

Hockerill Anglo European College

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Julian Mason / Dawn Taylor
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Date of last inspection	27 November 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

Hockerill Anglo-European College is situated within easy access of the town centre of Bishop's Stortford. It offers education to 791 pupils including 252 boarding students. Boarders are accommodated in five boarding houses, which are located within the school grounds. All boarding houses provide self-contained facilities that include showers, bathrooms, toilets, common rooms, games rooms and kitchen facilities.

Summary

This was a full announced inspection that concentrated on key national minimum standards for boarding schools. The inspection focused on areas relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic wellbeing and how staffing and management arrangements supported the operation of the college.

Hockerill Anglo-European College is an outstanding service. Boarders safety and protection is paramount. Each boarder receives a focused level of support that successfully promotes their personal, social and educational development. Staff are conscientious and committed to managing boarding services in a way that best suits the group of boarders in each house. Boarders are able to make meaningful contributions to the running of their houses because their views and opinions are valued. Staff provide an environment where boarders differences are acknowledged, understood and where they are treated fairly and with equal concern. The diversity of the boarding community is actively celebrated which results in a greater awareness of other countries and cultures.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The college has taken action to address the one recommendation made at the last inspection visit in 2006. Modifications to windows accessible above the ground floor have been made to ensure they open and close with minimum risk to boarders.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The promotion of boarders' good health and wellbeing is outstanding. Staff actively put into effect the college's health education policies and integrate these into their daily contact with boarders. Boarders are also well informed through a newly developed wellbeing curriculum which encourages a greater awareness of how to prevent illness and poor health. Staff working in a range of different roles are part of an established network that actively supports boarders welfare and safety. Information is readily available to boarders in age-appropriate formats, staff and boarders are relaxed and open when discussing personal, health and social matters.

Boarders are provided with medical centre staff who are registered nurses and work in partnership with parents, boarding staff and general practitioner services to ensure individual health care needs are identified and met. Boarders expressed great satisfaction with this service and confirmed that all medical matters are dealt with sensitively and confidentially. One boarder commenting: 'There is always staff around who look after you and notice whenever you do not

feel well.' The college ensures that boarders' health records are regularly updated with information from parents so that staff who need to be aware of a boarder's health and welfare needs are fully informed. Boarders health and safety is fully protected through robust medication policies and practices. These arrangements add-up to a professional and comprehensive approach when promoting good health and wellbeing.

Boarders have access to a refurbished refectory which has been designed and renovated to a high standard. This is an excellent example of the college's ambition to develop and provide a first class catering service that comprehensively meets the needs of boarders and the wider college population. The strength of this provision reinforces the college's well-established community atmosphere and healthy eating approaches. Boarders can and do influence and inform change. The ownership of this new development is felt throughout the college as extensive methods of consultation and involvement were used in determining what boarders and college staff wanted.

Boarders benefit from the catering teams strong commitment to provide freshly prepared local food which is appealing and meets with the national healthy schools programme. The refectory also provides a range of world foods that embraces and represents other cultures and countries. Special diets are catered for and are part of an extensive range of foods available at every mealtime. The vast majority of boarders are very happy with the food, one boarder summing-up: 'I am very satisfied and I really think that the healthy food contributes to my wellbeing.'

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' safety and protection is given a very high priority by the college which results in an outstanding contribution to safeguarding and welfare practices. Staff approach their role and responsibilities in a conscientious and professional manner. They embrace the values of Hockerill by placing boarders' safety and wellbeing at the centre of everything the college does. Boarders confirm this with statements like: 'Personally I feel well protected' and 'Hockerill is very protective and safe it makes me feel safe at all times'.

The college has a very clear procedure for responding to child protection concerns and have staff who link together to ensure safeguarding concerns are appropriately addressed. Staff are professional and responsible in their approach to any concerns and their knowledge clearly reflects the college's policies in practice. Training for staff in child protection is updated and older boarders in positions of responsibility receive training when they take on these roles. Boarders confirm that they feel staff give a high priority to keeping them very safe: 'As a boarder I always feel safe around staff, sometimes over protected but its great everyone cares about you here.'

