

Whitgift School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Mike Stapley
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Date of last inspection	

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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

Whitgift is a day school of 1220 pupils, situated in beautiful parkland and providing a continuous education for boys from age 10 to 18. The School enjoys impressive facilities and a proud record of commitment to the highest standards. Whitgift is in South Croydon and boys come from Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Essex and many London boroughs, as well as the immediate Croydon and South London area.

An international dimension is a crucial part of the education provided at Whitgift and a wide range of different languages is available as well as exchanges and links with other countries. An international scholarship programme brings a small group of overseas students to the sixth form to board with a staff family in accommodation within the school grounds. These students experience the range of opportunities at Whitgift, enhance their learning of English and contribute to the wider school community.

An education at Whitgift is unique, offering extraordinary opportunities which mark the school out as truly first-class.

Summary

The announced inspection took place over the course of three on site inspection days and was preceded by a pre inspection planning meeting. The inspection team comprised of one inspector from Ofsted. This inspection focused on specific standards aimed at assessing the welfare of the students who are boarding at the school. Information on which to assess the school's performance was gathered in a variety of ways. These included the examination of documentary information that was supplied by the school, discussions with the students at the White House, student guided tours of the boarding house, school and recreational areas, as well as discussions with a wide range of school staff.

The senior management team at the school has a wealth of knowledge and experience to support the staff and students at the school.

The school is effective at ensuring that the students who board receive the appropriate support from staff to help them achieve progress, both academic and personal.

The staff team are good with updating all of the relevant information needed to make students' time at the school a success. The staff team work effectively at gaining the trust of the students and advocate for them in a positive manner.

There are some areas that require improvement and development. In discussion with the housemaster of the boarding house and the second master of the school it was acknowledged that the school needed to develop a number of new policies and procedures to meet the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. The majority of the recommendations made at this inspection are reasonably straight forward and the school should be able to meet them fairly easily. All of the recommendations made at the time of the inspection were fully discussed with the senior management team during the feedback session at the end of the inspection and plans are being made to meet all of them.

Overall the school is warm and very welcoming and the students are very supportive of the school and its ethos.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first social care inspection of the boarding facilities at Whitgift School since being registered by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school has a Personal, Social and Health Education Programme (PSHE) in place. known as 'Critical Reflection' it is particularly designed for sixth form students. There are presentations every other Friday (Double Period) when significant philosophical matters may be discussed. Outside speakers are invited and recently there have been talks from a recovering heroin addict, a woman who was anorexic, a talk on safer driving from an ex police officer and a discussion from a military person who was seriously injured in Northern Ireland. The curriculum is flexible to the extent that current issues can be slotted in and much of the material is self-generated. Some students are involved in a summer project in offering respite care to children and young people with disabilities. Advice and guidance is given on smoking, alcohol and illegal substances to all students. The school has a clear policy entitled 'substance use and misuse policy' which is known to all staff and freely available in the staff handbook.

Parents submit a consent form and completed questionnaire prior to the student arriving in the school. Contact details and notes of significant medical conditions and treatments and immunisations are included. There is evidence of good care, appropriate support and contact with relevant, outside agencies. All six students are registered with a local general practitioner and there are both male and female doctors. The medical centre is situated in the main building and provides facilities for what is ostensibly a day school with a very small boarding element of six sixth form students. The Medical Centre is staffed by a qualified nurse and it operates six days each week. Students, who are ill in the evenings or at the weekend, remain in their house if their condition is likely to absent them from school for several days. Boarding staff, who have up to date first aid qualifications look after them until they are able to return to school. Medication, confidential records and equipment are all securely stored. The school does not have a written protocol for the provision of non-prescription 'household' medicines. There also needs to be closer liaison between the boarding house and the school medical centre. At present the medical centre does not inform the boarding house if a student has received non prescription medication and vice-versa. The school should consider developing an over-arching policy on health promotion and medication which should encompass the school and boarding house. There are appropriate medication records in the boarding house and in the Medical Centre but audit trails of medication between the house and school were not available. There were also no completed risk assessments for those students that self medicate.

