

# King's College School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Clive Lucas
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Social Care Inspection

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<b>Head/ Principal</b>	Nick Robinson
<b>Nominated person</b>	Nick Robinson
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	21/02/2008

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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

King's College School is situated in the heart of Cambridge. The boarding accommodation is within the main school building providing space for up to 40 male boarders. These are made up of choristers who are full boarders and flexi boarders who may board for a few nights a week, but not over weekends. The vast majority of boarders participated in the inspection and completed a pupil survey.

The boarding house consists of seven shared dormitories. The housemaster resides on the school site and the school's matrons share sleep-in duties. There are other resident staff and gap-year students. The headteacher lives in the house adjacent to the school. Boarders have access to a range of indoor and outdoor activity areas on the school site.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

The overall care that the school provides for boarders is outstanding.

Boarders are very positive about the school, the boarding provision and boarding staff. They are consulted well and able to influence aspects of how the boarding house is run. The school has clear and comprehensive policies to inform staff practice. There are high demands on choristers, who are full boarders. They say they receive very good support from staff to help them cope with these. Staff are very well aware of the demands on boarders.

There is a very high standard of behaviour in the school. Boarders have a thorough understanding of how they are expected to behave. Senior staff and governors are actively involved in monitoring the standards of care provided for boarders.

### Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous inspection recommendations were made relating to child protection training, behaviour management and written welfare plans. All staff, including ancillary staff receive child protection training as soon as they begin to work at the school. This helps to ensure that they have the knowledge to identify and respond to any concerns or allegations. Staff have a consistency of approach to behaviour management which helps to make it effective. The school has introduced written welfare records to identify significant health and personal problems of individual boarders and aid their management.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have personal, health and social education as part of their formal education as well as through their tutors. The choristers, who are the full-time boarders, have their own tutor sessions so that they have the flexibility to cover topics that are more relevant to them. There are comprehensive structures in place to ensure that boarders always have easy access to first aid and health care. There is always a matron on duty who can deal with routine health concerns and first aid. The boarders say that they can easily approach matrons if they feel unwell, or are just run down. They say that matrons take positive action to help them in such cases. A school doctor visits the school regularly and boarders can also see a doctor at other times if they need to. Parents arrange optician and dental appointments in school holidays, but emergency treatment is available if boarders require it. The choir undertake regular tours. A matron always accompanies these and boarders say that they get looked after if they are unwell on tours. Staff have a thorough awareness of boarders' individual health needs, so these can be responded to sensitively and effectively. Welfare plans are used to identify any significant health or personal problems of individual boarders. They include appropriate health and welfare information. However, they do not always show that they have been agreed with a parent, or any reasons why such an agreement was not appropriate or possible.

Boarders receive a high standard of catering provision. Meals are healthy and balanced. Mealtimes are relaxed and well ordered. Suppertimes, when only boarders are present, are enjoyable and suitably informal. Boarders and staff show good humour and interactions at these mealtimes. There are choices of food and catering staff cater well for individual dietary needs. There is a very good level of consultation over food. The catering manager asks for ideas and there is a food committee that allows boarders to have a say about catering provision. Changes are made as a result of the consultation, for example Thursday suppers in the summer are barbeques. Boarders say that they enjoy these. Some older boarders say that sometimes they do not get enough to eat at mealtimes, but they can go to matrons if they are hungry after supper. In addition fruit is readily available after school time and during the evenings. All catering staff are trained in food hygiene. A consultancy company looks at the menus to help ensure boarders have a balanced and nutritious diet. Full boarders say that they enjoy the differences in meals at weekends, for example, croissants for breakfast.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are very clear in their confidence that staff will identify and address any bullying that may occur. They say that there are some low level incidents, but do not identify bullying as a problem. The school have recently carried out a questionnaire on bullying and have had an external speaker to talk to them about the subject. This helps to ensure that they are well informed to protect boarders from bullying.

Boarders may have mobile telephones and can use the internet in their free time. There are full and clear policies and practices in place to ensure safe use on these and to protect boarders from cyber bullying. The school has a suitable policy on bullying which is available on their website. While they take appropriate action and record issues, the records are not always kept as set out in the policy.

Two senior staff oversee child protection issues in the boarding house. They have had appropriate training which is regularly updated. They, in turn, provide training for all new staff until they have a chance to undertake the whole school training, which is provided by an outside body. This ensures that staff have a sound knowledge of child protection issues as soon as they begin to work with boarders. In turn this enhances the safety of boarders. Another positive factor in the safeguarding of boarders is the provision of child protection training for ancillary staff who may be in a position to identify concerns due to their slightly removed position. The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and includes relevant contact telephone numbers. There is a very high standard of behaviour among boarders. Any punishments used in the boarding house are based on those that may take place in a family. These include early bedtimes, or small domestic chores. Boarding staff clearly recognise the difference between school and boarding time. They manage behaviour accordingly, so that boarders can have some time when they can let off steam appropriately or have 'down time'. Boarders say that punishments are fair. They have a very clear understanding of the behaviour that is expected of them, which is based on a code of conduct called 'the Kings way'. The physical layout of showering and bathing facilities, as well as the processes employed by staff ensure a high level of privacy for boarders at sensitive times such as when showering, bathing going to bed or getting up. Boarders say this is managed well. As is usual for prep schools, they sleep in dormitory accommodation. The group have agreed the use of a code word to alert peers when they are changing. They say this works.

