

Radley College

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Michael Williams / Wendy Anderson
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Address	Radley College Radley ABINGDON Oxfordshire OX14 2HR
Telephone number	01235 543031
Email	warden@radley.org.uk
Registered person	Radley College
Head / Principal	Angus McPhail
Nominated person	Angus McPhail
Date of last inspection	28 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

This service describes itself as 'a boarding school, not a school with boarding'. This is because it is an all-boarding school for boys. The boys are aged from 13 years to 18 years old. The school is on a campus that is a close community where boys, teachers and their families live and work together. The campus is on the outskirts of a village near a major city. At the start of the autumn term 2009 the total number of boarders was 679, who are all accommodated in ten separate houses, known as socials.

Summary

This was an announced, full inspection of all the key national minimum standards for boarding schools. It was carried out by three social care inspectors and a boarding school additional inspector.

The school was assessed as outstanding overall with one area judged as good. The following aspects were found to be outstanding: the care provided by the school's medical centre; the catering provision boarders receive; the school's countering of bullying; management of health and safety; the pastoral care provided by staff in each social and centrally; the range of activities and the personal support available to boarders; the school's consultation with boarders and communication with their parents; and the school's organisation of the boarding houses; and promotion of equality and diversity. The following areas for improvement were also identified: to clarify child protection procedures with all staff; to ensure all staff recruitment checks are verifiable from records; and to amend the school's written staff disciplinary procedure.

Analysis of the surveys received for this inspection from boarders and their parents showed a predominantly positive picture. Boarders surveyed responded that they were either always or usually satisfied with boarding at the school. Also the vast majority of boarders met during the inspection were positive about their experiences staying at the school. The parents' comments were predominantly about what the school does well, rather than needs to improve, when looking after pupils who board. A large proportion of parents commented that there was nothing at all that the school needed to improve for boarders.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection of boarding at the college was a follow-up visit carried out by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in November 2006. It reported 'There were no outstanding recommendations from the previous inspection undertaken in November 2003.' The CSCI report recommended two actions relating to the college's child protection policy and lighting for private study. Both of the recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' health is very well promoted through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) that they receive. Age-appropriate PSHE is provided by a combination of methods: biology and citizenship teaching; lectures from external speakers, with follow up sessions with form masters;

and the involvement of medical centre staff and pastoral housemistresses in PSHE in the socials. Overall the programme covers all the issues recommended and makes a major contribution to boarders' understanding of health and moral issues, such as smoking and bullying.

Appropriate first aid and minor illness treatment is available to boarders at all times. Boarders surveyed overwhelmingly responded that someone always helps them if they are unwell. The college has a medical centre staffed 24 hours a day by a team of nine registered nurses. The centre has robust systems in place to protect and promote boarders' health and the care it provides is excellent. Boarders are registered with a local general practice and each weekday a doctor's surgery is held in the medical centre. Emergency first aid treatment is available at all times from qualified staff across the college and in each of the socials. A minor gap in the communication between the medical centre and the social staff was identified. However, this gap had already been identified by the school, along with imminent action to address it; by the introduction of an electronic shared school health record.

Boarders receive excellent quality catering provision. The boarders' surveys showed that they feel the meals usually provide them with a balanced diet. A similar number of parents commented that food was something the school does well. The inspectors found the catering provision to be excellent, in terms of quantity, quality and choice, and provision for special dietary needs. It has recently been given an excellent food hygiene rating by the district council and all the kitchen staff are appropriately trained.

The college's strengths in personal, social and health education and healthy eating have in part led the college to now aim to achieve the national healthy schools standard.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are effectively protected from bullying. The vast majority of boarders surveyed said that they are not being bullied. This is a testament to one of the aims of boarding at the college, 'to create an atmosphere of cooperation, tolerance, kindness and trust in which teasing, harassment and bullying will find great difficulty in developing.'

Boarders are very well protected from harm. Since the last inspection, the college has updated its child protection policy in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance. The college is now working in partnership with this board and in September 2009 received training from them. However, this training was not completely in line with procedures for staff included in both this national minimum standard and the school's child protection procedure. A recommendation is, therefore, reported regarding this. Staff who did not receive this training, or are scheduled to be, have been separately briefed on safeguarding, having already been briefed on it during their induction. The college has a senior member of staff designated to take responsibility for child protection, and they and several other members of staff have received child protection training.

The use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate. The majority of parents who commented on the college's response to behaviour problems said that it is something the college does well. One parent commented 'Problems rarely occur but when they do they are dealt with swiftly and fairly.' This inspection found similarly that the college central pastoral team meets regularly, and intervenes swiftly and fairly in behaviour matters in socials; leaving the social tutor to advocate for the boys involved, and the head teacher to make the final

judgement regarding appropriate punishment. Boarders commented that difficulties between them are dealt with well and fairly, although they only recalled a few.

Boarders are very well protected from the risk of fire and from safety hazards as a result of the excellent work in both of these areas by the college's health and safety manager. He regularly carries out comprehensive fire risk assessments for each social and makes this and other fire prevention information easily understandable and accessible for them. Similarly, he issues a Think Safety handbook to each member of staff, and oversees an effective system of risk assessment supported by written records for each area of the college.

Boarders' personal privacy is well respected by staff, with appropriate supervision and availability in socials.

There is good selection and vetting of all staff, effectively gate-keeping who enters the campus. The human resources manager maintains the required single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, and ensures that a comprehensive recruitment process is followed for all staff. Inspection of the recruitment records of a range of staff recently recruited to work with boarders, showed that they included all of the checks recommended, except for a satisfactory written explanation of a gap in employment history in one case. A recommendation is, therefore, reported regarding this. However, this was an administrative, and not a safety, issue because this gap was checked at interview but not recorded.