The school employs a contract company to provide management of the kitchen and the mid day meal. The catering manager is very experienced and aware of the need to educate students in healthy eating as well as providing lunch during the weekdays. The dining hall is bright and spacious with a well-placed servery displaying the food in an attractive manner. The inspector

sampled two meals in the dining room and the food was of good quality with plenty of choice and good quality fresh fruit. The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly. Drinking water is available throughout the school and in the boarding house. Students prepare the evening meal in the boarding house on a rota basis with the support of staff as needed. While this is seen as very good practise that will help the students to gain skills that will be of value in later life there was no evidence of any students or staff receiving any formal food handling or hygiene training. One student commented 'Before I came here I couldn't cook so it has been great having the opportunity to develop this skill'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school's anti bullying policy and procedure is available to parents, staff and students. Good relationships and caring for others are fostered in the PHSE programme. The policy reviewed in 2008 defines bullying, including cyber bullying, and gives clear actions to be followed by all staff and parents. Students spoken to at the White House confirmed that bullying was not an issue within the boarding house. There was one issue of one student being 'overpowering' and issues were appropriately managed and dealt with.

The school provides a warm, friendly atmosphere and stresses team work and caring for others in keeping with the 10 principals of the school. The school has a comprehensive safeguarding policy and the designated person is also the head of pastoral care. Staff confirm they are given regular training briefings and the school follows the correct and required procedures regarding notifications and fully co-operates with the statutory processes in Croydon. There is a very good complaints policy available to parents but there are no formal complaints recorded in the boarding house log. Students commented in discussion that that they can resolve any issues within the boarding house and they feel very safe and well cared for by the staff who demonstrate a genuine regard for their well being and protection. Supervision is unobtrusive given the age of the students and they always know who is on duty and where to find them.

The school has comprehensive staff policies relating to the management of students behaviour with clearly stated expectations and a code of sanctions which are well known to all students. In discussion the students confirmed that sanctions are reasonable and imposed fairly, enabling them to develop and make decisions in the full knowledge of penalties they may incur. However the school does not have a policy for searching for and, if necessary reporting, any boarder missing from the school. The school has a current fire safety policy; fire evacuation notices and fire routes are clearly displayed. There is evidence of current tests on fire extinguishers and fire alarms. Students' confirm there are regular fire drills and fire alarm tests. Students safety and welfare are protected well during high-risk activities both on and off the site and the school only uses facilities which are licensed with the relevant national governing bodies, and only staff with relevant qualifications lead these activities.

There are no reports of intrusion into students' personal privacy; bathroom and shower facilities all have appropriate locks thus affording the pupils privacy when they are changing or washing. Students comment that they are treated with respect by most of the staff.

There is rigorous selection and vetting of staff who work with the young people. All staff records inspected had checks through the Criminal Records Bureau. The school keeps a record of follow-up checks to ensure the validity of all references and a note of this is made on each staff file. There were some minor shortfalls in respect of recruitment in that in a small number

of files inspected for support staff there were no interview notes and in one file there was only one written reference; the second referee was contacted by telephone and nothing was put in writing. While these are minor omissions it is important that all staff files contain all elements of Standard 38.2. The gap students that the school used had completed all the necessary checks prior to them coming to the school.

All visitors must sign in on arrival and wear a visitors badge on site. Students' accommodation is kept thoroughly secure from public intrusion by key pads on the doors and closed circuit television.

There are comprehensive measures in place to protect students and staff from safety hazards and a wide range of risk assessments for outings, transport, activities. Outdoor and recreational areas are well presented and suitably risk assessed. There is evidence of portable appliance testing in the boarding house and on site. Contact with parents is easy as students have mobile phones and also use internet services which are freely available. In addition there is a payphone in the boarding house.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There is a good range of indoor and outdoor activities available to the boarding students and staff are committed to encouraging students to try out different opportunities. The students' working days are busy, but students generally commented that they have the opportunity to watch television and relax in the later part of the evenings and during the weekends. Some students commented that the long days left them feeling quite tired.

