

St Edmund's School Canterbury

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Mark Blesky
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Date of last inspection	31 January 2006

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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

St Edmund's School Canterbury is a co-educational establishment situated close to the centre of Canterbury in Kent. It offers day, weekly, flexi and full time boarding and education.

The boarding accommodation is segregated by gender and incorporates separate accommodation for junior and senior pupils at the main site on St. Thomas's Hill. The male Choristers aged between 8 and 13 years of age board in the choir house along with the , which is located in the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral.

The headteacher and master of the junior school maintain an oversight of all aspects relating to boarding and welfare care. The house parents, and ancillary staff maintain day-to-day operation of boarding provision.

Summary

This is an announced key inspection. This school offers good boarding services for young people with some outstanding features. Good leadership and a clear sense of direction from the headteacher and senior staff are evidenced. Boarding staff are committed and dedicated to the care and welfare of the boarders. Whilst boarding houses differ in their broader presentation, the school values and principles of care are consistent.

Boarders are happy in this school; they are confident and aware of both their rights, but also their responsibilities for themselves and towards the school.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of 2006, the headteacher was asked to carry out some recommendations. Anti-bullying and discipline were areas considered to need review. Fire safety and drills were identified as in need of improvement along with visitor monitoring in the choir house. It was recommended that access by non-boarding pupils to boarding in the main school should be reviewed, with more robust measures to prevent access considered.

A recommendation was also made that the school should appoint an independent listener and detail the listener role within the boarders guide. Following the survey of the boarders, it was recommended that review and necessary action should take place to address the dissatisfaction with the choir house toilet and washing facilities.

All recommendations have been followed and the school has developed anti-bullying procedures along with clear and detailed guidance to address control and discipline. Fire safety planning has been undertaken with a review of the whole school. Recommendations made by the fire consultant have been implemented. Boarding areas are secure from unsupervised access from visitors and non-boarders. The school has appointed an independent listener and details of this role are included in the boarders guide. Major refurbishment has been completed in the choir house with ample washing and toilet facilities for all boarders now provided. There has also been substantial improvement in the recreational facilities for the senior school boarders.

The headteacher has taken appropriate steps to improve the quality of the boarding areas and school for boarders.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

All house parents have sufficient training and experience to encourage the boarders to adopt healthy lifestyles. Support, in the form of advice and guidance is given to the boarders regarding personal, social, and health education. Any behaviour that is hazardous to health or wellbeing is formally addressed, along with consultation with the nursing staff. The school has also developed the pastoral care role to ensure that this underpins boarder's wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. Effective co-operation and liaison in the school between house parents, pastoral care, and medical care staff has complimented support for the boarders.

The school has developed detailed policies and procedures to ensure that the health needs of the boarders are well managed. Boarders with specific known health conditions are supported by well managed guidance and planned responses to meet these needs. Training and support is provided to staff to ensure that medical support or interventions that are more urgent are appropriately met. All nursing staff are qualified nurses and all nurses undertake specific training in accordance with their professional role and in order to meet the needs of the boarders. All boarding staff undertake training and guidance within their caring role to ensure that they are able to support the nursing staff and have sufficient knowledge to refer boarders for consultation.

Nutritious and well prepared meals are provided to all boarders. Alternative meals are available for vegetarian or more diverse dietary needs. Mealtimes are orderly and well planned and staff provide appropriate supervision to assist boarders. Boarders are able to make choices of meals and make other comments regarding the meals at a dining hall committee meeting. This is the formal occasion for representation to the catering manager and minutes are taken of these meetings. Dining rooms and furnishings are suitable and of sufficient size for the numbers and ages of boarders dining. It was noted that some cutlery was not properly cleaned and food deposits were present. Health and safety in the kitchen area is generally well managed, however it was noted that a leaking walk-in freezer was causing condensation causing water to create an unnecessary hazard. This matter is being addressed to comply with the last Environmental Health Service inspection of April 2009; however, the school must address this matter expeditiously.

It is acknowledged that other than in these matters the kitchen is generally maintained to high standards, by trained staff with good leadership provided by the catering manager.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders say that bullying is not a feature in this school and that the teaching and boarding staff would be quick to act if bullying occurred. The school provides guidance to all staff and has a published procedure dealing with bullying. The guidance includes a definition of bullying and anti-bullying strategies for all staff to follow. The pastoral care and nursing staff are also vigilant to ensure that they are able to recognise any bullying indicators. The school has produced robust and well planned responses to bullying.

