



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

BOARDING SCHOOL

St Christopher School

**Barrington Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 3JZ**

Lead Inspector
Mr Bijayraj Ramkhelawon

Key Announced
17th January 2007 10:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	www.csci.org.uk

This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Boarding Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of school	St Christopher School
Address	Barrington Road Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 3JZ
Telephone number	01462 650850
Fax number	01462 481578
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	St Christopher School
Name of Head	Richard Palmer
Name of Head of Care	
Age range of boarding pupils	11 - 19
Date of last welfare inspection	8 th March 2004

Brief Description of the School:

The school was established in 1915 and from then until the late 1920's was supported by the Theosophical Education Trust. Members of different faiths mixed together in the school and learned to respect beliefs other than their own. The school has been independent for many years and is now an educational charity controlled by a governing body. The school provides education for boys and girls from the age of 2 to 19yrs. The boarding provision is from 7 to 19. The school is non-sectarian and aims to be a continuously developing community of children working together in an open and informal atmosphere, in which all are valued as individuals. The school has a particular style and personality. No uniform is worn and emphasis is given to informality, openness and individuality.

The 'Statement of Purpose', 'Boarding information' and the 'Complaints procedure' are available for current and prospective service users.

Current scale of fees charged is £ 5,500 up to £7115 per term.

SUMMARY

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

This inspection was carried out on the 17th January 2007 by two inspectors. A planned programme was followed to ensure that minimum disruption to school activities and boarding life for pupils and staff. All boarding facilities were visited. Questionnaire surveys from pupils and their parents were received. Meetings with different group of pupils and teachers were held and their views noted. Other school facilities were also viewed.

Feedback received from pupils, teachers and parents were positive. Pupils said that they enjoyed being at St Christopher School and that there were 'a lot of activities provided'. They were complimentary of the teachers and house parents and staff. They said that they felt supported and reassured.

Teachers and staff stated that they were happy to be working at the school and with the support of the new head of school they were looking forward to the challenges ahead and awaiting the outcome of the new proposals put forward to the Governors for an additional 19 bedded boarding provision for 6th Form pupils.

Below are some of the positive comments made by parents:

'I have always been particularly impressed at the family atmosphere in the boarding houses. The house parents are efficient and caring people. Whilst there are strict rules regarding safety and behaviour, these are enforced without losing the community atmosphere'.

'We feel that our children are well looked after and that the houseparents know our children very well and ensure that they are happy and working well'.

'There is a strong understanding and passion for the ethos of the school and so the work and ethos which goes on during the school day is continued after school for the boarders. Children are encouraged to have relaxed friendly relationships with those who care for them. They are able to speak freely and are disciplined sensitively but firmly if their behaviour lacks respect'.

Currently full boarders are from the age of 11-19. Total number of boys and girls as full boarders are 48 (28 boys and 20 girls). Number of day pupils are 459 (290 boys and 169 girls).

All pupils are addressed by their first names and there is no school uniform. The diet is entirely vegetarian and no meat is allowed on campus.

What the school does well:

This was a positive inspection that demonstrated the school was functioning well within its stated principles. The majority of the standards were fully met. Staff and students were very helpful and open in their approach to the inspectors. The school strong community feeling ensures a sense of belonging. The school is proactive, open and transparent in its operational activities.

Pupils said that they were able to express their views openly and that they were happy being at the school. There is a warm professional relationship between pupils and staff. They also said that there were a lot of opportunities for after school activities and that they were well stimulated. Others commented that there was excellent food with a wide range of choices, healthy eating and plenty of fruits.

There were robust policies and procedures in place to ensure that pupils were safe and that the school was achieving its aims and objectives. Boarding families were homely, comfortable and provided a relaxed atmosphere away from the school environment.

What has improved since the last inspection?

A 'knock and wait' policy is now in place and this policy is brought to the attention of new members of staff during their induction.

The school site has been made more secure with the introduction of a 'lock up' system of all premises by the resident caretaker and the use of 'key pad' entry. No reported unusual occurrence since. The advice of the crime prevention officer in relation to security was sought.

