

Colston's School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Wilfried Maxfield / Wendy Anderson
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	28 June 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

The school was founded in 1710 and moved to its current location in 1857. A range of older and new purpose built properties are located in 30 acres of beautiful grounds.

Formerly exclusively for boys the school became fully co-educational in 1991. It now has 383 male day students and 230 female day students. The age range is from 11 to 18.

Boarders numbers have been reduced from 42 in 2005 to 24 at present. Girl's boarding was closed in July 2007 due to a lack in demand. There are currently no younger children boarding at the school with the youngest boy aged 15 and the oldest 18.

Since July 2008 all boarding provision has since been housed in one building which was fully refurbished for the purpose.

Summary

This was an announced inspection of the school.

The inspection was conducted by two social care inspectors over a period of two days. All of the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Boarding Schools were inspected on this occasion.

As part of the inspection process boarders, parents and staff were offered the opportunity to anonymously complete pre-inspection questionnaires. A full return of questionnaires was received from boarders and a good return from parents and staff.

Judgements contained in this report are made from evidence obtained from pre-inspection material and from that gathered during the inspection. Views expressed by boarders accommodated at the school rated the boarding provision as exceptional and outstanding throughout, with very minor criticisms. This has positively influenced the rating of all outcome areas.

Due to the issues raised in staying safe, this outcome area is judged as satisfactory. As a result, organisation can only be satisfactory and the overall rating of the inspection outcome can only be satisfactory. This applies although all of the other four outcome areas have been judged to be outstanding.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last full inspection of boarding at the school was carried out by the National Care Standards Commission in October 2004. It inspected all 52 of the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and reported on 28 recommendations and six advisory recommendations. A follow up visit took place in June 2006, which found that the school had acted on all but four of the remaining recommendations.

Since then the school has radically changed the face of boarding provision and substantially improved all accommodation. Numbers of boarders have reduced over recent years and

subsequently some of the boarding houses have now closed and been turned into classrooms. With one boarding house remaining and standards significantly raised none of the recommendations set by the National Care Standards Commission apply today.

It was noted, that the school is planning to close the provision of boarding in July 2011. This follows a lengthy review into the feasibility of boarding over the longer term. The decision has been communicated formally to staff, parents pupils and Old Boys in July 2009. The current boarding community including staff and boarders have received these news with great sadness.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a policy on promoting the health of children and young people in its care. The policy is well known to staff and is implemented effectively. There are no concerns at the school about alcohol, smoking or drug related issues.

Health promotion forms part of the personal, social and health education curriculum offered to all pupils. Boarders confirm that levels of advice are appropriate to their age and enable them to make independent decisions and choices.

The school employs two registered nurses who maintain records detailing boarders health and welfare needs. A medical register contains the names of children and young people on medication and any details on dietary needs, allergies and intolerances. This information is circulated to all relevant staff. Boarder's records contain comprehensive contact details including identification of persons to be contacted in the event of a medical emergency.

The school has an excellent medical centre. The centre operates an open door policy and is staffed by qualified nurses. Boarders rate the medical support they are given as outstanding and praise the high levels of medical expertise and the warm and caring attention of medical staff. Local doctors visit the school weekly and a local surgery provides additional all-round medical cover and advice. The school has good arrangements for pupils to access a range of external dental, optical and other medical services if and when needed.

Medication is stored securely and record keeping details all of the elements in standard 15.2. Boarder's medical files contain written parental consent for all possible events of medical treatment.

Boarders who are ill and remain in the boarding house will be regularly checked and looked after by a member of staff by day and by night.

Depending on need and a process of assessment a dedicated health care plan will be maintained for boarders. Plans are of a good quality and identify significant physical, psychological and behavioural difficulties. The school supports boarders needing external professional consultation and services.

Boarders with a statement of special educational needs praise the school for the prompt and effective additional support given to them.

The school provides pupils with a good choice of well prepared meals. Choices include an alternative main course, a vegetarian option and a well stocked salad bar. Catering arrangements

are well managed and catering staff have received a wide range of appropriate food handling and hygiene training. Boarders are given good opportunity to put forward ideas and criticisms to the whole school food committee which currently meets once a term.

