

Ampleforth College

Inspection report for boarding school

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| Unique reference number | SC007916 |
| Inspection date | 23 January 2009 |
| Inspector | Michael McCleave |
| Type of Inspection | Key |

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| Address | Ampleforth College YORK YO62 4ER 01439 766000 |
| Telephone number | |
| Email | |
| Registered person | St Laurence Education Trust |
| Head / Principal | Gabriel Everitt |
| Nominated person | |
| Date of last inspection | 20 September 2004 |

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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

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| 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

Ampleforth College is a Roman Catholic co-educational, full boarding school. Governance of the college rests with the Abbot of Ampleforth who is in turn the Chairman of the Ampleforth Abbey Trust, which owns and governs the college. The age range of pupils is from 13 to 18 years.

The college provides the boys and girls with an academic, religious and moral education where excellence is encouraged. There are ten boarding houses for those young people who along with their parents have chosen to board at the college. The children have access to an extensive range of sporting facilities and other activities are catered for. Sixth formers have use of a social centre known as the Windmill.

The boarding houses are separated by gender and provide the boarders with a safe and comfortable place to live during term time. The newer build houses have excellent facilities that include individual en-suite bedrooms.

Summary

At this announced full inspection, all key boarding school standards were inspected.

The college provides an excellent quality of care for those children who are boarders. Each boarding house is managed by an experienced team led by the housemaster/mistress who are responsible for all aspects of life in the house. There is a high level awareness of safeguarding among the boarding staff, and responsibility for all matters relating to child protection rests with the Deputy Head. Positive links have been established between the college and the North Yorkshire Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). All boarding teams have been trained in child protection awareness.

The boarding houses are well maintained and there is an ongoing major refurbishment programme to modernise and improve boarding accommodation. The new build houses have excellent facilities and there is a firm commitment to bring the older houses up to a higher standard.

Boarders welfare is clearly paramount, and every effort is made by staff to encourage a healthy and enjoyable lifestyle at the college. There are excellent facilities available if boarders are unwell. There is a strong commitment to ensuring equality and diversity at the college.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school was recommended to improve facilities in some boarding houses and the infirmary. A call alarm buzzer is now located next to each bed at the infirmary enabling the patient to summon assistance if required. A review was carried out of the security arrangements for access to each boarding house and new coded locks have been installed. Old communal showers in houses have been replaced by modern individual showers which enhance privacy.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health of the boarders is taken very seriously by the school, and all staff are alert to the possibility of boarders who may be unwell or are experiencing some personal problems. There is a strong approach taken by the school in respect of substance misuse and smoking. Health education is provided in all year groups at the school. All boarders can get advice and guidance from their matron and they are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The Windmill social centre on the campus, is restricted to sixth formers, and alcohol can be purchased using an electronic card that restricts the units of alcohol that can be bought. The permitted alcoholic units that boarders are able to purchase follows official government recommendations. This is an appropriate policy and ensures that boarders drink responsibly. The penalty for misuse is automatic withdrawal of the privilege for a determined period. This approach means that the boarders learn to manage alcohol intake in a sensible and appropriate manner.

All boarders have access to first aid and treatment for minor illnesses. The well equipped infirmary is managed by a team of qualified nurses who are supported by the doctors at the local clinic in Ampleforth village. The local GP meets boarders at surgeries held five days a week up at the infirmary and, where required, will prescribe any medication. Specialist counselling support can be provided such as a psychologist. The infirmary provides a comfortable place for boarders to go if they feel unhappy and want a warm and caring place to stay for a short period. The accommodation at the infirmary caters for both sexes and ensures that privacy and dignity are maintained.

The meals provided are popular among the boarders and they rate the quality as very high. All tastes and dietary needs are catered for and choices are available every day. There is an emphasis on healthy meals and the catering manager meets regularly with the food committee to hear what suggestions boarders have on the variety of meals. The wide range of choices, means that most if not all tastes especially from different cultures can be met. The manager has an open mind about choices and preferences and will meet these if possible. There is a positive willingness to ensure that the boarders enjoy the food provided. The catering manager ensures that specialist meals are provided when appropriate, such as Burns supper, Italian and French nights and Asian cuisine. This reflects the colleges positive approach to diversity.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school operates a zero tolerance policy in respect of bullying and this is made known to all boarders when they first join the school. There is a group set up comprising of staff who are currently monitoring instances when bullying is highlighted, and strategies are developed to deal with individual situations. The policy is clear, emphasising the position of the school on this subject. However, it is evident from discussions with boarders that bullying is rare, and is not a major problem at the school. Boarders know that the school supports equality and diversity and children from other nationalities represented at the school are treated with respect. There is a positive approach among staff to ensure that all the boarders live in harmony and tolerance for differences among the boarders.