There are rigorous procedures in place to protect boarders from the risk of fire and safety hazards within the school and on trips. These include regular testing of equipment and practice fire drills in the boarding house as well as the school. The drills in the boarding house take place at double the frequency set out in the national minimum standards and at differing times of the day, so that boarders are well rehearsed in what to do if there is a fire. Risk assessments are used well to identify and reduce potential risks for boarders in all aspects of school life. There is a thorough process of recruitment checks to reduce the risk of anyone unsuitable working in the school and so having contact with boarders. These include undertaking a range of references which are followed up by the school, enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and following up of issues at interview. All governors are also subject to checks. Boarding staff do not start work until all checks are complete. Senior staff have had training in safer recruitment. The school uses a taxi company who undertake CRB checks on their staff. The security at the school helps to prevent contact between boarders and adults who have not been subject to the appropriate checks. External lighting and key pads are used to ensure security of the site and in particular the boarding house. Due to the size of the boarding house, any unauthorised visitors would be quickly identified by staff or boarders. Staff will confront any such person and boarders would tell staff if they saw anyone.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders and parents report a very high level of support from staff. Boarders made comments such as '(staff) are always there for me', 'staff are cool...really nice...easily approachable'. The majority of parents' comments were very positive about the school. Boarding staff were described as warm and effective and the housemaster as outstanding. The demands on choristers are high and this is recognised by the boys themselves as well as the school. No boarders identified this as a major problem. They said that they can approach staff and get support when they are feeling tired, or need help to catch up. A typical comment from a boarder was that the routines could be tiring, but were enjoyable. There is a school listener whom boarders can contact and speak to. The school listener attends school functions, such as concerts and spends some evenings in the boarding house, so that boarders are very aware of her and her role. In addition to this, her contact details are displayed around the school. Boarders can discuss any issues with her; they can also just go to her for a chat, a drink or a biscuit. She is well aware of the bounds of her role in relation to child protection concerns. When they feel it necessary, staff will direct parents to external support for their children and will facilitate this.

Individuals do not experience inappropriate discrimination. The school has a comprehensive policy on equality and diversity, which is operated in practice in the school. The school ethos is of acceptance and respect for others. The boarding community is made up of choristers and flexi-boarders. The choristers undertake a key, high profile role in the school, but there is no elitism. Boarders across the school say they are all treated the same.

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

The provision is outstanding.

There are extensive ways in which boarders can contribute to the operation of the boarding house. These include a boarding house council that sits twice a term; a food committee and annual surveys of all boarders and their parents. The surveys are collated and inform a purposeful development plan that the housemaster oversees. Boarders confirm that they are given opportunities to have their say about boarding. They have a wide range of options to help them maintain contact with parents and families. They can have mobile telephones (with appropriate restrictions on the time of their use). There is also a payphone in a dedicated cubicle, so providing a high level of privacy. In addition to this boarders can use the matrons' telephone. IT facilities can be used for boarders to send emails and they are encouraged to write letters. Parents can visit the school at set times and can stay for a meal at weekends. Boarders are inducted into the school in a way that they find helpful. They shadow existing boarders and get help from staff. They say that year eight boarders are nice and that the housemaster makes settling in fun.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

There are clear processes to protect boarders' money and possessions. The housemaster keeps pocket money for boarders, distributes it and keeps records. Boarders are encouraged to bring in a lockable box to store high value items such as mobile telephones and MP3 players. In practice, they do not always use these boxes and there are times when possessions go missing. Staff take action to sort out such problems. There is a high standard of accommodation for boarders. All areas of boarding accommodation are clean, tidy, well decorated, furnished and maintained. Staff accommodation is located close to boarders, so that they can easily contact staff at night if they need to, but it is separate and does not encroach on boarders' privacy. Washing and bathing areas provide a high level of privacy. Boarders can and do personalise their individual sleeping areas. They are also consulted about common rooms. There are extensive grounds and facilities for boarders to use.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

There is a suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice. There is a school web site that provides comprehensive information about the school and boarding. Dormitories are appropriately separated by age. There are no major discrepancies of the quality of boarding provision for different groups of boarders.

There is a high level of monitoring within the boarding house to maintain and improve standards of care, some of this is informal. A senior member of staff looks at boarding house records once a term and governors regularly visit the school and boarding house. One governor recently spent 24 hours in the boarding house to see how it was operating. Due to the size of the boarding house key staff do have an accurate overview of its operation. Accidents and risk assessments are reviewed across the school and the senior management team regularly look at health and safety issues to help reduce any risks to boarders. There is a sufficient number of boarding staff to provide a substantial level of supervision of boarders. Staff who work in boarding include the housemaster and his deputy, resident and non-resident tutors, matrons and gap-year students. Boarders say that they can contact staff when they need to, including during the night. There is always a matron available and they are identified by boarders as people they regularly go to.

The staff who work in boarding have clear job descriptions that set out their roles and responsibilities. They have effective inductions that they say help them to fulfil their duties in looking after the boarders. Inductions include shadowing other staff, reading and discussing the boarding handbook and specific areas of training such as child protection. Boarding staff have their performance regularly reviewed by senior staff through regular meetings (for new staff) and formal appraisals. This helps to ensure that staff perform well and provide effective care for boarders. Training for boarding staff is provided through whole school training days and specific boarding

training. One member of staff is currently undertaking a Boarding Schools Association course. Staff have easy access to written guidance, policies and procedures to help them in their work.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a clear school ethos of acceptance and inclusion that is operated in practice.

## **What must be done to secure future improvement?**

### **Compliance with national minimum standards**

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

- ensure that written welfare plans are agreed with a parent where appropriate and possible (NMS 17.2)
- ensure that the records on countering bullying are kept as set out in the policy. (NMS 2.1)