

# Dover College

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspector</b>	John Chivers
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	03/03/2011

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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**

Dover College is situated in the centre of the town and offers boarding places to boys and girls on a weekly or full time basis. There are four boarding houses, two each for male and female pupils. A resident housemaster or housemistress is responsible for managing each boarding house and they are supported by a 'second in charge' and other staff that perform boarding duties. Boarders at the school range in age between 11 years and 18 years. The school caters for a wide range of pupils from different nationalities and has full regard for equality and diversity. The school has a comprehensive extra curricular programme and encourages pupils to achieve to their full potential.

### **Summary**

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The inspection was an announced full inspection and was the school's first inspection of boarding by Ofsted.

All of the key national minimum standards in the sections being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic wellbeing and organisation were assessed. The six recommendations set at the last inspection (by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in 2006) were found to have been met in full and only one recommendation is made as a result of this inspection. The school is organised and managed to a good professional standard and affords an equally good professional standard of care and support to the pupils. The school also has full regard for equality and diversity throughout all aspects of its operation. The school has many strengths and commendable areas of practice. One hundred and seventeen boarding pupils were resident at the time of the inspection, many of who took an active part in the inspection process, via individual and group discussion and via completing pupil questionnaires.

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

At the last inspection the head teacher was asked to: review and update the written protocol on the provision of non-prescription 'household' medicines to pupils; ensure that any medication received into the school for dispensing to pupils is correctly packaged and labelled with the prescribing instructions; ensure pupils keeping and administering their own medication are assessed by staff as sufficiently responsible to do so and are able to store their medication safely and appropriately; review the purpose and function of the independent counselling service and the suitability of its current venue; review the membership of the food committee and include a member of boarding staff and ensure that a member of boarding staff also attends the

evening meal on a regular basis; ensure the shower facilities in 'school house' are upgraded.

The protocol regarding the provision of non-prescribed medication has now been updated. Prescribing and dispensing instructions are now clearly detailed on medicines entering the school. Assessments are now undertaken on pupils who administer their own medication and they have secure facilities in their rooms for appropriate storage of such items. A new counsellor has been appointed and a more private and sound proof venue has been found for this purpose. A member of boarding staff now attends the food committee and boarding staff also attend the evening meals on a regular basis. The shower area has now been upgraded and all shower facilities are subject to a rolling programme of improvement.

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

The provision is good.

The school adopts a holistic approach to the well-being of boarders and information is provided through a variety of sources. Personal, Social and Health Education is not only delivered in the classroom by tutors and in the science department, but nurses give advice at the medical centre, involvement in sports is encouraged and visiting speakers give lectures on a variety of health topics including world health issues, for example, water aid.

The medical centre is open during the day from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., 6 days per week. Pupils who are ill are required to remain in the medical centre during the day but return to their boarding house at night. If pupils are very unwell, a nurse will remain overnight. The school was able to manage the recent flu epidemic and accommodated 33 pupils in Priory House, a day house adjacent to the medical centre, for several days, thus remaining open throughout the period of illness. Pupils are registered with a local general practice and have appointments in the doctor's local surgery. Ongoing back up and advice is available from the surgery and specialists can be accessed through the doctors. The medical centre has good links with community health services, which provide specialist support. There is a dentist and optical specialist nearby where pupils may arrange appointments. Comprehensive policies and procedures ensure that medication is given appropriately in the medical centre by nurses or matron or from the boarding house by the houseparent's. Information gathered from parents in advance identifies any health matters and there is a system in place to alert staff across the school on a need-to-know basis. One pupil reported being well looked after and always welcome in the medical centre if feeling unwell. Others identify it as a place to go with a problem. New boarders are introduced to the medical centre upon arrival.

Catering is of a reasonable standard providing a range of nutritious meals. Pupils report the quality of food is not as good as it used to be but, since the Food Committee has been reinstated, it is improving again. All main meals are taken in the dining room, which is spacious and dining is a well ordered social occasion. In the

boarding houses snacks of fruit, bread, spreads and milk are provided for the pupils in the evenings.

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

The provision is good.

Pupils live in an environment where staff are alert to any bullying issues and act immediately to address such conduct. Pupils get on well with each other and are helpful and supportive to their peers. The homely, friendly and cohesive atmosphere, coupled with the sound supervision arrangements helps to reduce the likelihood of bullying becoming a significant issue. While a minority of pupils raise issues in this area via questionnaires and in discussion they acknowledge such issues are addressed and appropriate action taken by the school. No incidents of bullying or intimidating behaviour among the pupils were evident during the inspection.

