

CATS College London

Welfare inspection report for a boarding school

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| Inspector | Karen Malcolm |

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

CATS College London is an international school run by Cambridge Education Group Limited, which is based in Bloomsbury, Central London. There are other sites in Cambridge and Canterbury. The school provides boarding and education for children and young people from the ages of 15 – 25 years. It specialises in pre-university education at GCSE and A level. The boarding accommodation for the school is based in North London, Islington. The boarding accommodation can accommodate up to 209 residential students at anyone time. At the time of this inspection 151 boarders were onsite. This is the school's first inspection since opening in September 2011.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Overall effectiveness | inadequate |
| Outcomes for boarders | inadequate |
| Quality of boarding provision and care | satisfactory |
| Boarders' safety | inadequate |
| Leadership and management of boarding | inadequate |

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the boarding inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of CATS College London is inadequate. The school does not meet all the national minimum standards for boarding schools. The impact of the boarding experience and the quality of care and young people's well-being has not been fully met.
- The school's arrangement for safeguarding residential students and promoting their welfare is inadequate. For example, there is insufficient staffing supporting residential students within the boarding accommodation and when students are being chaperoned to and from the school.
- Students are not fully protected when they become absent without permission or missing.
- The health and safety of the boarding accommodation has not been appropriately assessed to ensure all areas of risk such as fire safety and the emergency planning procedures have been thoroughly reviewed.
- The majority of students feel that the food provided by the school does not meet their cultural or individual needs. The majority of the students said that they do not eat the meals provided at the school. There is no catering facilities within the boarding accommodation. The impact is that all students travel each morning to school before having something to eat.
- Residential care staff are not appropriately trained nor have received regular reviews of their boarding practice, with the opportunities for professional development in boarding.
- The school does not have an independent listener for students to contact if they

have any concerns.

- Residential students have mixed views about the support they receive from the school and boarding. They all feel that the school is excellent and provides a good starting point to plan their career opportunities. However, they feel the boarding support is poorly managed. They feel unsupported and not appropriately listened to when they have any concerns. Residential students feel they do not have much free time due to the time travelling to and from school.
- Although there are a number of risks, the quality of care provided is satisfactory and residential students when asked said that they feel safe. They have made a lots of new friends and they are satisfied with the quality of accommodation provided to them although it could be better.
- Residential students have good opportunities to study a wide range of subjects and receive highly individualised support to develop their interests and knowledge. They are prepared well for the next stage of education.
- The school is aware of the all the concerns raised by residential students and have put in some measures in place to improve the quality of the service provided, such as reviewing the staff levels within boarding.

Outcomes for boarders

The outcomes for residential students is inadequate. The majority of all the residential students do not feel that relationships with staff are positive or constructive. Residential students feel that they are not listened to and that the support given is not adequate or safe. There is an atmosphere of tension and some relationships are poor. Therefore, residential students tend to dislike being in the residential environment and see the overall support as a negative experience. The residential students do get on with each other and say that one of the best things about the school is its international environment where cultural and other differences are respected and celebrated.

Through the school council, residential students have opportunities to provide young people's perspective and contribute to the development of the school. However, it was unclear when the group meets, as there were no minutes available. There is a representative from each tutor group, but some members said that although the group meets regularly not all members attend. Also when concerns or issues are raised, they are addressed, but it was unclear if this was completed constructively and fairly. Members said that the main topic of discussion has been about food.

Residential students feel that they do not have enough free-time. Students feel that they are restricted due to the curfew times. They understand the reasons why this is in place, but feel it could be flexible at times. All residential students travel to and from the boarding accommodation to the school site. The majority feel the travelling time impacts on their studying and any free time they may have. Therefore, they feel

tired and tend to use the time travelling to catch up with sleep.

Residential students have developed trusting and appropriately warm relationships with the school staff. They talk about the school staff with great appreciation and respect. They feel the school staff really care what is happening to them. They take advantage of the great range of subjects that are taught at the school. They receive excellent support to develop their interests, talents and knowledge. They receive individualised and holistic support from their tutors. Students are working to maximise their life options and fulfil their potential. They achieve well and are making great strides in developing into positive, motivated, confident, ambitious, successful and respectful young people.

Students preparing for the next stage of education have suitable support. Minimal supervision is provided; therefore residential students' develop a sense of independence, sharing and self-reliance.