Boarders have their own accommodation that is secure from public intrusion, and they are protected from unsupervised contact with adults who have not been subject to the college's recruitment checks. There is a high level of security across the college campus and its socials, as a result of the college being such a close knit community, and the security staff and measures in place. The college has the recommended agreement with adult members of staff households, who are living on the campus but are not employed by the college.

In terms of boarders staying safe, analysis of the boarders' surveys showed that the vast majority of them said that they always thought they were properly protected from harm by those who look after them. A large proportion of the parents comments identified pastoral care as something that the college does well.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have access to an extensive range and choice of activities, including sporting, arts and crafts, and cultural and intellectual activities. The college regard their activities for boarders as one of their areas of strength. A number of boarders' parents commented that activities are something the college does well, linked to their excellent indoor and outdoor facilities. Boarders commented positively on the choice of activities available to them.

Boarders receive excellent personal support from staff. Analysis of the boarders' surveys showed that they identified a wide range of adults they would go to for help if they had a problem at the college. For example, they would often go to their form master. They would also go to other boys, who are their friends or mentors, for help. Outside of the college's staff, a school counsellor is available and is used by boarders. The college is in the process of also appointing an independent listener.

Boarders do not experience discrimination. A lot of the parents' comments received were about the college's caring and community atmosphere. They said 'Boys grow into caring young men through the respectful and caring atmosphere'; and 'Outstanding pastoral care creates an excellent boarding environment, boys with mutual respect for each other and the staff, creating a real sense of belonging and passion for the college community.' Boarders said that they were treated with respect and that it was expected they would treat others with respect, and that the college is a community with a family feel where everyone tries to get on. The inspectors observed respectful relationships between staff and boarders, and between older and younger boarders in their socials. The college has an ethos of inclusion and of valuing people's differences, reinforced in PSHE lessons and the daily influence of chapel, that is followed in practice.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the college. There are a wide range of formal and informal opportunities for boarders to contribute to the running of the college. For example, through cocoa sessions with house staff, house representatives, house committee meetings, and anonymous annual surveys about their pastoral care. Both the medical and catering departments of the college regularly seek and receive boarders' feedback, to inform their continuing development.

Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families. They mostly do this by mobile telephone and email. Staff contact parents about any significant welfare concerns regarding their son at college. A lot of parents commented that communication is something the college does well. They said 'Excellent communications between the school and home creating a very strong three-way partnership; school, boy, parent.'

There is a very good process of induction and guidance for new boarders, whether joining in the first year or lower sixth year. New boarders are given key information in writing, including 'A new boy's guide' before arrival, and value the mentoring scheme the college operates. A number of parents commented that boarders' induction is something that the college does well. Boarders commented that older and younger boys feel comfortable together.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders' possessions and money are protected. They are protected by each boarder having their own security box in their room, but moreover by one of the college's aims, 'to develop a sense of responsibility in each boy both as regards himself and others and his environment', being followed in practice. Boarders clearly understood and followed the expectation for them to respect others and to play their part in the community.

Boarders are provided with good accommodation overall. Their sleeping accommodation and toilet and washing provision is well decorated, furnished and maintained. In September 2008, the college opened two new-build socials to give boarders more social space. The college is now carrying out their five-year strategy to refurbish the eight older socials to a similarly high standard. To this end, the college's building and estates manager is following a 'style guide' for the refurbishment of each room in the socials. This guide has addressed the recommendation made by CSCI for suitable lighting for private study.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A suitable statement of the college's boarding principles and practice is available to parents, boarders and staff. The principles of the college and its boarding aims are in current reference notes for boys and adults.

The college's organisation of boarding makes an excellent contribution to boarders' welfare. Each of the college's ten socials is organised so that boarders from all five year groups can socialise with each other and receive a lot of attention from their social pastoral staff team. In terms of sleeping accommodation, socials are also organised so that the youngest boarders can form bonds with each other on arrival. However, pastoral care is not just organised around each boy's social, as the central pastoral team ensures common practice across all the socials.

College record keeping contributes to boarders' welfare. The college has exceptionally good monitoring and auditing systems. These ensure that records of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents are well monitored by designated senior members of staff and that any necessary action is taken.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Boarders do not experience discrimination; they benefit from being part of a caring community where any minority groups are not excluded but appropriately supported. For example, appropriate provision is made for boarders with learning support, special dietary, or different religious needs.

Boarders benefit from good supervision. The staff supervising boarders in their socials are their resident social tutor, sub-tutor and pastoral housemistress, with a number of non-resident sub-tutors providing additional supervision. A lot of the parents' comments received said that the college's boarding staff are one of its strengths, in terms of the staff-boarder ratio and the constant availability of staff, and singled out individual boarding staff for praise.

Boarders are looked after by staff who have suitable skills, knowledge and competence. Staff with boarding duties are supported by clear boarding policies and practice to follow, and benefit from good induction and continued training. The college has a number of different handbooks to guide social staff, that they usually access via the college's comprehensive intranet site. This guidance includes a staff disciplinary procedure, that when last followed included supporting a staff member during their suspension and investigation, although the written procedure does not state this. A recommendation is, therefore, reported regarding this. Social staff receive induction, that includes a child protection briefing, meet regularly as a team, participate in relevant internal and external training, and routinely have their performance appraised.

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):

- clarify with all staff, and the school counsellor, the procedure to follow should a child choose to make an allegation or disclosure of abuse to them (breach of national minimum standard 3.3)
- make sure that all of the checks that are part of the school's system for recruiting staff can be verified from recruitment records (breach of national minimum standard 38.2)
- amend the school's written staff disciplinary procedure to fully reflect practice in this area. (breach of national minimum standard 35.4)