

Colchester Royal Grammar School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Michael McCleave
Type of Inspection	Key

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Head / Principal	K L Jenkinson
Nominated person	K L Jenkinson
Date of last inspection	31 October 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 boarding school is an academically selective, maintained school with Foundation status. The school caters for boys aged 11 to 18 and both boys and girls in the sixth form. Boarding provision is exclusively for sixth form boys. The boarding accommodation is provided in two houses both of which are situated on the main school site.

Summary

This is a school where boarders are well cared for and feel safe. They are strongly supported and encouraged to enjoy boarding life by a team of staff who demonstrate a positive commitment towards the welfare of boarders, the majority of whom are from abroad.

Safeguarding is given a high priority and excellent links have been established with the local authority safeguarding service. Boarding staff have a clear understanding of their duty of care and they carry out their responsibilities with professionalism.

There is a positive appreciation of different cultures and religions at the school and boarders are supported by a committed staff team to enjoy boarding life and to achieve their potential. Equality and diversity is a strong feature of this school.

Boarding houses are well maintained and appropriately furnished providing boarders with a safe and supportive environment. The boarding provision is very well managed by the boarding manager, who is strongly supported by a dedicated team of staff.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the headteacher was recommended to review and improve the child protection procedures, the medication policy and the recruitment procedures. These have all now been updated and provide a more clearer set of procedures for staff to follow. The headteacher was asked to refurbish the old bathing facilities in one boarding house. This work has been completed and the bathing facilities have been brought up to the required standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health of boarders is positively promoted. They are encouraged to take good care of their health through what they eat and to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The school is part of the county healthy schools campaign. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging the boarders to adopt a healthy lifestyle and the personal, social, health, education and economics (PSHEE) teaching programme, introduces boarders to various topics that includes safety considerations when using the internet, cyber bullying, drugs, personal relationships, personal health and sexual health issues. Where appropriate, visiting professionals are invited to speak to the boarders on specific health related topics. There is no medical facility at the school and boarders are registered with the local health service clinic which has all the medical details of the boarders. An excellent service is provided from the clinic. Boarders have a choice of whether they wish to see a male or female doctor. Where bedrooms are shared in the boarding houses, alternative

arrangements would be made for the boarder who is unwell. There is always a member of staff on duty who is qualified to administer first aid. This ensures that boarders health and welfare is managed appropriately.

The catering arrangements provide the boarders with an excellent choice of meals each day and a vegetarian option is always on offer. The meals presented are nutritionally balanced with a well stocked salad bar. Hot and cold drinks are available. The catering manager meets with members of the boarding council to ensure that the views of boarders are listened to in respect of the meals provided. Cultural events are celebrated through special meals and in particular Chinese New Year and China Day. These are popular events and demonstrates a good approach to equality and diversity. Boarders can prepare meals in their houses and these are relaxed informal occasions where they share meals. However, they are unsure if they have received formal food handling and hygiene training.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Safeguarding is taken seriously and all staff are very clear about their responsibilities to ensure the safety and well-being of the boarders. There is no evidence to show that bullying is a current issue. Boarders are confident that bullying does not take place. The designated person for child protection has established an excellent liaison with the local authority safeguarding service. This ensures that the school is kept up-to-date with relevant safeguarding information and training opportunities. There is access to the local authority intranet site where safeguarding information can be downloaded and disseminated to all staff. The approach to safeguarding is very robust and staff have a very clear understanding of their responsibilities in this important area. Boarders feel safe living at the school and they have full confidence in the staff.

Sanctions are rarely imposed and the most common sanction is extra study time for poor time keeping rather than for any misbehaviour. The houses are safe for the boarders and all fire safety checks are carried out appropriately by staff. This includes full practice evacuations at differing times. The safety of boarders is further enhanced through the robust recruitment and selection process. Appropriate safety and identity checks are carried out on all applicants for work. No one is permitted to work in boarding until all checks are completed. These measures promote the safety and welfare of the boarders. Criminal Records Bureau checks are now carried out every three years. This is excellent practice.

The boarding houses are secure from any public access with all doors having good quality locks. Security cameras are strategically located on the school site. There are risk assessments in place to ensure that all activity and environmental hazards are properly assessed. The quality of information is very good and ensures that boarders are not exposed to unnecessary risks on or away from the school.

