

# Shiplake College

Inspection report for Boarding School

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<b>Inspector</b>	Tola Akinde-Hummel / Maire Atherton
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<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Gregg Davies
<b>Nominated person</b>	Gregg Davies
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	04/10/2006

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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 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

Shiplake College is an independent boarding and day school for boys aged 11 to 18 and girls aged 16 to 18. Boarding is available from age 13. Shiplake College is an educational trust. It is situated at Shiplake Court on the banks of the River Thames and nearby to Henley-on-Thames. The college is close to the village and a short drive away from Reading city centre. The college stems from a Christian tradition but welcomes pupils from all denominations and religious backgrounds. The parish church is alongside the college buildings and chapel services are embedded in the college timetable. The college has approximately 213 boarders. All boarding houses and pupils present at the time of inspection participated in the inspection through interviews and questionnaires. Boarders completed 179 surveys and 58 surveys were returned by parents and guardians.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a key announced inspection carried out covering the Every Child Matters outcomes. This is the first inspection of the boarding provision conducted by Ofsted.

Boarders at Shiplake College are supported by a staff team committed to making their boarding experience pleasurable and fulfilling. Boarders enjoy positive relationships with staff, are encouraged to develop maturity and reach their full potential academically. Boarders take pride in their college and openly express their commitment to the college by volunteering to take on responsible roles such as prefects, mentors and head of house. The volunteers for such positions exceed the availability. This is sensitively managed by the college ensuring all offers to contribute are appreciated and utilised.

Shiplake College has a well-developed system of managing child protection concerns and bullying in the college. The positive attitude and behaviour of boarders in the college is evident and indicates that they are happy with the way in which they are nurtured there.

A real strength at Shiplake College is communication. One staff member said: 'This is the best school for communication at every level.' Communication with parents, and most importantly with the pupils, encourages good relationships to be established based on mutual respect.

The headteacher and the senior management team are professional, approachable and lead by example. The main focus is the pupils, keeping them safe and re-

enforcing positive messages about pupils' ability to succeed. The senior management team are aware of their shortfalls and are taking steps to address these.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The college was asked to make improvements in a number of areas following the previous inspection. Shiplake College has successfully addressed the majority of the recommendations.

The medical team now make a valuable contribution to the personal, social and health education programme for boarders and take the lead on all matters concerning health. The college has welfare plans in place, organised through the pastoral care committee meetings, that identify who will offer support to boarders. These plans are reviewed and updated.

The snacks provided to boarders have been reviewed and the system of providing additional snacks is welcomed by boarders within the college and in the boarding houses.

Newly recruited staff receive training on child protection matters soon after they arrive to ensure they understand the college's expectation of them to report any concerns. They are fully aware of who the designated child protection officer is and his role. One house handbook continues to describe sanctions that the college no longer use. The headteacher stated that this is not endorsed and should have been removed from the handbook. Boarders state that they have little or no experience of these sanctions.

The college amended the details of the regulator on the complaints policy as requested at the previous inspection and now record the outcome of all investigations. This allows better monitoring of complaints and emerging trends.

The recruitment procedures for non-teaching staff remain inconsistent in some cases and require careful monitoring of safer recruitment procedures. Written agreements are in place for adults living in the same building as boarders. This gives a clear indication of their responsibilities and the college's expectation of their standards of behaviour.

All boarding houses now have a house bank where boarders are able to safely deposit money. Records of withdrawal are accurate and provide a good audit trail.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

The college's approach to the personal, social and health education of boarders is detailed and inclusive. This is delivered in classrooms, tutor groups, assemblies and within the boarding house. Certain areas of health and welfare such as smoking, illegal substances and sexual health are repeated throughout the years to ensure

pupils understand the information. Topics vary from 'personal awareness' to 'the world around me'. Nurses from the health centre contribute to delivering information relevant to the age of the boarders.

The health centre provides good provision for sick boarders and day pupils. The health centre also operates as a satellite to the General Practitioner's surgery in the village. Male doctors are available three times a week and boarders can access female doctors at the village surgery a short distance away. The health centre is staffed six days a week by qualified nurses and a health care assistant. There are protocols in place for the administration of medication approved by the doctors. Medication is stored securely and appropriate records are kept. The senior nurse provides boarding staff with written medical guidance for common ailments and where required for individual pupils. Records of medication kept in the boarding house are monitored by the senior nurse. Changes to non-prescribed medication procedures have been introduced to improve the audit trail of medication. Electronic information passed from nurses to matrons and vice versa ensure up-to-date information about medication is readily available and accessible. The senior nurse also monitors any patterns regarding non-prescribed medicines and shares this information appropriately. Parental consent is in place for medical treatment and first aid; this ensures pupils receive medical care according to their parents' wishes. Boarders said, 'The nurses are really nice, they do look after you when you are unwell.'

