

Clayesmore Preparatory School

Inspection report for boarding school

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Unique reference number | SC026909 |
| Inspection date | 10 June 2009 |
| Inspector | Clare Davies |
| Type of Inspection | Key |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Address | Clayesmore Preparatory School Iwerne Minster BLANDFORD FORUM Dorset DT11 8PH |
| Telephone number | 01747 811707 |
| Email | mpitcher@clayesmore.com |
| Registered person | Clayesmore Preparatory School |
| Head / Principal | Richard Geffen |
| Nominated person | |
| Date of last inspection | 19 October 2006 |

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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

Clayesmore Prep School is a day and boarding school with approximately 200 pupils. A senior school, pre-prep and nursery are located on the same site allowing children to move through the schools from the ages of two and a half to 18 years. There are approximately 65 boarders at the co-educational prep school, many are from families serving in the armed forces in the UK and abroad. The boarding accommodation is central to the school building allowing boarders easy access to school resources such as the library and ICT suite. The dining room and other areas on the site are shared with the senior school. The school has extensive recreational facilities and grounds; it is located in a Dorset village near to Shaftesbury.

Summary

This was an announced inspection to assess Clayesmore Prep School against the national minimum standards for boarding schools. Many standards have been exceeded and only one recommendation has been made. The boarding provision is outstanding and pastoral care is a strength of the school where boarders feel safe and have good relationships with the staff. The boarders receive excellent medical care and attention from qualified nurses and the catering team provide a fantastic range of nutritious meals. Boarders feel consulted and take an active role in the development of the school. They enjoy a wide range of extracurricular activities with good facilities on site. The senior management team is proactive in ensuring that the welfare of boarders is paramount and they are sensitive to the needs of military families. The commitment to safeguarding and the promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Boarders and their parents have high levels of satisfaction with the school.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Recommendations made at the last full welfare inspection in September 2004 were judged to have been met at a monitoring visit that was carried out in October 2006. Therefore there were no outstanding recommendations to be addressed during this inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health and welfare of boarders is promoted extremely well by all staff. The personal, social and health education programme is delivered through tutor groups and further supported by nursing and boarding staff. The programme provides age appropriate material, including films about the dangers of the internet and mobile phone safety, visiting speakers, and an interactive visit to a Safety Village. Physical activity, healthy eating and personal hygiene are all promoted by the boarding staff and sound health education policies and procedures are integrated into daily practice. Further information is required to ensure boarders know how to protect themselves from abuse.

Medical care is provided by qualified nurses 24 hours a day, this exceeds the minimum standard. Nurses are suitably trained and continue to develop their skills with training in minor injuries, first aid and responses to allergic reactions. The school has good links with a local surgery and a visiting GP is present at the neighbouring senior school every weekday and available to

boarders from this school if required. Specific health needs are managed effectively and sensitively with staff consulting with relevant health professionals to ensure boarders' needs are consistently met. Medical information and written consent for the school to administer any medication and treatment is obtained from parents, this ensures that health care is provided in accordance with parents' wishes. A large number of school staff are trained in first aid and the use of medication in response to an allergic reaction. The secure storage of medication and thorough recording systems ensure that boarders receive safe and appropriate medical care and attention. A designated room is available for boarders who are ill and it is fitted with a call bell to summon attention. Boarders say they feel well cared for when they are unwell. The nurses are integral to the boarding staff team and have a greater role than responding to medical issues, which promotes good relationships with boarders and provides the nurses with a holistic view of boarders' welfare. The catering staff have an excellent understanding of what makes a balanced and nutritious meal and put this into practice offering an extensive range. There is always a choice of main dishes with vegetarian options, pasta bar, salad bar and jacket potatoes. Puddings, yoghurts and a selection of fresh fruit are always available to follow. Boarders enjoy the food and appreciate the many choices. Very few negative comments were received about the food offered and these were related to personal preferences. The boarding and school councils are able to contribute to menu selections and feedback pupil comments to the catering team. To promote good hygiene and reduce the spread of any infections, dispensers of hand sanitizer are located at the entrance to the dining room for everyone to use.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders report that any incidents of bullying are rare and appropriately dealt with when known by staff. The policy has reference to government initiatives and documents in countering bullying and includes the dangers of bullying by text messages, email and websites. The boarders' document 'Say no to bullying' provides guidance on responding to being bullied, what to do if you observe others being bullied, and what to do if you are the bully.

