Bath
Bath & N E Somerset
BA2 5AH**

Lead Inspector
Sam Chisholm

Key Announced Inspection
18th September 2006 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Boarding Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life.

Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of school Prior Park College

Address Ralph Allen Drive
Bath
Bath & N E Somerset
BA2 5AH

Telephone number 01225 837491

Fax number 01225 835753

Email address

Provider Web address

**Name of Governing body,
Person or Authority
responsible for the
school** Prior Park College

Name of Head Dr R.G G. Mercer

Name of Head of Care

**Age range of boarding
pupils**

**Date of last welfare
inspection**

Brief Description of the School:

Prior Park College is an Independent, co-educational Catholic boarding and day school for children aged 13-18 years.

There are three senior boarding houses: Allen and Roche for male boarders and St Mary's for female boarders.

Prior Park College has been a school since 1830 and from 1981 it has been in the care of an independent board of governors.

The school has a strong community ethos which is supported by its adherence to Catholic Christian principles.

The school includes substantial Georgian buildings and is set within its own attractive grounds on a hillside with panoramic views of Bath.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection was carried out by three inspectors and included interviews with staff, discussions with and feedback from boarders, tours of the boarding houses, feedback from parents and scrutiny of records.

What the school does well:

The school provides an excellent level of health care and facilities of a high standard within its medical centre.

The school is commended for its strong community ethos and the excellent systems in place to ensure successful integration of overseas students.

There are excellent systems in place to enable boarders to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school.

Boarders receive an excellent level of personal support from staff.

What has improved since the last inspection?

A short Additional Visit Inspection was made of the school in January 2006 to follow-up progress in relation to recommendations made at the last full inspection. At this time the school was found to have achieved all of the recommendations and was commended for its strong commitment to meeting the National Minimum Standards.

What they could do better:

The school needs to ensure that there are no gaps in weekly fire alarm testing.

Staff vetting procedures could be further improved by verbal verification of references.

An audit of windows needs to be carried out and repairs made and restrictors fitted where necessary.

The school needs to ensure that all bunk and cabin beds are fitted with rails and ladders.

Some areas would benefit from redecoration and/or refurbishment.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders' health is promoted. (NMS 6)
- Safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records. (NMS 7)
- Boarders' receive first aid and health care as necessary.(NMS 15)
- Boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill.(NMS 16)
- Boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal Problems.(NMS 17)
- Boarders receive good quality catering provision (NMS 24)
- Boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals.(NMS 25)
- Boarders are suitably accommodated when ill. (NMS 48)
- Boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered.(NMS 49)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

6 and 15

The quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

Boarders' health is promoted by the school's Personal, Social and Health Education programme and its policies regarding countering risks to health.

Boarders receive an excellent level of health care from the school's medical staff. The medical centre offers a high standard of facilities for the care of sick boarders.

EVIDENCE:

Appropriate policies were seen on countering risks to health, including substance abuse. The school has a Personal, Social and Health Education programme which was seen to cover the elements required in Standard 6.

The school's 3 medical staff are well qualified and experienced and provide 24-hour cover between them with a resident nurse living adjacent to the medical centre.

The medical centre was seen to provide a high standard of facilities for the care of sick boarders, with well equipped rooms for them to sleep in if needed.

Robust procedures were in place for the storage and recording of medication, self-medicating and controlled drugs. Records of accidents, injuries and illness were satisfactory and closely monitored by the nurse and the headmaster.

The nurse has good links with other local health (including mental health) services and has worked with a local pharmacist to ensure that the school has correct and up to date policies and procedures in place.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders are protected from bullying.(NMS 2)
- Boarders are protected from abuse.(NMS 3)
- Use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate.(NMS 4)
- Boarders' complaints are appropriately responded to.(NMS 5)
- The operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare (NMS 13)
- Boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school.(NMS 22)
- Boarders are protected from the risk of fire. (NMS 26)
- The welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school.(NMS 28)
- Boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities.(NMS 29)
- Boarders' personal privacy is respected.(NMS 37)
- There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders.(NMS 38)
- Boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures and there is supervision of all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises.(NMS 39)
- Boarders have their own accommodation, secure from public intrusion. (NMS 41)
- Boarders are protected from safety hazards.(NMS 47)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47

The quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

The school has appropriate systems in place to protect boarders from bullying and abuse.

The school's system of sanctions and rewards is fair and appropriate.

Complaints are appropriately recorded and responded to.

Boarders are generally well protected from the risk of fire, but the school must ensure that there are no gaps in weekly fire alarm testing.

Boarders' personal privacy is appropriately respected by staff.

The school has a good selection and vetting process in place for staff and GAP students. This could be further improved by verbal verification of references.

There are appropriate procedures in place regarding resident adults not employed by the school. Visitors are appropriately supervised.

The boarding accommodation has good security measures in place to protect boarders.

Boarders are generally well protected from safety hazards, but many windows need to be fitted with restrictors and some need to be repaired.