Quality of boarding provision and care

The quality of care provided to residential students is satisfactory. The induction to boarding life was viewed by the majority of students as adequate. They felt the first few days was rushed and they were not given much time to settle into boarding life and being away from home. However, the booklet on pre-arrival information does give an overview of what to expect when arriving in the UK, but information on accommodation and curfew times were not included. The senior management team are aware of the issues and problems that arose, at the start of term. They are exploring the links between pastoral and academic support and how better this can be improved.

There is a reasonable range of leisure activities which have been recently introduced that are suitable for the ages and interests of the young people. There is an activities co-ordinator. However, students said that they do not always have enough time to participate in activities during the week, due to homework and travelling to and from school each day.

The quality of the school's catering arrangements is satisfactory. All meals are provided at the school site including breakfast. The school caters for all special diets. The majority of complaints raised by students relate to the meals provided. The surveys received by Ofsted stated that over 59% of the students strongly disagree or disagree that the food is good. Students said that the meals provided do not meet their cultural or individual need; therefore, they rarely eat on site. The school site is approximately 30 minutes from the boarding accommodation. There are no catering facilities within boarding, and no snacks or beverages are provided. There are three vending machines, however, at the time of this inspection these were insufficiently filled and not working. Residential students can cook on site if they so wish, but safety around this is not managed appropriately. The school and care staff do not have a clear overview on whether young people are eating a well balanced and

nutritious diet. Students said that they have jointly raised concerns about the food through the school council. However, there were no records of this complaint or how it was addressed.

The boarding accommodation is suitable. All boarders have accommodation which meets the national minimum standards. There is approximately 47 flats which consist of five to six bedrooms with en-suite facilities and one kitchen/diner area. There is one large common room on the lower ground floor. The maintenance of the accommodation is suitable. However, the main issue raised by the residential students was about the heating system and the warmth of the building especially at night. Environmental and fire risk assessments are undertaken. However, the information presented was brief and did not cover all areas of risk such as the appropriate staffing levels needed in an emergency, and whether and what were the risky areas. There is also an emergency planning policy; however, this only covers the school site and not boarding.

There are appropriate arrangements for keeping residential students' bedding clean. There is a launderette on site; however this is not adequate for the number of students residing within boarding. The student handbook clearly states that 'catered students' are provided with washing powder. However, students said that they provide this for themselves and the cost of using the machines is not included in the overall boarding costs.

The arrangements for medical treatment are safe and effective. There are two designated nurses on the school site. The nurses are rota'd daily to undertake morning visits at the boarding site. The majority of the students who attend the school are from overseas. There are clear guidance for parents and students in the pre-arrival information pack on how the national health service (NHS) is run. Those students who need additional care and support have care plans, which are overseen by the nursing staff with the support from academic or care staff. Therefore, any health or emotional well-being issues for an individual are appropriately monitored.

Residential students are able to keep in touch with families and friends mainly through mobile phones and other electronic communication. Residential students are provided with one or more appropriate helpline and contact numbers if they have any problems, but the list does not include an independent listener or the Children's Rights Director. Residential students said they would call their family or the agency supporting them whilst at the school if they had any concerns.

Boarders' safety

The school's arrangements for ensuring that students in their care are safe and protected from harm are inadequate. The school has not followed all the safeguarding guidance set out by the Department for Education (DfE) on 'safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education.' There is a central register. However, checks such as the criminal records bureau (CRB) and references are not

consistently undertaken prior to any person being employed by the school. The school does follow the guidance under List 99. Where a person has been employed prior to their checks being completed, there is no additional risk assessment in place to safeguard young people. The director of student services is the designated child protection officer along with one of the nurses. They have made good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board where the school is situated. However, the school and boarding accommodation are situated across two different London Boroughs; and the school's safeguarding policy and procedures does not reflect this.

Although staff are trained, child protection is not fully understood by all and students are not fully protected, especially in relation to children going missing. The school's procedure for the reporting of any safeguarding concerns is not well-known by staff or students. Procedures are not in place in relation to safeguarding young people who may go missing, including agreed protocols with the local police. There is a clear policy regarding bullying, and no incidents of bullying have been reported.