The accommodation in the health centre is of a good standard. The centre provides consulting rooms for the doctor and the counsellor and an isolation room to manage infectious illnesses.

The senior nurse provides first aid training to all teaching staff and ensures all boarding staff are trained. Training is also provided on the use of adrenaline pens and the management of asthma. Medical welfare plans are produced by the nursing staff to identify medical conditions, how to respond to them and strategies for all staff to follow in managing them. The pastoral committee ensures that any concerns raised about boarders' welfare is discussed and a plan of action is put in place. These plans identify who is responsible for which area of a boarder's welfare. These plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that individual boarders are properly assisted and monitored during their time at the college.

Boarders enjoy food that is of an exceptionally high standard. A wide choice is available for breakfast, lunchtimes and evening meals. One boarder added: 'Breakfast is amazing.' Mealtimes are orderly and the food is plentiful. Fresh fruit is always available during lunch and supper and boarders can have extra portions if they wish. One boarder said, 'The food is very good here, better than any other school I have been to,' and another said, 'If you ask for something different or additional, they do listen to you.' Catering is provided by an external supplier and there are good arrangements for monitoring safety and hygiene matters. There is good liaison between the catering manager and the boarders to ensure that pupils' needs are catered for. The menus reflect choices to accommodate vegetarian options, international dishes and an awareness of individual dietary needs. In

addition to main meals, boarders have access to a reasonable range and quantity of snacks, drinking water and milk in the boarding house. The college also operates its own tuck shop daily and matrons have additional tuck available in the boarding houses.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Shiplake College has a very clear policy on bullying. All pupils spoken to understood that the college has a zero-tolerance stance on bullying and staff will take action. Pupils are encouraged to tell someone if they are the victim of, or witness, unkind behaviour towards others. The college takes action that is measured and fair in response to bullying. One boarder stated: 'Staff are really good at dealing with bullying, they look after the person who has been bullied and also the person who has been the bully.' The college has also developed their response to cyber bullying. There is a clear procedure outlining how this will be managed. The college has, with the assistance of the local police, provided education to parents and pupils on the potential dangers of electronic communication and the impact of such bullying on victims. The college encourages and promotes responsible use of electronic communication. All electronic communication connected to the college network can be monitored if staff suspect this is being misused.

There are excellent systems in place to manage child protection and safeguarding concerns. The designated officer is skilled and competent in managing all child protection referrals and allegations and has embedded safeguarding into the college's ethos. The child protection policy and procedure are detailed and informative and include contact details of individuals responsible for safeguarding children and young people. The college child protection officer is able to consult with the local authority designated officer on any safeguarding matters. The college has two deputy child protection officers to ensure that in the absence of the lead officer there is no delay in reporting or follow up. Good records are maintained of communication and action taken in response to issues that arise. All staff receive training from the designated officer and are issued with basic guidelines on what to do should there be any kind of disclosure. Staff are clear about who they should speak to about issues or concerns they have and are clear about the whistle-blowing policy.

Shiplake College has a clear rewards and sanctions policy available to staff and parents. The college focuses on good behaviour and encourages the use of excellence slips in all areas of college life. All pupils' contribution to college life is recognised. Notices are placed around the houses and special mention is given in assemblies and house meetings. The college has an infractions slip which is less used and monitored weekly by the deputy head. This also gives an overview of welfare issues that might affect behaviour. Any sanction imposed in college is not carried over into the boarding house. Likewise sanctions in the boarding house are called house events and not transferred to college life. Boarders understand the various levels of seriousness in relation to sanctions and believe that these are fair. All

boarders spoken to confirmed that sanctions are fair. Minor sanctions include early bedtime, temporary removal of privileges and litter picking. More serious sanctions include Saturday detention and being sent to the deputy head. One house welcome handbook has not removed from their literature sanctions that are considered by the college to be inappropriate.