Students are able to access the internet in the boarding house through school provided computers or their own lap top. The White House is provided with a wireless broadband internet service and although this does not have a firewall in place the housemaster reserves the right to view the students' internet history. This system works extremely well and helps to promote trust and integrity amongst the small group of boarders. Boarders have access to a number of staff to provide help and guidance and in practice this is often the housemaster or other house staff. Boarding staff in the house provide good quality pastoral care. All students in the White House are assigned an experienced tutor to support their academic work while at the school that also takes an interest in any pastoral issues.

A counselling service is available to the students who can either be referred through school staff or self refer, however although the school does have an external counsellor students are not able to self refer and the details of him are not available to students. The school could be more pro-active by introducing the school counsellor as part of their induction in addition to the external counsellor. At present it is left up to the students to make such arrangements for them to see the counsellor if they feel they need to. The school has an approach that values the diverse needs of its boarders and this is evidenced through regular formal and informal discussions in the boarding house, the tutor system and various other groups that meet throughout the school so that issues on gender, race, religion, cultural or linguistic background are addressed appropriately.

The school makes good arrangements to cope with the needs of those students whose first language is not English and the boarders say they have been made to feel very welcome. The school is attentive in ensuring that any demands on boarders, for example sports practise, do

not adversely affect their welfare, although one or two students felt that they had very little free time. Boarding space is so arranged that all students share a bedroom with another while living at the White House. All students are encouraged to achieve educationally and socially to their full potential and the good teacher student relationships evident throughout the inspection were supported by discussion with the students. Overall the six students at the White House indicated that they all felt that the school was very much their second home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The boarding facility at the school is very small and consists of just one boarding house for six sixth form students. There are not formalised meetings as such although there are plenty of opportunities for discussion with the housemaster and the boarding house staff. If the need arises then the housemaster will call a more formal meeting although such meetings are infrequent due to the family style atmosphere that exists within the boarding house. Students spoken to stated that the boarding house staff are very easy to talk to and there was evidence of suggestions being made that were followed through.

Students benefit from supportive relationships with staff and can seek support and guidance from staff members, designated tutors and the school chaplain.

Students are able to have private contact with their families through telephone, email and internet services. Information about help-line numbers is provided and staff communicate with parents over any welfare concerns relating to students.

Support and guidance from staff and established students helps new students to settle into the school. They are also provided with comprehensive written information about school routines and rules.

Boarders have access to activities inside and outside the school during weekends and evenings and the weekend programme of activities and outings is popular amongst the students. Staff exercise care over the choice of outside facilities and outings are risk assessed to ensure health and safety requirements are met. Rules governing the students leaving the school site alone and in groups both ensure their safety and promote their increasing independence. Boarders have access to suitable newspapers, magazines and television.

Students benefit from sound relationships with staff who look after them fairly and well. Any disagreements between students and staff are dealt with appropriately.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school provides secure facilities for students to store their personal possessions and valuables, such as lockable drawers in bedrooms. In addition personal possessions may be handed in to the housemaster. The school emphasises the importance of students keeping their money and possessions safe and boarders spoken to were happy with the arrangements for the security of possessions and money. All of the students have a bank account and the housemaster looks after some of the students' money. Written records of students' finance that were accurate and clear were seen during the inspection.

The accommodation provided for the six boarders is generally satisfactory. Improvements have been made as part of a rolling programme of work and furniture and soft furnishings have been replaced in some parts of the accommodation. The rolling programme is ongoing and some areas are still in need of refurbishment. Heating, ventilation and noise levels appear to be satisfactory. Standards of cleanliness are generally of a good standard although there are occasions when the staff need to remind students to keep their bedrooms tidy.

Students' sleeping accommodation is reasonably spacious and adequately furnished. However there is a bunk bed in one of the three bedrooms and although this was not currently being used it had previously been used on a regular basis by a student. In discussion with senior staff the inspector was informed that this would only now be used for guests on an occasional basis as it is very clear in the National Minimum Standards that bunk beds are only to be used as an exception in Year 8 and above and that there should be sufficient headroom above the bunk bed which was clearly not the case in the White House. Sufficient storage facilities are provided and students can personalise their rooms. Students share appropriately and have some choice over this, although the staff ensure that students with the same native language do not share bedrooms. This is to help with their development of the English language and is in keeping with the international flavour of the White House. There are sufficient toilet and washing facilities for students though standards of decoration vary. The house was found to be well heated and lit at the time of the inspection and no adverse comments were received from students.