Students are encouraged to behave well and to develop positive relationships irrespective of any feelings they might experience. There is a policy to promote good behaviour, and sanctions are deemed suitable and fair. There is a clear overview of all sanctions and punishments imposed. However, none of the care staff are trained in physical intervention to deliver safe care practice, in line with the guidance from the Department for Education (DfE).

Leadership and management of boarding

The leadership and management of residential welfare provision is inadequate. There are significant weakness and failures to meet the national minimum standards, which has had an impact on the welfare provision and outcomes for students. The boarding provision is not being effectively and efficiently managed. Care staff are not well-trained or experienced to support the residential students appropriately. Staff are aware of the school's policies and procedures and are given a handbook to enhance their knowledge. However, management of residential student's safety and wellbeing at all times is not robust, with the exception of the security of the accommodation.

The staff team are fairly new and staff morale is low. The team feels that management support could be better especially with regards to training and development and the induction of new staff. The senior management team are aware of the service's strengths and weaknesses and what improvements are needed to ensure that the safety and welfare of students in their care is protected.

Boarding provision is insufficiently staffed. There are approximately 151 residential students boarding. There are up to two staff on duty and on occasions three. Night duty is covered by one member of staff. There is an on-call system for emergency support. It is expected that staff living-in, of which there are approximately nine on-site who are off-duty, can be called upon to help out in an emergency. However, it is unclear what procedure is followed if all these staff were not available. Those

residential students under 16 years of age are chaperoned daily to and from the boarding accommodation to the school site using public transport. The staff and student ratio for support was 1 to 17, which does not meet the recommended guidance.

The school has not appropriately managed all complaints received, especially a complaint from a number of students on how to improve the quality of their boarding experience and care.

The boarding Statement of Principles and Practice clearly outlines the service's aims and objectives of the school. Additional to this, parents and students are given a pre-arrival information pack and the school's website is another source for information. However, curfew times and laundry expenses are not included in the pack given.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools.

- The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the boarding and teaching staff of the school, who boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school. The school ensures that boarders know who this person is, and how to contact them. Boarders are also provided with one or more appropriate helpline(s) or outside contact numbers, including the Children's Rights Director, to ring in case of problems or distress. (NMS 2.3)
- The health, safety and welfare of the occupants are reasonably assured in every part of the school's land and buildings. (NMS 6.1)
- The school has regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State, 'Health and Safety: Department for Education Advice on Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies' (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 6.2)
- Adequate laundry provision is made for boarders' clothing and bedding. Boarders' clothing is satisfactorily stored and issued to the right boarder following laundering. (NMS 9.1)
- The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 11)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 ('Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards') are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.3)
- Schools operate safe recruitment procedures and vet staff in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance (as referenced in

'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards') issued by the Secretary of State. (NMS 14.1)

- The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time are sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved. (NMS 15.3)
- Any person employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders has a job description reflecting their duties, receives induction training in boarding when newly appointed, and receives regular reviews of their boarding practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding. (NMS 15.1)
- Staff working within the school know and implement the school's policy in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Staff actively search for children who are missing, including working with police where appropriate. (NMS 15.6)
- Boarders have an opportunity to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision, are able to raise concerns and make complaints, and their views are given appropriate weight in decisions about the running of the school. Pupils are not penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint in good faith. (NMS 17)

What should the school do to improve further?

- consider reviewing the number of laundry facilities within the boarding accommodation
- consider including in the pre-arrival information the bed times routines for residential students in accordance to their age
- consider providing breakfast provisions and supplies for students living on the boarding site

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



06/03/2012

Dear Students

Inspection of CATS College London

I recently carried out a welfare inspection to check if CATs College London meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools. Thank you very much for sharing your views with me. Your contribution to the inspection process is highly appreciated.

I know that you have mixed feelings about the boarding accommodation at CATs College London. However, what also came across is that you feel the education is excellent and you receive good support from you tutors. The school has a relaxed atmosphere.

I had to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the boarding school as inadequate. This is not to deny all the wonderful ways in which the school supports you. The main concerns relate to keeping you safe especially within the boarding and supporting you appropriately to and from school. You had a number of other concerns relating to food, laundry, the accommodation and your relationship with some of the staff. All your concerns have been raised with the headteacher so they can act on these matters.

You can find more information in the inspection report on the Ofsted website.

It was lovely to meet you and I wish you all the best.

Yours sincerely,

Karen M Malcolm

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Karen Malcolm