The school's commitment to the safety and welfare of the boarders is outstanding. All staff receive training on how to respond to a child protection concern as part of their induction and this is refreshed through staff meetings and training days. Staff are issued with small laminated cards to remind them what action to take and staff who have prime contact with boarders undertake further training provided by a national charity. The school policy is an excellent document and includes a one page summary for temporary staff. The designated member of staff has undertaken appropriate training with the local authority and additional senior staff have also attended. Boarders report that the use of discipline is fair and appropriate. The Claysmorian Code sets out expectations of behaviour supported by school rules which is a list of things all school pupils should do. This is followed by a list of things pupils can earn, such as team points, a commendation, certificates and prizes. Pupils are very well behaved and encouraged to represent themselves and the school with pride; this was evident as some pupils prepared for an athletics meeting competing against other schools. Boarding staff ensure that the rewards and sanctions applied to boarders are different to those during the school day to ensure that fairness is applied to day pupils and boarders. Credits are issued to promote good behaviour, community spirit and mutual respect and overall winners are rewarded each half term. Dormitory inspections accumulate points and the winners are rewarded with a special treat at afternoon break. Any sanctions issued are recorded appropriately and monitored by

senior staff. Parents and boarders know how to complain and contact details are provided for external agencies including Ofsted.

The school takes positive steps to ensure that boarders, staff and visitors are safe from the risk of fire. Fire safety equipment is regularly checked by school staff and external contractors. Boarders confirm that they know what to do if they hear the fire alarm as they have experienced practice evacuations at different times of the day. There is tight monitoring of any practice or false alarm to ensure that the systems in place are effective. Staff from all departments undertake fire safety training. The school welcomes visits by the local fire and rescue service to offer guidance and support to continually improve fire safety across the school site.

Safer recruitment practices are adopted; this is reflected in the robust recruitment procedures. All staff have clearance through the Criminal Records Bureau and the head has completed online training in safer recruitment. A sound policy ensures recruitment checks are thorough to protect pupils, and visitors are always escorted around the school. Health and safety issues are supported with sound policies and procedures that are tightly monitored by senior staff. Safety matters are reinforced with boarders through activities, fire drills, use of transport, testing of electrical equipment and areas of school that are out of bounds. Risk assessments are in place for the many activities, the environment and off site trips. An excellent system of reporting a fault or hazard ensures that matters are responded to promptly and senior staff can readily monitor progress and identify hazardous areas of the school.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are very positive about the activities that they can get involved with. The school facilities are extensive and this preparatory school benefits from sharing the site with the senior school. A sports hall, all weather pitches, sports fields, tennis courts, adventure playground, woodland trail, indoor swimming pool, art room, music department, library, ICT suite, table tennis and giant chess comprise just some of the activities and facilities available. Boarders also enjoy their free time in their dormitories and the common rooms where they can enjoy less structured play. Many trips are arranged for weekends and display boards show photographs of past events and details of forthcoming outings.

Boarders receive outstanding levels of personal support from staff which is a real strength of the school. This was confirmed by one of the boarders who reported, 'One of the best things about this school is the support we get.' Boarders identify many adults who they can turn to with a problem, the strength of the relationships between boarders and boarding staff ensures that the children feel safe and well cared for. Many boarders are from military families and the school has been proactive in liaising with a welfare team from the Ministry of Defence to ensure that the school can respond to the additional difficulties that may arise with family members being posted overseas. Families have welcomed this sensitive approach and report that there is 'good consideration and organisation for forces families' and that the school has 'a good understanding of military families.' Teaching assistants on a gap year are seen as older siblings by the boarders and they enjoy their company and supervision of activities, some teaching staff assist with prep. Nursing staff and matrons are significant carers and play a full part in the boarding team led by the houseparents. The head and his wife take an active role in boarding, covering some evening and weekend duties. The complement of the boarding staff creates a family atmosphere where boarders feel secure and happy. An independent listener is also

available to the boarders and concerns can be posted in the 'red box' if they wish to remain anonymous. Peer listeners from Year 8 have been trained to listen to pupils and help them. They are collectively known as the 'Friends' and are clear on their role and when they may need to report to an adult for help.