Pupils are protected from harm and abuse by staff who are trained in child protection and have full regard for pupils' safety and welfare. There are clear policies and procedures that underpin the school's practice in this area and pupils in discussion confirm they feel safe in school and well advised regarding their personal safety. There is a comprehensive school curriculum that covers health, education and personal safety matters which is interwoven into all aspects of their pastoral care.

Pupil's behaviour is extremely well managed and pupils learn to take responsibility for their own actions and attain sound standards of self discipline. There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils with good communication, interaction and engagement evident. There is good humour and banter and pupils respond to staff requests and instructions in a polite and cheerful manner. Pupils are polite and respectful to staff, each other and visitors. While a minority of pupils say the school is 'strict', the majority are clear the standard of discipline and behaviour management is fair and proportionate. Sanctions are sparingly used, clearly recorded and are appropriate and necessary in the circumstances described in the records. The school does not use physical restraint as a means of addressing behavioural issues. The school ethos and strong sense of community spirit helps to promote self discipline, consideration for others and a caring and supportive pastoral experience for the pupils.

Pupils and their parents have unrestricted access to the school's complaints procedure. Pupils are confident any complaint is taken seriously and thoroughly investigated. The school's complaints book shows that complaints are clearly recorded, describe action taken and have an outcome. Pupil's help and advice lines are displayed and there is access to an independent person should anyone wish to refer a concern externally. Pupils in discussion are clear they have no complaints about the standard of pastoral care they receive.

Staff are aware of the importance of confidentiality and confidential records are securely held in locked cabinets within locked offices. Pupils are treated with dignity and staff respect their privacy. There are telephones available for pupil's use without

reference to staff, although most pupils have mobile phones. Toilets and bathing facilities offer a satisfactory degree of privacy and such facilities are subject to a rolling programme of improvement and refurbishment. Pupils are able to lock their bedroom doors and have lockable drawers in their rooms in which to keep treasured and valued possessions. Despite this some pupils mentioned via questionnaire that their personal belongings are not always safe from their peers. The school does remind pupils to use the secure facilities provided.

The school takes active steps to keep pupils, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risks of fire and other potential safety hazards. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are good and with the exception of a loose banister in one of the boarding houses, no safety hazards were evident. Pupils live in a well monitored environment that fulfils its health and safety responsibilities.

The school has a staff recruitment policy and procedure that has full regard for equal opportunities and equality and diversity. Staff personnel files hold all required information including two written references with evidence of verification and checks via the Criminal Records Bureau at enhanced level. The school's recruitment and vetting arrangements are robust and help to ensure that only suitable staff are employed to look after the pupils. Visitors to the school site are issued with identification badges, they are supervised and staff challenge any unfamiliar individuals for confirmation of identity. Taxi drivers hold 'blue badges' which also confirms that they have Criminal Record Bureau checks at enhanced level.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The college provides a very good range of activities and opportunities that encourage pupils to participate and try new things. Pupils say, 'there is always lots to do and people to see'. School facilities offer a variety of sports, drama, dance, music, art, design and technology. House competitions enable integration of all ages and nationalities and pupils confirm these events are very popular. In a recently held boarding houses 'music festival' a compulsory item proved very popular when all houses had to learn and perform a song in a different language.

Learning support services are available to help pupils participate fully in school life and make arrangements to meet their individual learning needs in the classroom, ensuring that they are able to access their entitlements in public examinations. Staff in the houses are informed of any special arrangements and support required in private study in the evenings; this is often offered by older pupils. All areas of the curriculum and recreational activities are accessible to all regardless of gender or ethnic origin. The school supports local community projects and raises funds for under privileged areas overseas. Currently the school is planning a major expedition to support a school overseas and pupils are involved in fund raising and planning matters.

The pastoral care that Dover College provides is outstanding and a real strength of

the school. It is integrated throughout the school where all members of staff recognise their contribution to the welfare and development of the pupils in their charge. Excellent electronic communication systems are used to ensure there is a joined up approach to any problem. The deputy head manages all pastoral matters, supported well by the medical centre, boarding house staff, tutors, counsellor and the chaplain. The first priority is support for the pupil when pastoral concerns are identified.

According to the pupils, the boarding houses are managed as large families. Senior pupils are given areas of responsibility towards younger pupils in school and within boarding houses. Pupils indicated in discussion that there are many people they can turn to in the school, if they have a problem; older pupils received a specific mention. The school has the services of a part time counsellor. She offers a confidential service but may alert the school to any ways they may help the pupil while maintaining pupil's confidential information. The school has developed good links with external agencies when specific issues need to be referred for specialist support.