The boarding house has its own well equipped kitchen. Boarders enjoy preparing their own food and drinks in order to complement additional dietary needs outside the main meals.

Boarders who are ill also have the use of a designated sick room. One of the sick rooms does currently not have an adequate emergency call system. The school will employ additional out of hours and night medical staff to keep the medical centre open and support ill boarders if and when needed.

A dedicated housekeeper and a team of cleaners ensure that boarders' bedding and clothing is washed and maintained to a high standard. The school manages to clean and maintain most of the boarders' laundry on site with additional dry cleaning services available on request. Boarders report on the good bond with housekeeping staff and are very positive about their services and all of the related systems managed by them.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The school has an anti-bullying policy. It is well known to boarders and has been distributed to parents as part of the 'Guide for Boarding Pupils and Parents'. The policy covers all of the elements of the relevant standards. Boarding pupils and staff confirm that bullying is currently not a problem within the boarding community.

The school has a child protection policy which is well known to staff. It has recently also published a safeguarding policy. Both documents do not reflect all of the recent changes in local safeguarding procedures and restructuring and do not take full account of information available through the South West Safeguarding Protection Group. However, the school benefits from two experienced and designated child protection officers who take responsibility for the implementation of the child protection policy. All staff, including ancillary staff, have received child protection training. Designated members of staff have received advanced child protection training at Level 2.

Boarders benefit from a wide range of behaviour management policies and the school's insightful approach to discipline. The use of punishments and sanctions, the policy on the use of restraint and the role of prefects and Heads of House in monitoring and role modelling appropriate behaviour are exceptionally well managed. Sanctions and rewards are also clearly stated in the guide for boarders. Young people perceive the disciplinary measures adopted by staff to be implemented fairly at all times. Sanctions are well recorded and trends are being effectively monitored by the Head of Boarding and the Head Teacher.

A comprehensive complaints procedure is made widely available to boarders and parents through the guide to boarding.

The school has not nominated any prefects in the boarding house. All prefects currently in post are day pupils. Candidates undergo a rigorous selection and vetting process. Duties and responsibilities of prefects are clearly stated in the relevant documents. The Head of Boarding

appoints Heads of House to supervise boarders tasks and duty rotas and to role model and encourage appropriate behaviour and attitudes.

The school does not appoint any guardians.

The designated health and safety officer monitors the effective implementation of the fire safety policies and procedures. Records show that emergency lighting, fire alarms and fire fighting equipment are regularly tested and serviced. Boarders know the evacuation procedures and fire drills are carried out at least once a term.

No children and young people other than the school's boarding pupils are accommodated in the boarding house.

Boarders are protected through a rigorous system of risk assessments. Assessments are well documented and recorded and identify possible high risk activities for boarders. All safety measures are taken and supervisory arrangements are adequate.

Boarder's personal privacy is respected at all times and residents do not report on any inappropriate intrusions.

The school's recruitment and vetting procedures are satisfactory. However, not all of the elements of standard 38.2. are rigorously applied when checking prospective staff in every case. While most files were complete not all staff files included a full employment history and a CV, a proof of identity and evidence on qualifications. References are missing in a small sample.

In addition, the school does currently not implement Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for all of the adults living on the school site. This potentially leads to unsupervised contact with unchecked adults in areas on the site of the school and regularly used by boarders. However, boarders accommodation itself is secure from public intrusion and pupils are protected from unsupervised contact with adults, such as external contractors, who have not been subject to the school's recruitment checks.

Sleeping, living and recreational areas, indoors and in the school grounds are risk free. The school implements an effective system of risk assessment to identify, monitor and reduce the risk to boarders.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders rate the range and choice of activities available to them outside teaching time as excellent.

Equally, boarders receive excellent personal support from staff and rate this as outstanding. All of the boarders report that they benefit from a network of highly supportive staff. Parents also comment that the pastoral and academic support systems are excellent.