Complaints made to Shiplake College are managed in a fair and transparent manner. The college has a policy and procedure which are made available to parents. Boarders also have the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction and this is made clear in the boarders' diary, and a willingness by staff to listen to boarders is evident. The procedure available to parents is in three stages with an appeals process. Results from surveys indicate that most boarders know how to complain. The complaints procedure available electronically to parents does not include the details of Ofsted. College prefects are supported by staff to undertake duties within the houses and help to maintain order. This is a role that prefects see as a privilege and is undertaken with the highest level of pride and sensitivity. Prefects do not administer punishments.

Health and safety matters are taken seriously in the college. All boarding houses have regular fire drills and boarders know the evacuation procedures. Records of fire drills, alarms and equipment tests are undertaken periodically and maintained centrally. The college has developed good relationships with the local fire service who have assessed the college for any action they would take and equipment and access they would need should there be an emergency. The college has an independent fire risk assessment in place.

Boarders report that their privacy is well respected and gave the example of staff knocking on bedroom doors before entering. Both male and female staff are sensitive to the boarders' need for privacy when they are present in the boarding houses.

Recruitment procedures in the college demonstrate that non-teaching staff should be subject to interview, Criminal Records Bureau checks, identity checks and references. However, some staff references are missing on personnel files. The implementation of their procedure for non-teaching staff is not sufficiently robust. Staff receive induction training and are provided with a detailed staff handbook. The college has information from preferred taxi firms that confirm all drivers have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks.

The college continually monitor their security. An electronic keypad system is in place at all boarding houses. The codes are known only to boarders who live in the house. Suitable and adequate security measures are in place to protect boarders when they are in college or if they leave the premises.

Records of risk assessment show that the college manage the boarding houses and surrounding grounds very well. Boarders know which areas are out of bounds and do not compromise their safety. The bursar responsible for minimising safety hazards ensures that regular repair and monitoring take place. Health and safety meetings



provide a forum to discuss the college's priority to ensure high standards of safety are maintained.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have a range of activities available for them to pursue. These include outdoor activities such as the Combined Cadet Force, football, rowing and swimming. Boarders can participate in the Duke Of Edinburgh award and attend music and drama clubs. Boarders have an opportunity to compete in house competitions and participate in trips abroad. Boarders' activities are organised at the weekend with another local school and boarders can opt not to take part if they wish. Boarders do not feel they have high demands placed upon them that compromise their free time. Older boarders can request town leave with the permission of their parent during the weekend and understand the code of conduct they are required to follow.

There is an excellent pastoral care system in place that provides pupils with a range of adults that they can approach for support. Surveys show that 95% of boarders feel well cared for and say staff know them well. Boarders state: 'There are so many people in the college that you can talk to and it does not have to be someone from your house.' Support to boarders is advertised in their personal diaries and around the college. Equally staff will suggest particular colleagues that they think may be in a better position to offer support to individuals. Boarders also said that they can speak to their peers within the house if they were worried about something or needed advice.

All boarders are part of the tutor system and meet regularly with their tutors. Boarders explained that if they are feeling overwhelmed by work and commitments, tutors help them to prioritise and reduce their activities until they can be better managed. Boarders find this level of support beneficial. Excellent communication between staff means that they are aware of issues when they need to be, providing pupils with consistency and sensitivity on an individual basis. Boarders describe the college as 'very friendly', and 'a safe place to get to know people.' Staff make clear to boarders the limits of confidentiality.

Shiplake College positively celebrates difference. Shiplake College policies refer to equality of opportunity and the mechanisms the college will use to deal with any incident of discrimination. One boarder stated: 'The college do all they can to help you fit in and find areas that interest you.' Another boarder said: 'Staff are really good at supporting us; if you are creative they appreciate this and no-one makes fun of you.' Staff encourage boarders to learn about each other in a way that is respectful and supportive.

Boarders have good facilities for study. All bedrooms have a desk, lamp, chair and boarders' wireless internet connection is available. Some houses also have a communal study area with computers. Boarders are also able to use other study

facilities around the college if they wish to. Study time is factored into the day and boarders are expected to use this.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have many opportunities to express their opinions about the way in which the boarding provision is organised. Boarders have regular house meetings and school council meetings. Food committee meetings are incorporated into the school council meetings. Examples of changes made to the provision of boarding include an extension of the time that flood lights are kept on around the astroturf, additional food items at breakfast and themed meals during the year. Boarders said: 'We are always given a reason why certain proposals cannot be agreed.' Boarders also confirmed that any changes suggested are quickly implemented.

Private contact with family members by boarders is maintained through a variety of methods. Boarders have access to email, telephones and letters. Boarders' contact with their families is not restricted. Those boarders who have families and friends abroad are able to access voice calls over the internet at one of the boarding houses if they wish to do so.

