

City of London Freeman's School

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Paula Eaton / Jackie Graves
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Setting address	City of London Freemans School, Park Lane, ASHTEAD, Surrey, KT21 1ET
Telephone number	01372 277933
Email	
Registered person	City of London Corporation
Head/ Principal	Philip MacDonald
Nominated person	Philip MacDonald
Date of last inspection	25/11/2009

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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

City of London Freeman's School has a large population of day pupils, 807 in comparison to those who board which is 19 boys and 18 girls. These figures were accurate at the time the pre-inspection questionnaire which was completed in November 2009.

There are two boarding houses, with the boys' house accommodating 28 boarders and the girls' house accommodating a maximum of 24 boarders. One of the houses is a listed building which limits any external or internal changes that can be made. The other boarding house is connected to the medical centre.

The school is based on a large site with grounds that can be used for sports activities.

The majority of boarders were present and spoken to during the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced inspection that assessed all of the key national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Boarders are well cared for and build good relationships with staff. The health and well being of boarders is paramount and boarders feel safe and well looked after. Communication between the boarding houses and the medical centre is not always satisfactory and there are insufficient boarding staff who have a first aid qualification.

Good systems are in place to ensure that the welfare of boarders is promoted and protected at all times and staff are very knowledgeable about child protection procedures and their responsibilities with regard to reporting concerns. Boarders are consulted with on a regular basis and feel that their views are listened to. The accommodation for boarders meets their needs and is maintained to a satisfactory standard.

There is a lack of formal monitoring of records maintained in the boarding accommodation.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection recommendations were made in relation to improving

policies for the safe storage, disposal and administration of medication and privacy. This has been achieved and the policies and procedures in place are good. In addition to this a recommendation was made regarding the provision of diversity training. Staff are able to attend a variety of training courses and are well informed about diversity issues relating to young people and boarding. Separate bathing facilities have now been provided for the male gap student and welfare plans have been developed for those boarders who require them.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Boarders receive adequate guidance regarding personal and social health issues as part of the school curriculum. This is followed up by staff in the boarding houses on an informal basis. In addition to this two of the qualified nurses in the medical centre are in the process of completing a personal, social and health education qualification so that they can take a more active role in developing the level of support and advice for young people in the school. Leaflets on various health issues are also available in the medical centre and throughout school. Clear rules are in place in relation to the misuse of alcohol and drugs and smoking is actively discouraged.

The health needs of boarders are met. The school has a medical centre staffed by three qualified nurses Monday to Friday. A general practitioner (GP) visits the school once a week and appointments can be made at a local surgery if necessary with either a male or female GP. Treatment and welfare plans are developed when a boarder has a serious allergy or medical condition and records are maintained for any medication or treatment administered. Communication between the boarding houses and the medical centre is not always satisfactory especially if there has been some illness or accident over a weekend. Medication is securely stored in the medical centre and in the boarding houses. However, there are variations in the recording systems for the administration of medication in the boarding houses. The records do not provide a clear audit trail of the medication given to individual boarders. During the day if boarders are unwell they are cared for in the medical centre and return to their boarding house after school hours to ensure that they are adequately supervised during the day. Boarders report that the staff in the medical centre are approachable and feel that they are looked after when they are unwell. Although there are first aid trained staff in each boarding house this is not sufficient to ensure that there is always someone on duty who is able to administer first aid.

Boarders benefit from a varied, nutritious diet and fresh fruit and vegetables are available at all meals. Boarders eat all meals in the school dining hall and are given a choice of meals including a vegetarian option. Boarders commented that they preferred breakfast and especially Sunday brunch to other meals but were generally satisfied with the food provided. Boarders have access to snacks and drinks within the boarding houses and are offered a weekly opportunity to go to the supermarket to purchase snacks and drinks of their choosing. Boarders are able to voice their

views about the food provided via a catering committee that meets on a regular basis.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school has an appropriate anti-bullying policy in place and staff and boarders are clear that bullying is unacceptable and not to be tolerated. Levels of bullying within the school are low and generally boarders report that they are not bullied. However, where bullying does occur evidence suggests that although bullying is appropriately responded to there is not always an effective follow up to ensure that the bullying has stopped.

Robust systems are in place for protecting boarders from abuse. Staff receive annual safeguarding training from the designated child protection lead, and there are very clear procedures in place to guide staff if they have any concerns. Staff spoken to during the inspection were able to demonstrate their understanding of the procedures and accurately relay what action they would take if they had any concerns about the welfare of a boarder. Appropriate policies are in place in the event that a boarder is absent without authority.

Good systems are in place for managing the behaviour of boarders. There are very few incidents of unacceptable behaviour and sanctions are rarely imposed. Those that are imposed usually involve not being able to go out and missing activities. Boarders are clear about what behaviour is acceptable and feel that the sanctions imposed are fair. They understand the reasons for the rules in place. Physical restraint is not used within the school.

There is a clear complaints procedure in place that is included in the staff and boarders handbooks and on the school website. Very few complaints are received by the school, but those that are, are dealt with promptly and records maintained including the action taken and the outcome.

Fire safety equipment is checked at regular intervals to ensure it is in working order. Appropriate fire evacuation procedures are in place that are known to boarders and staff. Regular fire drills take place and any issues observed during the evacuation of the building are noted and acted upon. Recruitment procedures are sound and all the required recruitment checks are taking place. However, criminal record bureau checks are not always renewed after three years and not all staff have a current job description.

Boarders are supervised well without any unnecessary intrusion of their privacy. There are appropriate measures in place to prevent unauthorised access to boarders and their accommodation. Security measures include a key fob system on doors and external CCTV cameras which are used to monitor who is coming in and out of the school. Good systems are in place to monitor visitors to the school.