EVIDENCE:

The school's policy on countering bullying was appropriate with a good level of detail. Boarders spoken to said they had not experienced any bullying.

The school's Child Protection policy and procedure was clear, detailed and comprehensive. The school has a copy of the Local Safeguarding Board guidance held electronically. A good level of Child Protection training had been provided for staff. The Missing Persons procedure was clear. The child protection record showed that no referrals had been made since the last inspection.

Guidance on Sanctions and Rewards was seen in both the Community Handbook (given to families of all pupils) and the Common Room Handbook. The guidance was clear, detailed and appropriately proportionate.

Feedback from boarders indicated that they were generally satisfied with the behaviour management systems in place.

Discussion with boarding house staff indicated that sanctions and rewards were generally consistent across the three houses.

The school has a clear complaints procedure contained within the Community Handbook received by parents and pupils.

The complaints records are kept in a bound book. These were seen to be clear, detailed and signed and dated by the headmaster and deputy headmaster.

The fire safety records were seen to be generally satisfactory apart from a 5 month gap in the weekly alarm testing. The school must ensure that fire alarm testing is carried out and recorded on a weekly basis.

Boarders demonstrated a good awareness of fire drill procedures during the boarding house tours.

Staff supervision of boarders was seen to afford an appropriate level of privacy. Boarders felt that staff supervision met their needs without being intrusive.

Staff recruitment records showed that the school has followed appropriate checking and vetting procedures for boarding house staff and GAP students. This included obtaining Certificates of Good Conduct for GAP students and CRB disclosures for other staff. It is recommended that the school also contact referees to verbally verify references in accordance with Standard 38. As a point of good practice the school could consider renewing CRB checks every 3 years.

The school has a clear policy for 'Adults Living in Boarding Accommodation' and guidance in its Occupancy Agreement about the expectations of resident adults not employed by the school. Both documents were seen to be satisfactory.

Taxis used by the school have been CRB checked and visitors to the school are appropriately supervised.

Tours of the boarding houses revealed a good level of security including keypad entry systems, CCTV and sufficient lighting along paths and around buildings. Boarders reported that they felt safe both in their accommodation and within the school grounds.

Boarders are generally well protected from safety hazards in the school and demonstrated a good knowledge of which areas presented a risk and the safety guidance for these areas.

The school has a good system for recording risk assessments and satisfactory examples of these were seen. A satisfactory Health and Safety policy was also seen. a Health and Safety committee meets regularly and minutes of these meetings were thorough.

Radiators were seen appropriately covered, but many windows were seen to be in need of restrictors and repair.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders have access to a range and choice of activities.(NMS 11)
- Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination.(NMS 18)
- Boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands.(NMS 27)
- Boarders have satisfactory provision to study.(NMS 43)
- Boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas.(NMS 46)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

18 and 46

The quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

Boarders have access to a good range of safe indoor and outdoor recreational areas.

The school has excellent systems in place to prevent discrimination and ensure successful integration of overseas students.

EVIDENCE:

Tours of the boarding houses revealed that there are a good range of recreational areas and facilities, including common rooms for the boarders' use. In addition, boarders are able to visit each others' boarding house communal areas.

Boarders have access to a range of sports facilities in the evenings and at weekends. These include a recently refurbished swimming pool.

The school has a strong community ethos that was evident in the attitudes of staff and boarders. This is supported by a satisfactory equal opportunities policy. Information relating to this and physical access restrictions are included in the 'General Information' booklet given to all parents and prospective boarders.

The school provides an excellent level of support to overseas students through its inclusive ethos and through specific support via its English as an Additional Language department. The tutor from this department described the one-to-one language and pastoral support boarders receive. She ensures that they take part in an induction programme in their first term, to help them learn about British culture and the local area. She also ensures that

they have a mentor of the same nationality and a classmate as a 'buddy'. She ensures that birthdays and celebrations are remembered and has organised 'International Student Voice' to help them make their views heard in a way that contributes to the school community.

A copy of the induction programme was seen and the results of this and the other inclusion efforts made by the school were evident in the positive relationships observed between boarders of all nationalities. The school is commended for its success in this area.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school.(NMS 12)
- Boarders receive personal support from staff.(NMS 14)
- Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families.(NMS 19)
- New boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in.(NMS 21)
- Boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school.(NMS 30)
- There are sound relationships between staff and boarders.(NMS 36)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

12, 14 and 19

The quality in this outcome area is excellent. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

There are excellent systems in place to enable boarders to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school.

Boarders receive an excellent level of personal support from staff.

Boarders are enabled to maintain private contact with their parents and families.

EVIDENCE:

Boarders are able to make their views known through the comprehensive system of meetings that the school has in place. Boarding house staff provide an opportunity for questions every evening after prayers. Boarders also attend tutor group sessions twice per day. In addition to this, two representatives from each year (one day pupil and one boarder) sit on the House Committees which meet every half term. These meetings are Chaired by the Housemasters/mistress, who in turn meet regularly with the head and deputy head masters. The school also has a number of whole school committees that all include 6th Form representatives. A sample of minutes from the meetings showed that boarders' views are effectively fed through this system, influencing decision making processes.