Pupils have different responsible people available to talk to including house parents, resident tutors, drop in sessions with independent counsellor and the educational psychologist who acts as the independent listener.

Various issues and concerns are discussed and dealt with via the school council.

What they could do better:

Fire doors must only be held open by means approved by the Community Fire Safety Officer and not wedged.

An audit of all medicines kept should be undertaken on a regular basis. There should be a policy and procedures for the management of homely/homeopathic medicines. A record of all medicines disposed of should be kept.

The bath hot water must be reduced to the safe required level of close to 43°C.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Recommended Actions identified during the inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders' health is promoted. (NMS 6)
- Safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records. (NMS 7)
- Boarders' receive first aid and health care as necessary.(NMS 15)
- Boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill.(NMS 16)
- Boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal Problems.(NMS 17)
- Boarders receive good quality catering provision (NMS 24)
- Boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals.(NMS 25)
- Boarders are suitably accommodated when ill. (NMS 48)
- Boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered.(NMS 49)

The Commission considers Standards 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Boarders' health care needs are promoted and appropriate treatment to minor illness is available at all times with access to medical and other health care services as required. However, an audit of all medicines kept should be undertaken on a regular basis, a policy and procedures for the management of homely/homeopathic medicines should be devised and implement and a record of all medicines disposed of should be kept so that pupils are not put at risk.

EVIDENCE:

Personal, Social Health Education lessons provided a regular forum for health education. Individual records for boarders were available and contained all the relevant information including, drug reactions, major allergies and notable medical conditions. Discussion with the school nurse and other members of staff confirmed appropriate measures were in place to maintain confidentiality of personal information within their professional codes of practice.

There is a 'drop-in' room in the clinic suite where there are leaflets and other sources of information available to the pupils on subjects such as HIV/AIDS, Drugs, Sexual Health, smoking, bullying, abuse etc.

All the house parents, resident tutors and the teaching staff have had first aid training. The school has a small clinic facility, which includes a rest room for boarders to stay if they are unwell. The school has a good relationship with the local GP where most of the boarders are registered.

However, an audit of all medicines was not carried out and there was no policy and procedures for the management of homely/homeopathic medicines nor a record of all medicines returned for disposal was being kept.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders are protected from bullying.(NMS 2)
- Boarders are protected from abuse.(NMS 3)
- Use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate.(NMS 4)
- Boarders' complaints are appropriately responded to.(NMS 5)
- The operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare (NMS 13)
- Boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school.(NMS 22)
- Boarders are protected from the risk of fire. (NMS 26)
- The welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school.(NMS 28)
- Boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities.(NMS 29)
- Boarders' personal privacy is respected.(NMS 37)
- There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders.(NMS 38)
- Boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures and there is supervision of all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises.(NMS 39)
- Boarders have their own accommodation, secure from public intrusion. (NMS 41)
- Boarders are protected from safety hazards.(NMS 47)

The Commission considers Standards 2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Quality in this outcome area is **adequate**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Adequate information was available and provided to pupils and their parents. This included information on anti bullying, complaints, managing behaviour and child protection. There were comprehensive policies and procedures for the overall operation of the school including recruitment and retention of staff. Privacy and dignity of pupils were respected. However, the bath hot water temperature was too high and should be reduced to the safe required level to

ensure that pupils were not put at risk of scalding and that the fire doors should not be wedged open.

EVIDENCE:

A comprehensive anti-bullying policy was in place and included a definition of bullying. Both staff and boarders confirmed that they were aware of and had received a copy of the anti-bullying policy. The anti-bullying policy is displayed throughout the school, with bullying reporting forms available at strategic points. The school has an ethos of openness and pupils can talk to tutors, house parents, teachers, the counsellor, the independent listener and any member of staff they feel comfortable to speak to. Pupils spoken to and questionnaires received from them confirmed that the school's anti-bullying policy together with its proactive approach is having a positive effect on this policy.