Health and safety policies and procedures are in place and appropriate window restrictors and safety glass are used within the school to ensure the safety of boarders. Detailed environmental risk assessments are completed for any identified risk to the welfare of boarders and these are regularly reviewed to reflect any changes that occur. Health and safety checks of the boarding accommodation take place at regular intervals. All the appropriate certification is in place for electrical and gas safety and water temperatures are regularly tested.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Boarders report that they have various people that they can contact should they have a problem including their families, peers and staff. Boarding staff have built positive relationships with boarders which enables open communication and encourages boarders to raise any concerns that they have. One boarder stated in a survey that 'you can always talk to the school Chaplain, teachers and friends'. Boarders also have access to a counsellor who provides a drop-in on a weekly basis and also an appointment system. This service is clearly advertised throughout the school and boarders do access this service. This service is sited in the medical centre. Although the room used is appropriate for counselling sessions the furnishings are not homely and comfortable. Boarders are also given the contact details for ChildLine.

Boarding staff are sensitive to the needs of individual boarders and strive to ensure that they feel safe and comfortable boarding at the school. The school takes a holistic approach to the care of boarders aiming to meet their emotional, social and physical needs, as well as providing good academic opportunities. Staff monitor the behaviour of boarders and respond sensitively to any difficulties they are facing. The school strives to ensure that overseas boarders settle in and cultural community links have been established to support this such as with the local Chinese church. Boarders are supported to integrate into life in England, however, occasionally minority groups within the boarding community feel isolated as a result of not sharing a common first language.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders are consulted about life at school in various ways. Boarding house meetings take place on a weekly basis and both boarding houses contain a suggestions book. Boarders feel able to openly express their views and feel that staff listen to them. There is also a catering committee that boarders are encouraged to contribute to.

Staff encourage boarders to maintain contact with their families. All boarders have

mobile telephones and access to a landline phone should they wish to use it and they all have access to email. However, the telephone in the girls house is located in a communal area where there is very little privacy. The boys house has a private room where the telephone is kept, however, boys report that there are often queues for the use of this telephone. Boarders also stated that they have limited access to email during evenings and weekends. Staff ensure that parents are kept informed of any developments in relation to the care of their child.

An induction process is in place for new boarders, the new boarders spoken to were able to describe the process and felt that this had helped them settle in to life at the school. A handbook is provided for new boarders to the school which includes key policies, services provided and expectations.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Good systems are in place for ensuring that boarders personal possessions are looked after. All boarders have a lockable space in their bedroom that can be used to store items safely and they also have keys for their bedroom doors. Boarders feel that their personal possessions are safe in the boarding houses.

The boarding accommodation is satisfactorily maintained although some of the furnishings are worn. The accommodation is kept very clean and tidy and an efficient system is in place for responding to maintenance issues. The boys boarding house is not very homely. There are plans for the future development of the boarding accommodation. Neither of the boarding houses are fully accessible for people with disabilities.

There is a mix of single and shared rooms within the boarding houses with there being a higher proportion of single rooms in the boys accommodation. Furniture has been suitably arranged in shared rooms to provide some division to give boarders a sense of their own space where possible. Bedrooms have suitable furnishings and boarders are able to personalise their rooms and make them feel homely. There are a satisfactory number of bathroom facilities that are located close to bedrooms and communal space.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a good statement of the school's boarding principles and practice in place which is available to parents, boarders and staff. The information provided reflects the practice of the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff strive to make links in the

community to support overseas boarders and additional language support is provided. Boarders are encouraged to integrate with each other and the differing cultures within the group but this does not always happen as in their free time boarders may prefer to converse with peers in their shared language and not English. Cultural activities are provided and cultural and religious needs are met.

The boarding accommodation is organised well and boarders are accommodated in rooms according to their age group. There are clear boundaries in place. One boarding house accommodates the girls and the other accommodates the boys with meals taking place together in the dining hall. There are good security and monitoring arrangements in the boarding houses.

At present there is no formal monitoring of the records maintained in the boarding houses. However, the deputy head teacher who has overall responsibility for boarding meets with the housemaster and mistress on a weekly basis and is kept informed of any concerns within boarding.

Staffing levels meet the needs of the boarders and allow them to participate in a variety of activities outside of school hours. There is a rota system in place and adequate cover was observed during the inspection. There are adequate contingencies in place to cover any sick leave and Gap students are not left to work unsupervised with boarders.

Staff receive an induction to boarding and receive regular supervision from senior members of staff. The appraisal system for staff has been recently reviewed and updated and staff are clear about their roles and the expectations upon them. There is a comprehensive staff handbook in place that contains all key policies and information. Gap students receive a thorough induction process and attend relevant training to support them in their role. Ongoing training is provided for all boarding staff to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of boarders.

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...

- consider improving the appearance of the room used for counselling to make it more homely and free from foul odours (NMS 14)
- review how medical information is communicated from boarding staff to medical staff to ensure effective communication and review how medication is recorded for individuals in boarding houses (NMS 15)
- ensure sufficient numbers of staff are trained in first aid so that trained staff are available at all times (NMS 15)
- ensure all staff have job descriptions reflecting their duties and that CRB checks

are renewed every three years (NMS 38)

- check that all exterior doors are secure (NMS 4)
- review the number of telephones and their use in private, and the facilities for e-mail (NMS 19)
- evidence that the Head, or a senior member of the school's staff, regularly monitors the school's record of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents to identify any issues requiring action (NMS 23)
- follow up on effectiveness of measures taken to deal with bullying. (NMS 2)