Boarders spoken with felt able to voice their views and were confident that they were listened to.

The Community Handbook contains a clear, detailed and comprehensive section about support available to boarders. This was seen to include information about a range of school staff, plus an independent listener and external agencies who offer support.

Staff described a good system of support that they offer boarders. This was also observed in practice during the inspection.

Boarders reported feeling well supported by their fellow pupils and staff.

Boarders are enabled to keep in contact with their parents through letter writing, e-mails and telephones. Appropriate facilities for this were seen during the inspection. Many boarders said they use their own mobile phones. Overseas students were generally happy with the telephone and e-mail provision but reported that one telephone in St Mary's House was not currently accepting their phone cards.

Appropriate helpline numbers were seen in the telephone booths.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders' possessions and money are protected.(NMS 20)
- Boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation.(NMS 40)
- Boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation.(NMS 42)
- Boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities.(NMS 44)
- Boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day.(NMS 45)
- Boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school.(NMS 50)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

40

The quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

Boarders are generally provided with satisfactory accommodation but an audit is needed of all windows, with repairs carried out and restrictors fitted as necessary. Toilets and bathrooms also need to be checked and repairs made as necessary. The school must ensure that all cabin and bunk beds are fitted with rails and ladders.

Some areas would benefit from redecoration and refurbishment.

EVIDENCE:

The inspectors received pupil led tours of each boarding house.

St Mary's House was found to be generally clean, tidy and well furnished with good leisure and kitchen facilities. The windows were checked and many were found to be in need of repair and restrictors. There was some peeling ceiling paint in a shower room and the bath in the sixth form corridor bathroom had no lock.

Some girls reported that the rails and ladders were missing on their cabin beds.

In Roche House some windows were in need of repair and restrictors, some locks were broken on shower and toilet doors and the sixth form showers showed signs of damp on the ceiling. The house would also benefit from some redecoration.

Allen House was generally clean and tidy, but would benefit from some new furniture in the common rooms as this was well worn.

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- A suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- There is clear leadership of boarding in the school.(NMS 8)
- Crises affecting boarders' welfare are effectively managed.(NMS 9)
- The school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare.(NMS 10)
- Risk assessment and school record keeping contribute to boarders' welfare.(NMS 23)
- Boarders are adequately supervised by staff.(NMS 31)
- Staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site.(NMS 32)
- Boarders are adequately supervised at night.(NMS 33)
- Boarders are looked after by staff with specific boarding duties, with adequate induction and continued training.(NMS 34)
- Boarders are looked after by staff following clear boarding policies and practice.(NMS 35)
- The welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted.(NMS 51)
- The welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1, 23, 31 and 34

The quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

The school has a suitable statement of its boarding principles and practice.

The headmaster and senior staff carry out appropriate monitoring of risk assessments and records.

Boarders receive a good level of supervision from staff.

Staff have accurate job descriptions and receive appropriate induction, supervision and training.

EVIDENCE:

The school has an accurate and up to date statement of its boarding principles and practice which is available to boarders, parents and staff.

The headmaster and senior members of staff appropriately monitor records of major punishments, complaints, accidents and risk assessments. Records of this were seen to be satisfactory.

Duty rotas showed that staff are providing a satisfactory level of supervision for boarders at all times. The boarding house staff felt that the rota worked well and boarders felt well supported and supervised. Sixth form pupils and GAP students assisted with appropriate tasks.

Accurate job descriptions were seen for boarding house staff.

The housemasters/mistresses described a suitable induction programme that new staff and Newly Qualified Teachers complete. All boarding staff receive formal on-going supervision and attend regular staff meetings. A sample of the minutes of these were seen. In addition, all staff receive a formal appraisal every three years.

Staff training records showed that they had attended appropriate courses and INSET days. All staff had received child protection training.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion
 "N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
6	3
7	X
15	4
16	X
17	X
24	X
25	X
48	X
49	X

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	3
3	3
4	3
5	3
13	X
22	X
26	2
28	X
29	X
37	3
38	3
39	3
41	3
47	2

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
11	X
18	4
27	X
43	X
46	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4
14	4
19	3
21	X
30	X
36	X

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
20	X
40	2
42	X
44	X
45	X
50	X

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

Continued

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
8	X
9	X
10	X
23	3
31	3
32	X
33	X
34	3
35	X
51	X
52	X

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection? No

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)
1	BS26	Ensure that there are no gaps in weekly fire alarm testing.	18/09/06
2	BS38	Contact referees directly to verify staff references.	
3	BS47	Carry out an audit of windows and make repairs and fit restrictors where necessary.	28/02/07
4	BS40	Check bathrooms and toilets and carry out repairs where necessary.	
5	BS40	Check bunk and cabin beds and ensure that they are all fitted with rails and ladders.	31/12/06

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