The approach to safeguarding of boarders is excellent.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The support given to boarders is excellent. Staff in boarding houses, are always on hand to offer advice and guidance. As commented by some boarders, 'the house staff act like our parents', 'the house staff are always around for us to talk to'. Staff demonstrate a very strong

commitment to their duties and have a passion for their work. Boarders said that the house staff are 'fantastic'. The school has an independent listener from the local community who is available for boarders to contact about personal problems or concerns. Although boarders are aware of the independent person, they expressed a confidence and trust in the boarding staff as their preferred contact for any issues. Each house has a list of external contacts who boarders can contact confidentially. Support is provided for those boarders who may have difficulty initially with English through extra tuition from tutors. The school has a proud record of admitting pupils who have been taken out of mainstream schools because of behavioural issues and offered a boarding place. Through the strong and sensitive support of staff, these boarders have succeeded and gone onto university. This is commendable and demonstrates a positive approach to equal opportunities in line with the school's mission statement. Parents are very satisfied with the care and support of their children and make the following comments, 'the boarding team has provided a most caring, supportive and family feel boarding environment', 'a second home which parents deeply appreciate and old boys who graduated ten years ago still treasure to date'.

The school has a robust approach to celebrating diversity and any form of discrimination is not acceptable. Boarders are very satisfied with their care and state confidently that they do not experience any inappropriate behaviour towards them either in the school or local area.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The views and opinions of boarders are valued at the school. The boarders' council is the main formal mechanism where issues are raised with staff that are related to boarding. This group meets every half term and provides staff and boarders with the opportunity to discuss a range of issues. These have included the provision of kitchen facilities to make snacks in one of the boarding houses. Discussions have taken place with the catering manager about the type of meals provided. The council has successfully bid for the provision of some new furniture in boarding houses. The informal contact between boarders and staff during evenings and weekends, provide a good opportunity for information sharing. Boarders are confident that they are able to share their views with staff and that they are listened to. Through voluntary work, boarders make a positive contribution to the local community, working with the elderly and disabled. This is commendable.

As the majority of boarders are from overseas, it is recognised that contact with their families is very important. Broadband internet is provided in the boarding houses to enable email and skype contact to be made. Although each house has a payphone installed, personal mobile phones are more commonly used. These measures enable boarders to maintain the important links with their families.

New boarders are introduced to their house before the start of the term and a buddy system is used to pair up the new boarder with an experienced boarder. This works well and supports boarders during the initial stages of their life at the school. This is very good practice.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The two boarding houses are located on the main school site. The upper sixth form boarders enjoy single bedrooms whilst the lower sixth, share two to a room. This arrangement works

well and boarders have a choice of whom they share with. All bedrooms are comfortably furnished with a bed, desk, chair, reading lamp and personal storage facilities. Each house has a common room with a snack making facility in a kitchen area.

The bathing and toilet facilities are located close to the bedrooms and these are very well maintained by domestic staff. The laundry service is excellent and very much appreciated by the boarders. The school has invested in a modern facility that ensures clothes and bedding are cleaned and returned in a short space of time. Boarders are particularly appreciative of the excellent laundry service.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school has a positive approach promoting respect and tolerance for each other. The school mission statement clearly points out that school is committed to providing a quality education for its pupils and aims at excellence in order to strive to raise the aspirations of all pupils, irrespective of social or cultural backgrounds. Through the religious education teaching programme, pupils are introduced to other religions from around the world. These include Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism. This broadens their outlook and understanding of different religions. Visiting speakers representing different faiths are invited to talk to students. A special aim of the school is to help those designated with special educational needs. A special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) ensures that individual support and encouragement is provided to those who require it. The school admits pupils with physical disabilities, sensory impairment, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has a Disability Access Plan that includes the provision of signs, ramps, railings, and lifts to improve access around the school site. The governing body takes a specific interest in special needs and receives regular updates on the support provided for those who have special needs. Parents comment that that the school has an 'ideal mix of boarders from different countries and diverse cultures, this has fostered cultural adaptability and provides excellent learning opportunities in the development of rapport and the building of friendships', 'there is a rich array of opportunities for the boarders to shine'.

The school's prospectus clearly outlines the ethos and principles in the mission statement. There is a strong emphasis on respect, courtesy and the opportunity to achieve the potential of all students.

The boarding houses are operated in a consistent way and there are no major discrepancies between the two houses. The staff team work effectively together and they are provided with strong leadership from the boarding manager. There is good contact between the boarding staff each day and information is shared between them, in order to ensure that they are kept fully informed about any boarding issues. This helps to promote an effective service for the benefit of the boarders. The staff have an excellent awareness of each boarder's current situation and are available to support them at all times.

The safety of boarders is enhanced by the robust risk assessments in place. These cover the school site as well as external activities. All other boarding house records are well maintained and these are monitored by the boarding manager.

It is evident that the boarding staff work as a close knit team to provide the boarders with a friendly and safe environment. This is identified by parents who say they are 'a highly and efficient team of boarding staff led by a distinguished boarding manager'.

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 boarders involved in preparing food for others have received appropriate training in food handling and hygiene. (NMS 24.7)