Staff spoken to showed a good level of understanding of the child protection policy and procedures. The school follows the procedures established by the Hertfordshire Area Child Protection Committee and has a designated senior person as Child Protection Officer.

St Christopher has a rather unusual attitude to discipline and use of punishments. Some of the pupils who attend the school have had negative experiences of other schools and / or difficult life or family circumstances. The school therefore feels it is important to ensure that discipline is proportional to the behaviour with reference to the child's situation and the reason why the behaviour has been presented. Pupils spoken to, and also reflected in the boarders questionnaires, clearly felt that staff were fair, reasonable and proportional in the way the discipline was used. Staff adhered to this policy and could speak in depth about the philosophy and the practicalities of the current system. The gap students do not apportion punishments, referring any issues directly to staff. During this inspection the attitude and behaviour of the pupils was excellent. Any use of punishments was recorded clearly in the boarder's files. There is a complaints procedure and pupils spoken to said that they were aware of.

Fire evacuation procedures were on display throughout the school. Regular fire drills were carried out and appropriate records were kept. Fire equipment and systems were checked and serviced regularly. The fire safety officer gives a talk and shows a video every September to staff and pupils about fire safety. However, it was noted that fire doors were wedged open.

The staff were observed to take appropriate action before entering bedrooms by knocking on the door and asking if they could enter.

The school has robust recruitment procedures. A number of staff files were examined. All staff had received a disclosure notification of enhanced CRB check before starting work. The recruitment procedure is recorded and follows a clear and appropriate process including the taking up of at least two written references

There is a comprehensive set of risk assessments in place for all school activities. An annual Governors Risk Management Summary is produced which covers the whole school, particularly in risk management and operations. In the boarding houses, house parents carried out environmental risk assessments.

The school has an annual health and safety survey throughout the school that lists any identified risks and action needed. Fire equipment is checked annually. However, it was noted that the bath hot water temperature was recorded to be 53.3°C and must be reduced to the safe required level close to 43°C.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders have access to a range and choice of activities.(NMS 11)
- Boarders receive personal support from staff.(NMS 14)
- Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination.(NMS 18)
- Boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands.(NMS 27)
- Boarders have satisfactory provision to study.(NMS 43)
- Boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas.(NMS 46)

The Commission considers Standards 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Equal rights policy was in place and staff spoken to confirmed that they were aware of.

EVIDENCE:

The school has an equal rights policy that ensures that equal opportunities are promoted for all pupils. New boarders from ethnic minority groups or those who have parents living in distant places were given special help and support with the settling in processes at the school. Discussion with house staff showed that they were aware of the different needs of boarders and took appropriate steps to ensure that each pupil received the support required.

Pupils spoken to and questionnaires received did not show any concerns that discrimination was an issue at the school. Pupils were also aware of whom to contact if they needed support with personal issues.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school.(NMS 12)
- Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families.(NMS 19)
- New boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in.(NMS 21)
- Boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school.(NMS 30)
- There are sound relationships between staff and boarders.(NMS 36)

The Commission considers Standards 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Boarders were able to express their views on boarding provision through their representatives in the school council and house meetings. Pupils are able to speak to staff, close friends and parents if they had any problems. Adequate pay phones were provided within the boarding houses.

EVIDENCE:

Each house has boarding house meetings when the boarders are given opportunity to express their views and to bring forward suggestions and ideas. The school has a school council, which is part of the inclusive philosophy of the school. Boarders spoken to were aware of the complaints process and of the ethos of the school in ensuring all pupils have the right to speak and express opinions within the school's systems.