Students can easily obtain any necessary minor personal or stationary items from the school or from local shops that are situated nearby in South Croydon.

No students are currently accommodated in lodgings arranged by the school, either during term-time or in the school vacations.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

While the White House operates in a highly satisfactory manner and has an inclusive atmosphere the school has not, as yet developed a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice of boarding aims and objectives. This document should include the aims, admission criteria, and facilities on offer at the school and welfare support services to support students and should be made available to parents, boarders and staff.

Although one of the school's governors has lead responsibility for safeguarding matters it was evident that the governing board does not have a clear system or process to monitor welfare provision within the boarding house. The school should therefore seek to develop and put in place a system which is inline with the National Minimum Standards.

The school has just one boarding house 'The White House' for six, sixth form students. The accommodation is in reasonable condition and there is a rolling programme of refurbishment. Reference is made to the boarding house accommodation in the economic wellbeing section of this report. Sleeping areas, recreational areas and washing facilities are reasonably and appropriately separated for students.

There is a signing in and out system for boarders, so that staff can keep track of them at all times. There are clear guidelines about who can leave the school premises and when. When

boarders are returning home for holidays or returning to the school at the end of holidays, they are expected to have provided clear travel arrangements.

Staffing levels are well managed and staff are able to respond to the varying needs, wishes and activities of the students. The school has an excellent plan to address any major crises that relate to the welfare of the boarders. The school does have a system of monitoring risk assessments, although these are not currently monitored twice a term as laid down in the relevant standard. Electrical appliance testing for school and student equipment is up to date.

Although the boarding house is for only six students and managed very much as an extended family none of the three staff have undertaken any courses in boarding practice, run by the Boarding School Association. There does need to be opportunities for the three staff to develop their boarding practice. There should be opportunities for them to attend training courses such as those run by BSA so they can update their knowledge and practise.

The school has not had to face any major crises for a considerable time. There are well formulated policies and procedures in place regarding pupil welfare, accidents and fire, to name but a few. In conversations that were held with boarders, it is evident that there is a good understanding of what to do in the event of fire and who to contact in case of any other kind of emergency.

The school ensures that all new members of boarding staff receive induction training before they start work at the school, including child protection training. All three of the boarding staff have an annual appraisal that includes a review about their boarding practice.

Students and parents stated in discussions and surveys that they were satisfied with the level of pastoral care and services provided to the boarding students of the school. The outcome for young people in this section is judged as good although a number of recommendations have been made to ensure good practice.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school and staff can be justifiably proud of the academic and pastoral support they offer to a diverse range of students. Overall the staff team is seen to promote diversity in a creative manner and there is a strong approach throughout the school to promote inclusion.

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 the school obtains and follows, qualified medical or nursing advice in developing a written protocol on the provision of non prescription household medicines to boarders (National Minimum Standard 15)

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- implement a written risk assessment – based approach in deciding when and how boarders can administer their own medication. (National Minimum Standard 15)
 - ensure that staff and students involved in the preparation of food for others have received appropriate training in food handling and hygiene. (National Minimum Standard 24)
 - implement a policy that is known to all staff and used in practise, for searching for and, if necessary reporting any boarder missing from school. (National Minimum Standard 3)
 - ensure there is a satisfactory recruitment process recorded in writing that includes all elements of this standard. (National Minimum Standard 38)
 - ensure that the school identifies at least one person outside the boarding and teaching staff of the school whom boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. The school must ensure there is easy access to the person. (National Minimum Standard 14)
 - implement a suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice and make this document available to all parents, boarders and staff. (National Minimum Standard 1)
 - ensure that all boarding staff are provided with opportunities for training so that they can update their knowledge and practice. (National Minimum Standard 34)