The school has a clear procedure for staff to follow about child protection concerns. There are excellent links with the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children's Board and the Deputy Head

and Head of Boarding have both completed the appropriate training provided by the Board. All boarding staff are expected to receive child protection training. This means that they are more likely to notice possible situations which may be abuse. The school places a high importance on child protection and in addition to the oversight of the Safeguarding Board, the Abbey Trust has created the Ampleforth Safeguarding Commission as an additional safeguard. The commission consists of representatives from the external statutory agencies. This is excellent practice. When incidents have taken place, these have been responded to in a professional manner in line with established procedures. The systems in place ensure that boarders are cared for in a safe environment.

The school operates a clear policy on behaviour and sanctions that are known to staff and boarders. The school ethos is based on tolerance and respect for each other irrespective of race or cultural background. Boarders confirm that sanctions operated by the school are fair and non discriminatory. Monitors recommend sanctions to the house staff who will decide what action to take. This ensures that boarders are not subject to unfair sanctions from their peers.

The emergency evacuation procedures are practiced regularly in each boarding house and information is clearly recorded when these take place. The safety of boarders is a high priority and staff are well versed in the operation of the procedures. This clearly enhances the safety of the boarders.

Staff are only appointed after thorough statutory checks have been completed and suitable references are received. The spouses of house staff, who have access to boarders, are also checked through the Criminal Records Bureau. However, there is no written guidance in the conditions of residence about relatives who visit and stay in boarding houses. There are a number of staff appointed from within the European Union and the school conducts checks from their country of origin. This ensures that boarders are looked after by staff who are safe to care for them.

Boarding houses are made secure with effective locking mechanisms to each entrance. This is a large campus and closed circuit television with night capability is installed around the school grounds. However, some areas leading up to boarding houses are less illuminated than other parts of the campus. Although all boarding houses are equipped with appropriate security alarm systems on entrance doors, in some instances these are not activated, for example, when older boarders wish to go for an early morning jog. The doors are however always locked.

The school takes health and safety matters very seriously and have appointed a senior member of staff as Director with sole responsibility for health and safety throughout the school. This is excellent practice. All aspects of health and safety are very well managed and risk assessments are excellent. There are a range of responses to emergencies and these are clear and concise ensuring that all staff are aware of how to deal with crises situations.

Overall, there is a clear understanding among staff of the policies and procedures to ensure the safety of boarders. Systems are in place to promote safety. Life in houses is based on tolerance and understanding irrespective of cultural background. This ensures that boarders live in safety and harmony.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The boarders are provided with support from their house masters/mistresses, house tutors, gap students attached to a house, matrons, monitors and independent listeners from outside of the school. The house masters and mistresses play a key role in ensuring that boarders are settled and happy. Young people away from home for the first time can become isolated and lonely, the practice is to ensure that all are made to feel valued. Practices to support new boarders varies between houses but all have a system to welcome and support them. This is especially in the case of boarders who come from outside of the UK. Opportunities are available to those from less fortunate backgrounds to share in the high quality facilities at the school. The college has formed links with a number of maintained schools. This is excellent practice.

The school has a strong commitment to supporting the principles of equality and diversity. All house staff have been trained to recognise any form of discrimination and to ensure that incidents are dealt with speedily. Boarders demonstrate a healthy approach to differences in culture or religion and do not report any significant discrimination. There is a positive commitment to ensuring that boarders live in an open friendly and supportive environment. Boarders therefore do not experience inappropriate discrimination.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The views of boarders about life in houses is taken seriously by staff, and there are very good systems in place for boarders to share their views. Weekly house meetings are held when all manner of topics relating to boarding house life are discussed. Boarders confirm they actively contribute to house meetings. In addition to house meetings, each house has a representative who attends the school council. This forum meets with the Deputy Head to share the views of boarders and where appropriate can bring about changes. The food committee takes soundings from boarders across all houses and this information is passed to the catering manager each term. The activities committee is another forum where boarders can influence the social life of the school. There are therefore, a number of forums whereby boarders can contribute their views. This ensures that they can make changes and have an influence on decisions which affect their life as boarders.