Boarders do not experience discrimination and describe being part of an atmosphere of tolerance and inclusion. The school has a policy on equality and diversity.

In spite of an intense and busy schedule boarders report that they still have reasonable amounts of free time each day.

The school has appropriate facilities for both organised and private study. Boarding houses benefit from full internet access and wireless networks are available with appropriate filters. There is a policy covering computer use. Boarders are full of praise for the range of facilities available to them. Comments such as 'We love the boarding house and facilities available to us' are supported unanimously.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school operates a range of meetings designed both for the sharing of information and to ascertain students views on relevant aspects of boarding provision.

All boarders are able to maintain contact with their families and all have access to landline, mobile phones and the internet to assist them. The school's library offers students a range of newspapers. Boarders appreciate having access to satellite TV news and sports channels.

There is a good process of induction for potential new boarders which includes the opportunity for 'taster days'. The Guide for Boarding Pupils and Parents gives relevant information about all of the key aspects of boarding. New boarders speak positively of the more experienced boarders and their efforts to integrate all newcomers.

Relationship between staff and boarders are positive and respectful and boarders are very positive about the strong sense of community that exists within the boarding provision. Boarders speak of the staff group in exceptionally positive terms.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Good levels of protection are provided for boarder's personal possessions. Students do currently not report on any missing or stolen items.

The school provides young people with boarding provision of an exceptional standard. The boarding house has been fully refurbished in 2008 and provides dormitories and communal areas that are decorated, furnished and equipped to a high standard. The boarding house provides for single and two bedded bedrooms. Room sizes are good and bedrooms are well furnished with good quality bedding and excellent study facilities. Housekeeping is excellent with boarders praising staff for providing a well cared for, clean and comfortable environment.

Numbers of bathrooms and toilets in boarding houses are appropriate for the number of students accommodated. Bathroom provide adequate privacy. Boarders report on 'lots of hot water and excellent showers'. Locks to toilets and bathrooms provide external access in the event of an emergency.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available to parents, boarders and staff. The school has a current Guide for Boarding Pupils and Parents, a Boarding

Staff Guide and a range of policies and procedures which are also available on CD. All documents reflect the actual current practice of boarding at the school.

The development of boarding and boarding practice is well managed. Senior boarding staff have substantial experience and training and are able to ensure boarder's welfare. The school's Head Master takes a strong and active interest in the day-to-day management and monitoring of boarding and boarder's welfare. The Head Teacher regularly reports back to the Board of Governors.

School record keeping contributes to boarders' welfare. Records of risk assessments are maintained and are monitored by the Head Teacher. Accidents and incidents are directly monitored by the schools nurses. The school's policy for crisis management is comprehensive and includes protocols for dealing with a range of scenarios.

Boarding provisions are staffed by a House Master and a number of tutors. House masters and tutors have academic responsibilities in addition to providing residential and pastoral care. Well maintained duty rotas demonstrate that the supervision of boarders is adequate at all times. Two staff provide sleeping in cover. Staffing rotas also provide cover for absence and sickness.

Boarders are looked after by staff with considerable experience and training in the practise of boarding. All staff benefit from continued training and development opportunities. Members of the boarding house staff team have current job descriptions. All members of the boarding staff have updated training in child protection, fire awareness and first aid.

All staff are provided with up-to-date written guidance on the schools boarding policies and practice. The guidance covers all of the boarding policies listed in standard 35.3. A recommendation to update safeguarding and child protection policies has been made in earlier parts of this report.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school's focus on equal opportunities for boys who experience forms of specific learning difficulties is outstanding. The integration of boarders from overseas is equally excellent. Policies and procures relating to the promotion of equality and diversity are implemented and monitored in a way that fosters the full integration of every pupil into the school community.

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):

- update the child protection and safeguarding policy to include the latest legislation (NMS3).

- ensure that the school's system for recruiting and vetting staff includes all of the elements of relevant standards (NMS 38.2).
- ensure that all adults who have access to boarder's accommodation and facilities and live on the school site have a CRB check at standard level (NMS 38).
- install an emergency call system for the first floor sick room (NMS 16).