The school have embraced safeguarding and child protection guidance and ensure that all key staff have the appropriate knowledge, skills and guidance to address any allegation or indication of abuse. The chaplain has recently undertaken specific training provided by the local authority and this training has been imparted to colleagues with specific safeguarding roles. Detailed and comprehensive guidance is available for all key staff and safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff in the school.

The school maintains effective measures and procedures to address negative behaviour from boarders. Systems support behaviour modification philosophies and are not overly punitive or excessive. Records are kept of the events and action taken by the school to counter any undesirable behaviour. Methods used to challenge poor behaviour are managed by the senior house parents and overseen by the headteacher.

The school manages fire safety and contracts a fire safety consultant to carry out an assessment of the school. Regular self-assessment is also carried out by the school to ensure that monitoring between inspections is maintained. Regular fire evacuation drills are completed along with health and safety checks.

Boarders say that staff respect their privacy and understand the importance of having private time. House parents (and gap students that supervise the junior boarders) are aware of the need to understand privacy and also demonstrate sensitivity and respect for boarders.

Recruitment of staff is well managed and all statutory checks and reference checks are carried out. Criminal records bureau checks are completed before any staff members are allowed to have unsupervised access to the boarders and boarding areas. A central record is held by the school to ensure that all appropriate checks are completed and monitored. Gap students are also checked rigorously before they are allowed to commence boarding duties. All visitors to the school must sign in and all boarding areas are only accessed under direct supervision or through key pad entry. No day pupils are allowed to access the boarding areas and staff are vigilant towards security of boarding premises.

The whole school is the subject of regular risk assessment, which is typically carried out by senior house parents or boarding staff. This includes boarding and common areas of the school. Risk assessment also addresses the situational or event led risks for known high risk activities. Risk assessments include consideration of behaviour and the inherent vulnerability of boarders. The school has produced some well managed risk assessments regarding a number of different events which are extremely detailed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Pastoral and personal support is well managed in this school and underpins all salient welfare procedures and practices. There is regular and effective liaison with key staff members including the nursing sister, the chaplain, master of the junior school and headteacher. Senior management team meetings also provide an opportunity for staff to consider and discuss strategies of care and support. An independent listener is also provided by the school to ensure that boarders are able to talk to somebody independent of the school. Guidance within boarding handbooks is extremely detailed identifies external support services and includes helpline information. Boarders say that they always have someone to go to if they need support. The matron is another popular source of support for day to day worries and the chaplain is also seen as another

key source of support. Boarders are aware of their rights and the school encourages boarders to voice their views and opinions whenever they wish.

Guidance for all boarding staff is available to counter discrimination or the marginalisation of any boarder or group of boarders. The anti-bullying procedures and guidance are very well written and deal specifically with bullying on the grounds of culture and race, along with consideration of gender and background. Diversity and difference is celebrated by the school and the school promotes the importance of learning about different cultures. The celebration of festivals and foods are often a source of gaining understanding and knowledge about difference and are popular events for boarders. Well managed specific planning and support strategies are planned for all new boarders with the parents and the boarder. Boarding staff are vigilant towards the needs of all new boarders and assist them towards integration into the boarding culture.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

A school council has been set up for the boarders and this enables them to nominate a representative to voice the collective opinions and views of the boarders. These meetings are held regularly and this provides an opportunity to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision. Agreements and topics of this meeting are recorded and the boarding house staff feedback any action that has been agreed or the reasons when requests cannot be met. In addition, the boarders can attend a dining hall committee meeting where they are able to express views and opinions specifically regarding the catering provisions. Details of these meetings are also recorded and the headteacher and house parents are consulted appropriately.

There are many opportunities for boarders to contact their friends and family in private. There are various private telephones situated around the school. Materials for writing letters are also provided by the school, along with email and social networking access. The school also ensures that there are plenty of opportunities for boarders to access electronic communication after school hours. The library and information technology facilities are kept open and accessible to all boarders. The school is also aware of the need for maintaining safety and security regarding electronic communication and risk assessment is regularly re-visited.

The needs and wishes of all new boarders are considered prior to moving to the school. Senior staff meet with parents and enable them to raise any questions or concerns that they may have. The school has produced very comprehensive and detailed guidance about the school and boarding life. These documents are insightful and demonstrate the school's ethos and the high regard for welfare undertaken by the school.