The college achieves exceptional standards of behaviour that ensure a welcoming and enjoyable boarding environment for all. All inappropriate or bullying behaviour is addressed promptly and in a way that invites positive discussion and effective learning: 'I haven't seen any bullying at this school. The community here is really friendly and when I have a problem everyone offers to help.' Boarders also state that the college is 'firm but fair' and they 'value the house status system'. This system provides an incentive for any boarder, irrespective of age or background to gain increasing levels of privileges within the boarding community, one boarder reflecting: 'We are rewarded for positive responsible behaviour.' Levels of privilege are gained through appropriate behaviour, being helpful to others and being respectful to the environment. This

system supports the college's ethos of rewarding positive behaviours and to encourage boarders to want to be a responsible member of the community: 'We are always looking to behave better because it gives us more privileges.'

There is great aspiration for boarders to work towards positions of responsibility such as house prefects, deputy captains and captains. Boarders view being chosen for these posts an honour as being chosen reflects on their level of initiative, maturity and responsibility. Staff encourage post holders to forge mature relations with staff and be supportive of their peers. As a consequence of these arrangements there is minimal use of punishments or sanctions.

The promotion of boarders' safety and protection is also clearly reflected in other key areas of the college's operation. For instance, boarders' privacy is respected and considered as part of the day-to-day boarding routines. Boarders and their parents are provided with information in an appropriate format about how to make a complaint. Boarders are clear that staff listen to them if they have a complaint or concern. This is because college staff actively listen to them which results in most complaints being resolved quickly and informally. This is summarised in one boarder's comment: 'There's always staff around you can talk to about anything.'

There are robust health and safety systems in place to ensure Hockerill's environment is safe and that risks associated with being away from the college are minimised. Boarders learn how to protect themselves in an emergency because they have regular opportunities to practice the evacuation of their houses. They demonstrate a very good understanding of the college's emergency procedures which helps to keep them safe. Boarders' feel very safe in their accommodation and this is as a result of staff being vigilant in their approach to maintaining a safe environment for everyone.

The vetting of new staff is carried out very carefully to ensure they are suitable to work with children and young people. The college renews Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks every 3-years which is over and above what is currently required. A number of managers have attended new safer recruitment practice training and this is a very good example of the school strengthening recruitment and selection processes that are consistent with expectations from the newly formed Independent Safeguarding Authority.

The college takes appropriate steps to ensure people who live on site but do not work for the college are checked. These arrangements are also supported by a written code of conduct. However, the code is not entirely clear about an individual's responsibility to notify the college regarding specific changes to their circumstances.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Individual support to boarders' is outstanding and given a high priority by the college. One boarder stating: 'I think Hockerill is an amazing school everyone is so helpful.' Boarders' are encouraged and supported by peers and staff to have positive experiences socially and educationally. Boarders' each have a team of staff including a head of house, boarding assistants, house tutors and a form tutor who oversee and co-ordinate their care and education. They play key roles in guiding the moral and emotional development of each boarder as well as promoting confidence and respect for others. One boarder expressing the feeling of many others: 'I feel comfortable with boarding and I feel like I always know where to go if a problem arises.' Specific additional support is accessed and sensitively delivered through relevant departments such as

the counselling service. This ensures the college provides each boarder with a holistic service that is tailored to their needs.

The college successfully promotes an environment where boarders' learn to be respectful and understanding of the backgrounds and circumstances of others and where differences are appreciated and accepted. Boarders' live harmoniously within the community of the college where respectful values are promoted. The college welcomes all religious denominations and encourages tolerance and respect. For example, a weekly 'Crossfire Club' encourages open conversation about such topics as morals, conscience and beliefs.