Although the boarding houses have pay telephones available for boarders to use, most now have mobile phones to enable them to keep in touch with their families. Contact with home is actively encouraged by boarding house staff and computers are available in each house in order that e-mail contact can be made. This is the most popular means of contact, no doubt influenced by the free access. Active encouragement is given by house staff for boarders to maintain contact with family. This will help them settle into boarding life especially the new younger children.

Before the start of the new academic year all new boarders are invited to the school for an induction into boarding life. This is seen as an important process and is done sensitively, to ensure that the younger boarders in particular, look on boarding as positive experience. Older boarders are allocated a new boarder to assist on the induction. Some houses refer to these as guardian angels. There is an excellent process of induction for new boarders. This helps to make the transition to boarding life as sensitive as possible.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarding houses provide the children with a clean and comfortable environment to live. Some older houses do not have the modern facilities when compared to the newer builds such as single en-suite bedrooms and disabled facilities. However, there is an ongoing refurbishment building programme and there is a positive commitment to bring all the boarding houses up to a similar standard. The houses have well furnished bedrooms as well as comfortable common rooms for social interaction among the boarders. For those boarders who share sleeping accommodation, there are secure storage facilities to keep personal possessions and money safe. There are sufficient bathing and toilet facilities to ensure that boarders maintain personal cleanliness.

Boarding houses are clean comfortable and provide the children with a safe comfortable place to live. There is a positive commitment by the school to continually improve the standard of the accommodation.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is extensive evidence to demonstrate that the school operates an effective equality and diversity policy. The whole ethos of the school is based on tolerance and understanding. The boarders demonstrate a close alliance and loyalty to each other that transcends differences in background and culture. Discussions with boarders and staff clearly show that they care and respect each other.

The school has a very detailed statement of principles that is known to parents and their children at the school. The parent's handbook and information booklets for each individual house clearly set out the principles of boarding. The student handbook is colourful and contains all the information boarders require to ensure that they are clear about boarding life.

The organisation of boarding houses operates very well. This ensures that boarders are provided with appropriate accommodation and that their safety and well being is managed by dedicated staff. The house masters/mistresses are responsible for ensuring that all records for the house are maintained appropriately, including risk assessments, sanctions, accidents and complaints. Records are very well maintained. The information ensures that staff are up to date and that boarders have their welfare and safety protected.

The supervision of boarders outside of teaching time is managed by house staff. Staff are always available to deal with supervision or any problems experienced by boarders. There are, however, some times on weekends when a single member of house staff is on duty in a house. Boarders nevertheless feel safe and they are aware of how to contact staff if necessary. The supervision of boarders is sufficient outside of teaching time.

All boarding staff undergo induction training when they are appointed. Thereafter they are subject to ongoing performance assessment and annual appraisal. This ensures that staff are able and competent to carry out their duties and responsibilities ensuring the well being of the boarders. There are very good training opportunities available for boarding staff to enhance their professional development. Matrons for example, can have training in counselling, health related issues such as eating disorders, child development and awareness of psychological issues that may affect boarders. This demonstrates the commitment of the school to ensuring that staff provide the best care possible for children who board. All staff involved in boarding houses have access to a copy of the school handbook on boarding. This document contains all the

information required for staff to ensure that they are clearly aware of their duties and responsibilities. This means that boarders are cared for by staff who are aware of their responsibilities.

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 there is a written agreement between the school and any adult not employed by the school but living in the same building as boarding accommodation (NMS 39.4)
- ensure there are no significant safety hazards on routes regularly used by boarders (NMS 47.5)
- ensure that security measures in boarding houses are used (NMS 41.5)
- ensure that staff supervising boarders outside of teaching time are sufficient in number for the age, number and needs of boarders. (NMS 31.1)