All new boarders are supported by a 'buddy' or more senior boarder. All new boarders are appropriately supervised and supported as they come to terms with boarding life. All house parents demonstrate insightful and caring considerations to the challenges facing a new boarder. Provisions are planned and put into place for any boarder that has specific health or other diverse needs.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

All boarding areas have facilities for boarders to lock their valuable or cherished possessions. House parents do remind the boarders to keep their possessions safe and will offer to look after any item of particular value.

It was noted that many boarders have lost their room/locker keys and feel that the replacement cost for new keys is too excessive. Some boarders did state in person and through the boarder surveys, that theft or the loss of property had resulted from unsecured items.

Pocket money is provided for boarders and detailed records are kept all pocket money given out. Boarding areas are of good standard and all boarding areas are adequately lit and heated. Boarding areas are clean and furnishings are of good quality. Many of the senior boys' rooms have en-suite facilities and all boarding areas have adequate common and sleeping areas.

Work has taken place in boarding areas to improve the facilities in many areas. The choir house has had extensive building work and refurbishment, which they are very proud of. Another key area of work has taken place in senior boys and girls common rooms. This work has resulted in two very attractive areas for recreation and the school have managed this refurbishment with clear thought and consideration for the welfare of the boarders. Boarders say that they are happy with the dormitories and rooms that they have and the facilities provided for them. Although boarders have a range of different faculties and types of accommodation their expression of happiness with their particular accommodation is consistent. Bedding is of good standard and no boarders have bunk beds. Boarding areas are in most cases personalised, although the junior boys house and the choir house walls did appear somewhat bare and lacking in personal or communal decoration.

The junior boys and girls' house have sufficient toilets and washing facilities with current numbers of boarders. However, if numbers increase current facilities will not be sufficient and in accordance with the national minimum standards. It was noted that dissatisfaction was expressed frequently in the surveys regarding the junior boys and girl's toilet and washing facilities. The master of the junior school confirmed that extra toilet and washing facilities are being planned within the junior boys and girls boarding area.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school has a prepared and published statement of the school's boarding principles and practice, which is available to parents, boarders and staff. The statement covers the aims and organisation of boarding at the school. It includes the admissions criteria, outline of facilities and welfare support services for boarders. Details of religious and cultural aspects of the school are also presented along with relevant school policies and practice.

The boarding is well managed with house parents primarily responsible for the organisation and management of their respective houses. Policies and procedures that address boarding are maintained centrally and consistent practices are in place. Individual and more specific management of the boarding areas is organised by the individual head of boarding and house parents. This individual planning allows the needs of the boarders and the more idiosyncratic features of the boarding house to be facilitated. Although all houses have different features, there are no major or inappropriate discrepancies in principles or practice of boarding between different boarding houses.

The headteacher, deputy head and house parents meet regularly to overview and monitor the school's records of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents, and to identify any issues requiring further action.

Action is taken in relation to any concentration or trend in recorded punishments, offences, complaints or accidents.

Adequate supervision of boarders is maintained in the boarding areas. Formal after school activities, such as clubs, sporting events and prep are managed by boarding or school staff. Events that may need to be more intensely supervised are considered and planned following risk assessment.

All staff with boarding duties have job descriptions and a comprehensive boarding handbook to ensure that they are aware of their day to day duties. Guidance includes their responsibilities towards the welfare and care of the boarders and the expectations placed upon them. Although all boarding staff members are managed, it was noted that some boarding staff are not receiving formal supervision, review and appraisal of their performance. Training opportunities are available for boarding staff and the school is currently reviewing the boarding training programme. A staff disciplinary procedure is in place, which includes provisions for precautionary suspension of staff, pending investigation or final decision following any allegations.

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

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that crockery, cutlery and dining facilities including food storage are adequately clean and maintained (National Minimum Standards 24)
- ensure there are sufficient opportunities and provisions for boarders in the choir house and junior boarding to personalise an area of their dormitory with suitable posters and personal items (National Minimum Standards 42)
- ensure that there is an appropriate process for the regular review of the performance of each member of staff with boarding duties by a more senior or experienced member of staff. This maybe managed through individual supervision meetings or a staff appraisal system. (National Minimum Standards 34)