In 1957 Dover College became the first English public school to be registered as an international centre supported by NATO. Internationalism is embedded in every practice and is a real strength of the school. The school values the diverse needs of all pupils and demonstrates a commitment to equal opportunities. Increased access to technology makes it very easy to contact families outside the United Kingdom. Support for pupils for whom English is not their first language is very well managed with access to the curriculum at three different stages according to linguistic need. Houseparent's are fully aware of these needs and pupils from overseas report that the school encourages them to integrate fully whilst acknowledging and respecting their cultural identity. This is evident in all departments, for example, during the World Cup matches, catering staff dressed in national costumes of pupils whose teams were competing and menus reflected 'the teams on the day'. Commitment to equality and diversity is outstanding.

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

The provision is good.

Pupils have several formal opportunities to contribute to the development of boarding in the school. There is a school council, house councils, prefects meetings and many informal opportunities where pupils can express views and make suggestions. Pupils confirmed that they had stressed the need for greater access to electronic communication. Recently the food committee has been reinstated in response to pupil request and pupils have constructed a food questionnaire. These are circulated to all boarding pupils and will present the results at the next meeting to a representative of the catering department.

Contact with family and friends is readily available and mobile telephones are permitted. Pay phones, email and 'skype' provide other options and access has been made easier for boarders to contact family who live overseas. Concerns and



comments from parents are dealt with as soon as possible and staff have a partnership approach with families.

New boarders receive good support upon arrival and written information is sent to all pupils during the holiday before they join the school. At the start of the academic year new boarders arrive before the rest of the school for a one-day induction. Boarders said it was quite easy to find their way around and become familiar with school life. In the first few days there are arrangements to meet staff at the medical centre, and spend time with the boarding house staff and tutors. A programme of activities provides opportunities to sample the school's facilities and to keep busy to combat feelings of homesickness. The school is very conscious of pupils who arrive during the school year and make efforts to assist their integration by a buddy process and they are exploring ways of developing further mid-year induction.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is satisfactory.

Pupils have lockable facilities in their rooms and are able to lock their doors if they wish. Accurate records of pupil's saving and spending money is kept.

Pupils live in satisfactory boarding accommodation which is subject to a rolling programme of improvement. There are good size communal areas and while some furnishings, fittings and decoration are tired due to wear and tear, they are homely and comfortable in style. The standards of accommodation in all four boarding houses are broadly similar and pupils said they feel safe and secure in their environment. Pupil's bedrooms are of an equally satisfactory standard and most rooms are personalised to varying degrees by their occupants. Toilet and bathing facilities afford varying levels of privacy, are sufficient in number and subject to on-going improvement. The school grounds are spacious and well maintained. Pupils said they are satisfied with the general standard of accommodation and they enjoy living in the boarding houses. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are good in all boarding houses and, with the exception of a loose banister rail in one of the boarding houses, all are free from potential safety hazards.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school works with thirty different nationalities, has clear regard for pupils' individual backgrounds and is inclusive in its practice. The pastoral provision at the school is organised and managed to a good professional standard and affords an equally good professional standard of pastoral care and support to the resident pupils.

Pupils and their parents are given sufficient information about the school via an informative prospectus and boarding handbook that accurately describes the service and facilities provided.

The boarding houses are well managed with sufficient numbers of staff who are committed, professional and competent. The combination of their skills, experience and level of competencies allow them to meet the needs of the pupils and enables the school to achieve its aims and objectives. Pupils receive a sound and professional level of care and support from a well-trained, supervised and appraised staff team. Pupils benefit from staff that are highly supportive of the schools management and ethos and are firmly committed to the pastoral care of the pupils. Staff confirmed that their supervision and training arrangements are effective, and that the school has full regard for equality and diversity issues and that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the service. All staff have written job descriptions and an induction programme. Pupils are aware of how staff can be accessed by day and by night and are appreciative of them. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and to who they are accountable.

The boarding houses are organised and managed to a consistent standard, allowing flexibility for individual approaches and styles yet being fully attentive to school policies, procedures and the overall ethos.

The headteacher and senior staff monitor the conduct of the school each half term and sign appropriate records. The school's standard of internal monitoring and scrutiny act as a sound and effective quality assurance mechanism. The school has a current insurance liability certificate that complies with the services responsibilities as an employer.

## **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...

- Fix the loose banister in one of the boarding houses and assess the need to raise its height on the upper floor section. (NMS 47)