Provision is made for boarders' to attend their place of worship and time is allowed to celebrate religious festivals. The college also embraces and celebrates diversity of culture and language differences. Overseas boarders' are able to express themselves in their heritage language and at the same time are supported by the learning support department to develop their English. Events such as the boarders' international open weekend, further celebrates the cultural diversity that exists at the college. The college's extensive range of trips, exchange programmes and fund raising projects are outstanding. These are aspects of college life that helps to develop boarders' linguistic advantages but also enhances their knowledge and understanding of other cultures and countries.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The consultation and active involvement of boarders in the life and development of boarding is outstanding. They feel that their views and opinions are valued and that they can make a difference to matters affecting their daily lives and operation of the college. Systems of listening to and obtaining the views of boarders are fully integrated into the running of the college and are imaginative and effective in capturing their honest opinions. One boarder commenting: 'Although we are many boarders we all have a say about things and there are many ways of discussing our views.'

Written and on-line surveys have been used to seek boarders' opinions about life at the college. House committees meet to discuss any issues relating to boarding and also play a role in planning weekend activities. A catering committee meets each term and gathers boarders' points of view about their dining experiences. These are just some of the many arrangements in place that encourage discussion to inform development and change. Open feedback is given to boarders and changes identified are quickly acted upon. This supports boarders in being part of a mature and developing residential community. This is evident in the strength of feeling about the outstanding quality of boarding when boarders are asked to describe their boarding experience at the college.

The college has outstanding working relationships with parents, which is seen as an essential aspect to the individualised support. Boarders are supported to remain in regular contact with their parents and family through phone calls, e-mails and letter writing. The college promotes easy access to key staff and operate an effective website that features regular newsletters and provides parents with communication channels to give feedback and comment to the college. Working in partnership creatively is another key strength of the college who maintain relationships with parents living in Britain as well as those living abroad. All parents of boarders not only receive regular reports on the educational progress of their child but on their social

and emotional development within the boarding community. The college also organises regular key events that encourages and caters for parents who are abroad.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders are provided with good quality accommodation that is comfortable, clean, adequately furnished and well maintained. Some accommodation has been updated and decorated with one boarding house about to be redeveloped and extended. This represents a significant investment and is an indication of the college's ambition to provide a high quality boarding environment. Boarders' sleeping accommodation is of sufficient size and decorated to a good standard. Individual rooms reflect the interests and tastes of the boarders who sleep there. Boarders have access to toilet and washing facilities that supports their privacy. Boarders expressed great satisfaction with the accommodation provided.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The management and organisation of the college's welfare and boarding provision is outstanding. Managers ensure that the welfare of boarders is given first consideration and the college communicates this approach clearly to staff and boarders. There are more than enough staff available for boarders and they are trained and supported to deliver consistent, high quality boarding services. The style of management ensures that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and that boarders feel that the college is run with their welfare and safety as its primary concern.

Managers have an excellent insight into how well boarders are being looked after. Boarding staff teams are led by a conscientious and effective director of boarding who is accountable to the college principal. Staff deliver professional and supportive services because they work in partnership with each other and as a team. They are also provided with clear guidance about their roles from competent and supportive heads of house.

The college provides a very clear and detailed statement of boarding principles and practice to parents, boarders and staff. There are excellent policies and boarding practice guidance, kept under review, known by staff, helping to ensure boarders are looked after well during their time at the college. In addition, boarders' welfare is promoted by well established and extensive monitoring systems. Managers have a clear overview of boarding operations which helps to ensure that boarders are supported in a consistent and safe manner. These arrangements guard against complacency and help to deliver consistent, high quality boarding services.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The college has a range of policies that relate to equal opportunities and understanding diversity. The college's ethos is carried out in practice where all boarders are treated as individuals with equal concern and consideration. The college welcomes referrals from any cultural, ethnic, racial or religious background and offers each boarder a tolerant and respectful environment. Boarders are viewed positively and their involvement in college life is actively promoted irrespective of their circumstances or where they are from.

Governors provide effective oversight to the college which helps managers focus and prioritise on the development of facilities, services and future opportunities for boarders. Governors

provide further scrutiny of boarders' welfare and these arrangements mirror the high levels of accountability and responsibility that exist throughout the college.

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 any written agreement between the college and any adult not employed by the college but living in the same building as boarders stipulates that they notify an unrelated senior member of staff if they are charged with or convicted of any offence. (NMS 39)