Parents report very positively about the boarding provision with comments such as 'Pastoral care of the children is excellent. They clearly have a lot of fun and my son loves it' and 'Good family atmosphere in a caring and compassionate environment.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school actively engages boarders in consultation through councils, weekly boarding meetings and informal opportunities. Boarders' council members feel empowered by their effect on changes within the school, such as a later start time for prep to allow more time for supper and the production of the new boarders' welcome booklet. The school has been proactive in undertaking a questionnaire to establish boarders' views and considering them within the development plan for boarding. To maintain contact with family and friends the boarding area has three payphones and there is good access to email. Personal mobile telephones are permitted during free time in the evenings and to assist those with families overseas a webcam is available. This is an excellent resource for boarders to be able to keep in close contact with their families who are not in the country. Parents report that communication from the boarding staff is very good and they feel that they are kept informed about their children's development and wellbeing. For parents who are unable to visit on their child's birthday, the houseparents send photographs by email of the birthday event held at the school to ensure that parents feel included albeit from a distance.

New boarders are made to feel welcome by receiving a postcard in the summer holidays from the houseparents saying that they are looking forward to them joining the boarding house. Taster days are offered including the chance to experience staying in a dormitory where a buddy is allocated to welcome them and help them join in with boarding life. A new boarders' booklet will be available from September. This has mainly been produced by current boarders, giving information that they would have found helpful when they arrived as a new boarder.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The boarding area is located centrally to main parts of the school. This provides easy access to some school facilities, such as the ICT suite and the library. Dormitories are separated by age and gender, and are suitable for boarders' needs. The dormitories vary in size; boarders in the larger rooms have sufficient space for their belongings. Boarders report that they like their dormitories and they personalise their bed space with choice of duvet cover, posters and photographs. Common rooms are pleasantly decorated and furnished, providing a comfortable homely environment. Boarders gave the following comments about boarding: 'It is like a big family but there is space to be alone' and 'It is like a big sleepover really.' The showers and toilets are suitably located on each floor and previous reports of the showers being cold have now been rectified.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The organisation of the school is underpinned by strong management and leadership from the head. Responsibilities are delegated across the school, empowering staff, which in turn provides a committed and dedicated staff team. The boarding staff are led well by the houseparents and, with the team working really well together, excellent pastoral care is delivered to the boarders. Policies and procedures are of a very high standard, providing staff with clear guidance. There are sound systems in place to monitor the safety and welfare of boarders with clear record keeping and effective meetings promoting good lines of communication across the school. The head and his wife are very involved with boarding, which enables them to be accessible to boarders and fully aware of any boarding issues.

There is a high regard for the safe supervision of boarders with good staffing levels at all times. The staff handbook and job descriptions ensure that everyone knows what is expected of them. Boarding staff speak highly of the support and communication they receive from the houseparents and staff welcome the training opportunities made available to them. Training has occurred in fire safety, first aid, child protection, food hygiene and boarding issues.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The strength of commitment is summed up by one boarder who said, 'Whatever you are like you are accepted, it doesn't matter if you are different.' The learning support unit helps pupils with aspects of their learning where they may need some additional support. A helpful guide has been produced for overseas pupils that prepares them for differences they may encounter being at a boarding school in England; helpful comments from pupils have been incorporated into this guide. Advice and guidance has been sought from other agencies to ensure the best possible individual support is provided by the school. To promote equality and diversity the children have been involved with global projects, acknowledging a range of religious festivals and customs, supporting local, national and international charities, and welcoming visiting speakers such as a member of European parliament and a paralympic athlete to promote disability and achievement.

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 |
|----------|--------|----------|
|----------|--------|----------|

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the personal, social and health education programme provides appropriate advice and guidance on protecting oneself from abuse. (NMS 6)