

Wycliffe College

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Barbara Davies
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

Wycliffe College was founded in 1882 and currently comprises of Wycliffe Preparatory School and Wycliffe Senior School. It is set in 54 acres of green belt land on the outskirts of Stonehouse in Gloucestershire. The college is co-educational and offers boarding and day education for children between the ages of 13 years and 18 years. The senior school and boarding provision are located on a single campus. Seven boarding houses provide accommodation for a maximum of 270 students. The boarding houses are a mixture of traditional and modern properties. Much of the school and boarding provision has been subject to renovation and refurbishment in recent years. The school's recreation facilities include a floodlit all-weather sports pitch, rugby, football and netball pitches and a multi-functional sports centre. The dining room, where the boarders eat the majority of their meals is a modern facility. A café, offering light snacks and refreshments is open throughout most of the day.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced inspection to assess the school's practice against the national minimum standards for boarding schools. The school last received a welfare inspection in December 2007. At that time shortfalls were found and actions made in staying safe, being healthy and enjoying and achieving. This inspection found that action had been taken in all of the outstanding matters and its practice is assessed as being outstanding in all areas except economic well-being which is good.

Boarding is valued for the contribution it makes to the school and is extremely well organised. Staff are trained for the role they perform and are clear about their responsibilities. Excellent provision is made for attending to the health and dietary needs of boarders. A well co-ordinated activity programme in the evenings offers boarders a range of interesting things to do. Requests from pupils for more organised activities at week-ends are being considered. There is an emphasis on safeguarding the welfare of boarders and robust practices help to keep children safe. The views of boarders and parents are considered important and their access to key personnel in the school facilitates two-way communication. Boarders enjoy their time at the school and say 'we are very well looked after and our grumbles are little in the grand scheme of things.' The school is continually striving to improve its boarding provision and a specific budget has recently been allocated to boarding houses to help them achieve this.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection the school was required to take action in line with recommendations made by the local fire officer. A further visit has been conducted by the fire officer and compliance notices issued in some respects. Direct contact was made with the local fire officer who said that the school had taken appropriate action. The risk assessment process has been made more robust in respect of boarding houses but due to the lack of documentary evidence it is not clear how often routine maintenance checks are completed on boarding houses. A robust system has been introduced for assessing the suitability of candidates to work in the school and there is rigorous monitoring to ensure all checks have been completed. Adults not employed by the school but living in boarding houses are now required to sign a written agreement defining the terms of their tenancy, including the contact they are permitted to have with children. Shower curtains have been fitted to shower cubicles in Lampeter to promote the privacy of boarders when using the shower. The parental consent form has been extended to include the administration of first aid. House staff know they have to report refusals of medication to the health centre for advice and a written procedure is now in place for assessing a boarder's competence to self-medicate. Taps that do not provide suitable drinking water have been labelled to alert boarders not to drink water out of them. A new recording system has been introduced for recording money and valuables held and administered on behalf of boarders and this is used in most boarding houses. The school's child protection policy has been amended to be consistent with local safeguarding procedures. Consideration is being given, but not yet implemented, to extending the range of activities available to boarders at the week-end.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent provision is made for promoting and attending to boarders' health care while boarding at the college. Boarders receive formal advice and guidance in personal, social and health care matters through a well co-ordinated and comprehensive life skills programme. This is delivered each week by a team of trained staff as part of the school curriculum. Boarders confirm being offered additional advice, guidance and support by staff working in the boarding houses and by staff working in the medical centre. Advice leaflets are also available in boarding houses. In March 2010, the Independent Schools Inspectorate found that 'a programme of life skills provides for pupils' social development.' The college has an appropriate policy on countering major risks to health, including alcohol, smoking and substance abuse, which staff know and follow in practice. The college operates a strict non-smoking policy and boarders are not permitted to smoke on or off campus. A minority of students indicated that they would like the rules to be relaxed. The school adopts a non-negotiable position with regard to this matter and the college's approach is appropriate given the health, legal and safety implications involved.

Boarders receive excellent first aid and health care when needed. This care is

provided by the three registered nurses and two first aiders at the college's medical centre. The medical centre has recently been extended to provide better and more private facilities. Excellent links have been established with the local surgery where most boarders are registered. The college works to a written and agreed individual health care plan for any boarder with health care needs. There is excellent communication between external consultants, parents and the school nurses to ensure they are kept informed of changes in health and medication regimes. The medical centre has implemented each aspect of the medical treatment and first aid recommendation made at the last inspection. They have: extended parental consent to include the administration of first aid; ensured refusals of medication are appropriately reported and introduced a procedure to assess each boarder's competence to self-medicate.

There is an expectation that all school and boarding staff are trained and authorised by the medical centre staff to administer medication and first aid. First aid training has lapsed for a small number of boarding staff and refresher training is planned. Despite this, the volume and proximity of other qualified first aiders to the boarding houses concerned would allow a prompt response to be provided in the event of a medical emergency. Both prescribed and household medication administered to boarders is securely stored and recorded by the college. Good practice is evident with only small amounts of household medication being kept in boarding houses. In most instances medication is administered and recorded appropriately with amounts of stock held in medicine cupboards tallying with the written records kept. A discrepancy was noted in one of the boarding houses. It was possible to track that this was due to a recording error rather than a failure to administer medication. Remedial action was taken during the inspection to address the matter. The procedure for administering controlled drugs in boarding houses does not meet best practice guidelines as two signatures are not always recorded. The practice of boarding staff in administering and recording medication is not routinely monitored by the school nurses which might help to identify errors if they do occur. The school's medication policy and medical consent forms have not yet been updated to make reference to the Gillick competency of children in respect of consenting to medical treatment in line with the new national minimum standards for boarding school's that were very recently published. The school adheres to this principle in practice and boarders are informed of their right to meet and speak to the General Practitioner in confidence.

Catering provision is of an extremely high standard and is recognised by most of the pupils as providing a varied, nutritional and well-balanced diet. Provision is made for boarders who have special requirements. The school's catering contract was recently due for review and a new catering company awarded the contract. Most boarders say that the quality of meals has improved since the start of the autumn term. A minority of boarders say there is insufficient choice of meals at supper and that portion sizes are too small for older pupils. The school has expressed a commitment to seek a resolution to this.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The safety and welfare of boarders, while accommodated at the school, are considered to be of paramount importance. Robust policies and procedures have been developed to protect all pupils and these are implemented consistently throughout all aspects of school provision, including boarding. The emphasis on educating pupils to recognise bullying, its impact and how to respond has been successful in reducing and maintaining bullying to minimum levels. Almost without exception, the responses to questionnaires from boarders indicate that they do not experience bullying. There are some boarders who do not know whether or not they are bullied. Nevertheless staff are not complacent and remain aware of the potential for bullying to occur. They are vigilant in intervening in disputes between young people to prevent situations from escalating and to achieve a prompt resolution. The school has been quick to take precautions against the possible risks presented by cyber-bullying. Boarders are alerted to these, and to other dangers presented by the internet, through information provided to them and during computer technology lessons.

Primary responsibility for managing child protection is delegated to the director of pastoral care who is well qualified for the role she assumes. Her training, knowledge and understanding of child protection issues is updated at least annually. Boarders are also protected in the event of the absence of the director of pastoral care as a number of other key personnel have also completed formal safer recruitment training. Boarders are all well protected as all other staff are well informed about how to recognise and respond to indicators of abuse. Boarders say they feel well cared for and safe.

Information concerning the school's code of conduct and behaviour management policies is distributed to staff, parents and boarders. Boarders receive information in a format that they can carry around with them and so it is readily available for them to refer to. Dependent on the seriousness and nature of the misdemeanour, written records are kept in the boarding house, by the director of care and by the deputy head-teacher. Sanctions are used sparingly in the boarding house and are proportionate to the misdemeanour committed. Separate written records are also kept of more serious misdemeanours, such as smoking and the use of alcohol or drugs; the frequency of these types of these misdemeanours are closely monitored. Most boarders say that sanctions are fair and appropriately administered.

A prefect system operates within the school and within boarding houses. The system is carefully managed by the school with a recruitment and selection process being used to assess the suitability of pupils expressing an interest in the role. A thorough induction process informs prefects about their roles and responsibilities and advises them about the scope of their powers. They are not permitted to issue sanctions to other pupils but are expected to refer matters of conduct to a senior member of the school staff. Boarders speak positively about prefects and the support they provide to younger pupils.

The school takes positive steps to keep the boarders, staff and visitors safe from fire and other hazards. Established systems are in place for regular checking and servicing of fire safety and detection equipment. Action has been taken by the school in response to compliance notices issued by the local fire service in November 2009. The fire officer is satisfied with the action taken by the school. The boarders and staff are briefed on the school's emergency fire procedures and regularly participate in routine evacuations.

There are robust systems for the effective implementation, review and updating of risk assessments completed on the individual boarding houses. Thorough assessments are also completed for activities that boarders are involved in both on and off campus. The school trustees conduct tours of boarding houses to assess the standard of facilities and understand the nature of the problems they present in terms of maintenance.

Security measures are in place to restrict intrusion onto the school campus and into boarding houses. Boarders and staff report the measures to be effective. Historically some problems had been experienced with intruders from the local community and on occasions the safety of boarders was compromised. The school has sought advice from local police and has raised its involvement with local schools in an attempt to forge more positive relationships. This, together with a change in practical arrangements and the implementation of further security measures, has achieved a significant reduction in incidents.

The school has established robust systems for the recruitment and vetting of staff. These are a significant contributory factor to the safeguarding of boarders and helps to ensure that they are not cared by staff who may cause them harm. The recruitment and vetting process for boarding staff is thorough and covers all of the requirements of the national minimum standards. Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks at an enhanced level are completed for all staff employed by the school and for all other adults living on the site. CRB checks are obtained before boarding staff take up their employment. Accommodation agreements are in place advising those adults living on site, but not employed by the school, about the restrictions regarding contact with the boarders and pupils.

Positive steps are taken to ensure that boarders do not have contact with unchecked adults. External contractors are normally scheduled to work on site during holiday periods or are supervised while working in the residential areas. All visitors to the site are required to wear identity badges. Boarders are aware of the need to report any strangers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have access to an interesting and varied programme of planned activities in the evenings. Younger boarders are encouraged to participate in several activities

each week. This expectation decreases as pupils work their way through the school as there is a greater emphasis on preparation for exams. Boarders say that the evening activity programme provides them with more than enough choice and 'has something to offer everyone regardless of their interests.' There is a diverse range of opinion amongst boarders about activities on Sundays when fewer trips and activities are organised. Opinion amongst boarders is almost equally divided between those that like the opportunity to shop with friends in local towns, those that like to relax in the boarding house and those that would like a more structured programme of outings and activities to be implemented. The school has listened to boarders, canvassed their views in a survey and is now considering how it can best respond to the requests made.

The arrangements for boarders to have access to support are carefully considered and implemented. The head-teacher and director of pastoral care make sure they are readily accessible to boarders and parents. They operate an open-door policy, encouraging anyone to approach them spontaneously to discuss concerns. This approach is encouraged and replicated throughout the school and by boarding staff. Boarding and teaching staff meet regularly to discuss and share information about individual boarders and the school has recently introduced a cause for concern strategy which identifies children who are considered to be in need of additional support. Boarders benefit from the availability of a dedicated school counsellor and arrangements can be made for boarders to access this service. An extensive list of confidential helpline numbers is published within the information given to boarders. This enables boarders to independently and confidentially access them without reference to staff. The communication needs of overseas students are assessed and additional support in English provided where necessary. A buddy system and week long induction programme for overseas students is a particularly strong feature of the school's practice and helps students settle into school and make friends.

Boarding is a multi-cultural community and the school is proficient at managing the dynamics that such a group presents. The school knows its pupils well and quickly becomes aware of issues that arise. Throughout all aspects of school life, boarders are supported to develop an understanding and appreciation of the cultural differences that exist. A variety of forums, such as chapel, are used to deliver interesting and age appropriate guidance about anti-discriminatory practice. Boarders are alerted to the injustices and tensions that can occur in society in relation to age, gender, ability, disability, religion and culture and are helped to develop a sense of right and wrong. Discrimination is not evident. Boarders of all nationalities appear well integrated while there is also a recognition of their right to socialise within their own culture and/or with people who share the same interests. The report published by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) following an inspection of the school in March 2010, stated that the 'social development and awareness of pupils is outstanding.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Extensive opportunities are provided for boarders to express their views and opinions about the boarding provision. The school places an emphasis on talking and listening to boarders informally as a means of obtaining their views on how the boarding experience can be improved. All pupils also have the opportunity to make their views known and represented through the school council. Boarders report some successes have been negotiated through the school council such as negotiating changes to clothing for sixth form pupils and a request to improve re-cycling provision. Boarders also have the opportunity to influence practice in the boarding houses during the weekly house meetings.

The school helps boarders to maintain contact with their families and friends by providing telephone and e-mail facilities. Most pupils also have their own mobile phones. Consideration is currently being given to a request from some boarders for the installation of Skype. Parents are extremely pleased with the two-way flow of information between themselves and the school and of the support and guidance offered when problems arise.

The introduction of new pupils into the school is very well managed. They are given written information explaining about how boarding operates and this is also available in the boarding house for them to refer to. The school is sensitive to the needs of overseas students and special effort is made to welcome and familiarise them into the school before the term starts. A buddy system has been introduced since the previous inspection and boarders say they find this a helpful way to get to know each other and to make friends.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school recognises the need for boarders to be able to keep their valuables and possessions safe. As a means of facilitating this, boarders are provided with keys to their rooms and have the additional security measure of a lockable cupboard in their dormitory. Boarders are discouraged from having large amounts of cash in school. Should this be necessary, they are encouraged to hand this to staff for safekeeping. Despite these arrangements, boarders do not always use the facilities provided. During interviews boarders reported incidents of minor theft but said that staff have not been alerted to these. Appropriate action is taken in response to incidents involving significant amounts of money with police involvement being sought. The school also works closely with the police and invites them into school to educate pupils about the measures they can take to protect themselves against crime.

Boarding houses offer a mix of traditional and modern facilities. The age and nature of accommodation varies between boarding houses and presents challenges for the school to manage. There are differences in the size and standard of facilities in each

house, for example the kitchens are bigger in some houses than others. Nevertheless, boarders are loyal to the boarding houses to which they are affiliated. The school has a planned and continual programme of refurbishment aimed at improving facilities. Regular maintenance checks are completed on each house to make sure that damage and is quickly attended to. Overall this inspection found boarding houses to be well furnished, clean and well maintained. A maintenance issue found in one of the houses was speedily addressed. This was reported as not being present when the routine check of the house was completed just before the inspection. It is not practice for a checklist to be kept when maintenance checks are completed so there is no documentary evidence confirming when this area was last checked. A good practice recommendation will be made under organisation concerning this.

All boarding houses provide a range of facilities including, common rooms, study facilities, a kitchen to make snacks and drinks and laundry facilities. Although varying in condition, toilet and washing facilities provide appropriate privacy for the boarders.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school is aware of the challenges presented by a multi-cultural community and are proactive in helping boarders develop an understanding and respect of each other. The school celebrates and helps boarders to recognise religious and cultural festivals such as Ramadan. An extensive choice of international cuisine is included in the weekly menu. Excellent levels of support are provided to help minority groups settle and integrate into school and boarding life. Documents demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities and avoidance of inappropriate discrimination in all forms.

The school's practices are transparent with staff, parents and boarders having access to copies of the school policies and procedures. The parent portal on the school website allows parents easy and prompt access to information. Boarders receive information describing the school's practices in a variety of formats.

There is clear and well-defined delegation of responsibility for boarding. The importance of the contribution that boarding makes to the school is recognised by the appointment of senior member of staff as director of pastoral care. The role and the enthusiasm with which it is implemented in practice, contributes to the continual development and improvement of boarding provision. The director of pastoral care provides clarity of role, direction and support to the boarding staff.

Boarders are appropriately separated by age and gender. They are allowed to make requests about who they share a dormitory with and consideration is given to these but cannot in all instances be agreed to.

The welfare of boarders is protected and promoted by the monitoring of records. A procedure has been introduced for monitoring checks completed on newly appointed

staff. Exemplary practice is evident with monthly audit of records being undertaken by the finance director and a further audit by one of the trustees. Records of accidents, risk assessments and sanctions are also completed regularly by several senior members of the school's staff with the intention of identifying trends and taking corrective action where necessary.

A high priority is given to ensuring that staff are suitably trained and competent for the role they perform. On appointment, staff benefit from attending a well-planned and executed induction programme to familiarise them with their role and duties. The opportunity to shadow a permanent member of staff helps them develop confidence in their role. A well co-ordinated training programme includes the opportunity for boarding staff to attend courses run by Boarding Schools' Association (BSA), enabling them to develop their skills, expertise and professionalism. Alongside this there is an expectation that all staff attend training in fire safety, child protection and first aid. Some house staff have also completed training in food hygiene. Each member of staff receives a copy of the school's policies and procedures on disk and sign to say they have read and understood key policies such as safeguarding and anti-bullying. Although staff do not receive individual supervision, they are well supported in their role and have opportunities to meet as a group with other house staff. An appraisal scheme provides the opportunity for them to receive feedback on their performance and agree training needs. Housemasters and housemistresses meet weekly with the director of pastoral care.

Duty rosters show a minimum of two staff on duty in each house. Contingency arrangements are in place to cover staff absenteeism. Boarders are aware of how to contact duty staff in the night although report this is seldom necessary. Boarders confirm there are sufficient staff around in houses to attend to their needs. Behaviour of boarders is observed to be good with boarders complying with the stated expectations.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that the school's health policies, procedures and medical consent forms signed by parents are updated to refer to Gillick competency (NMS 15) (good practice recommendation)
- ensure that written records are kept up to date following administration and that there is regular formal monitoring of the medication administration and recording practices in boarding houses by the school nurses (NMS 15.13) (good practice recommendation)
- ensure that a written audit trail is introduced following maintenance checks completed on boarding houses. this should show the areas checked, matters

identified as requiring attention and action taken in response (good practice recommendation) (NMS 47)