The college is effective in helping new boarders settle in. The induction is started prior to boarders taking up their place in the college. Boarders are supported by an allocated mentor who is available on day inductions and responsible when boarders move into the boarding house. During the first week at the college there is a team-building exercise for boarders. The house staff team contact families to reassure them that their sons are settling in well. All parents and boarders receive a welcome pack and handbook which explains life in the college and in their boarding houses. Female boarders are allocated a 'care bear' on arrival to assist with orientation around the college and settling into a predominantly male learning environment. House staff are aware of the difficulties boarders may encounter being away from home. One parent stated: 'Staff have been the making on my child. I will never be able to thank the school enough but particularly the housemaster for all he has done to look after, mentor, guide and educate.'

Positive relationships exist between staff and boarders. Staff recognise the unique situation boarders are in and promote an environment of tolerance and understanding. Staff ensure that individual personalities are allowed to develop and all boarders are treated fairly. One parent commented: 'He (the house tutor) gives a lot of his free time to the boys and I believe is genuinely concerned for the boys' happiness and well-being.' Another parent said: 'Boys grow up to be considerate, respectful, polite, well-rounded individuals with a great team spirit. The housemaster encourages their development in every way. Nothing is any trouble.'

## Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarders have sufficient lockable storage available to them. They do not routinely use this facility. Boarders report that where there have been thefts in the college, this is handled well. Goods are often returned and those responsible are appropriately dealt with.

Boarding accommodation at the college is varied. This is due to a recent major investment in one house and the rolling programme of refurbishment in others. The college recognises the need to allocate additional funds to improve the standard of accommodation to boarders. This is a long-term plan. Smaller improvements are made quickly and plans are in place to upgrade some facilities this financial year. Boarding houses have individual budgets to repair and replace some items. Some houses are in need of replacement furniture. All houses have sufficient toilet and washing facilities and boarders state the accommodation meets their needs. The cleanliness in houses is maintained with the assistance of ancillary staff who are managed by the senior matron.

## Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Boarders' cultural, social and religious needs are taken into account and inclusive practice underpins the pastoral care provided. Boarders are encouraged to lend their support to each other regardless of individual differences and limitations. Staff promote an anti-discriminatory approach and show an awareness of the effects of homophobia, racism, sexism and religious intolerance. The Shiplake College ethos is that everybody has a valuable contribution to make that is recognised, for example with the 'square peg' award. The college has an excellent accessibility plan and accessible facilities for disabled students. Shiplake College is a happy environment where pupils feel cared for. Staff responsible for providing pastoral care demonstrate a high awareness of the expectations and pressures that may be placed on boarders and of the importance of promoting a healthy work-life balance.

The information provided by the college in the prospectus, handbooks and on the website describes the principles, practice and ethos of the college. Boarders say: 'This is absolutely the best school I have ever been to, I love it here, the staff really care about you.'

The leadership of boarding in the college is excellent. Many areas of boarding practice have been streamlined to promote improvement in practice. This has not compromised the individual characteristics of boarding houses and the housemasters who manage them. All practices focus on the education, health, safety and welfare of boarders. One parent wrote: 'My child has benefited enormously from the education at Shiplake college. The sport and the social interaction has allowed my child to

mature and develop into a confident adult.'

The headteacher along with the head of pastoral care and house parents monitor complaints. Shiplake College senior management team effectively monitor all complaints, accidents and sanctions. Risk assessments are completed by individual departments and these are signed off by the health and safety coordinator. Health and safety meetings take place and action is taken to minimise any risks identified.

Information in boarding handbooks and on college notice boards outline the availability of staff during the week and at weekends. Boarders do not report a lack of staffing during evenings and weekends. Staff are committed to providing support to boarders and due to high staff morale, any occasional thin times are covered willingly.

Shiplake college has a formal appraisal system for housemasters. This is being introduced for matrons. The college encourages staff to attend training and is now utilising the skills within the staff team to deliver training to other boarding staff. For example, the learning development team recently provided training for staff, including matrons and catering staff, as part of the inset programme.

## **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...

- review one handbook to ensure that no idiosyncratic punishments are being recorded or issued contrary to college policy (NMS 4.4)
- amend the complaints procedure available to parents to include the role and contact details of Ofsted (NMS 5.4)
- apply recruitment procedures consistently as detailed in Standard 38. (Breach of national minimum standard 38.2)