The boarders are able to contact their parents in private, as there are pay phones available in private areas in each house. Children are also allowed to use phones in the school offices or the house parents' flats if they need to contact parents urgently. Many of the children also have mobile phones and

although there are some rules about their use, there is adequate opportunity for the children to stay in touch with their friends and families.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders' possessions and money are protected.(NMS 20)
- Boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation.(NMS 40)
- Boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation.(NMS 42)
- Boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities.(NMS 44)
- Boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day.(NMS 45)
- Boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school.(NMS 50)
- The welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted.(NMS 51)

The Commission considers Standard 51 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Quality in this outcome area is **(excellent, good, adequate or poor)**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

Not Applicable

Management

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- A suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- There is clear leadership of boarding in the school.(NMS 8)
- Crises affecting boarders' welfare are effectively managed.(NMS 9)
- The school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare.(NMS 10)
- Risk assessment and school record keeping contribute to boarders' welfare.(NMS 23)
- Boarders are adequately supervised by staff.(NMS 31)
- Staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site.(NMS 32)
- Boarders are adequately supervised at night.(NMS 33)
- Boarders are looked after by staff with specific boarding duties, with adequate induction and continued training.(NMS 34)
- Boarders are looked after by staff following clear boarding policies and practice.(NMS 35)
- The welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

The Commission considers Standards 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Adequate information was available to current and prospective pupils and their parents. Risk assessments were carried out for activities within the houses to ensure that pupils are not put at risk. Adequate number of staff were rostered to support pupils after school hours.

EVIDENCE:

The school issued a prospectus and various handbooks to reflect the principles and practice of life at St Christopher School. These were available to boarders,

parents and staff. The handbooks were informative and gave details of the boarding routine policies and procedures and how to contact the school.

Appropriate records relating to punishments, complaints and accidents were kept and the Head of the school reported that he undertook regular monitoring of these activities. Risk assessments for generic activities within the houses have been undertaken and also used for any additional events.

The perception of staff levels by the boarders spoken to was adequate at all times throughout the week. Each house had a live-in houseparent with other staff being a combination of residential workers and GAP students. This provided cover at busy times of the day. Rotas on display showed that there was adequate staffing during activities.

Staff spoken to confirmed that they all had job descriptions and had completed an induction programme. They said that they had received written guidance about house and school policies and practices. The school has a unique and specific ethos, which is the reason the school is the choice of the parents of the children who attend. This has implications, such as a vegetarian only canteen and the 'no meat on the school premises' rule. But all the differences are clearly set out in the school statement of principles and in all the handbooks and other documents.

The job descriptions of the house parents are comprehensive and included the responsibilities and role of the job with set boundaries. The resident tutors are generally teaching staff or gap students who live in the boarding houses take duties to relieve the house parents. Most other teachers in the school do one or two evenings a week as additional support during the busy prep and evening activity times. Boarding staff do receive formal training on Fire Safety, Health and Safety, First Aid, Child Protection and other training sessions relevant to their work.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
6	3
7	X
15	3
16	X
17	X
24	X
25	X
48	X
49	x

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	3
3	3
4	3
5	3
13	X
22	X
26	2
28	X
29	x
37	3
38	3
39	3
41	3
47	2

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
11	X
14	3
18	3
27	X
43	X
46	X

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	3
19	3
21	X
30	X
36	x

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
20	X
40	X
42	X
44	X
45	X
50	x
51	N/A

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

Continued

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
8	X
9	X
10	X
23	3
31	3
32	X
33	X
34	3
35	X
52	x

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)
1.	BS15	a) Devise and implement a policy and procedures for the management of homely/homeopathic medicines. b) A record of all medicines disposed of should be kept. c) An audit of all medicines stored should be undertaken on a regular basis.	
2.	BS26	Fire doors must only be held open by means approved by the Community Fire Safety Officer and not wedged.	23/03/07
3	BS47	The bath hot water temperature that was recorded to be 53.3°C must be reduced to the safe required level close to 43°C.	23/03/07

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Hertfordshire Area Team

CPC1

Capital Park

Fulbourn

Cambridge

CB21 5XE

National Enquiry Line:

Telephone: 0845 015 0120 or 0191 233 3323

Textphone: 0845 015 2255 or 0191 233 3588

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

© This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI