

Centre Academy East Anglia

Centre Academy East Anglia, Church Road, Brettenham, IPSWICH, IP7 7QR

Inspection dates	19/03/2013 to 21/03/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Adequate	3
Outcomes for boarders	Good	2
Quality of boarding provision and care	Adequate	3
Boarders' safety	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management of boarding	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is adequate because

- Boarders enjoy their boarding experience and that it gives them opportunities to socialise with their peers. They enjoy learning new skills and benefit from the range of activities on offer. Boarders and their parents identify the positive impact boarding has on supporting progress, and personal growth and development.
- Boarders say they feel safe and do not experience bullying behaviour in the school or boarding provision.
- The school does not have a robust fire risk assessment in place. Records to confirm remedial works have been undertaken to electrical systems were missing. Remedial works recommended by a fire company had not been risk assessed to establish urgency. The safeguarding policy has not been ratified by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The inspection thoroughly explored these issues and established that pupils have not been put at risk of harm as a result of these shortfalls. However, there is the potential of harm in the absence of comprehensive systems, monitoring and recording.
- Boarding is well organised and runs well on a day-to-day basis. Boarders know the routines and respond well to the boundaries and expectations. However, there is no evidence of continual focus on improvement of the boarding provision. There are no systems in place to monitor the boarding provision or develop it further.
- The school promotes equality and diversity throughout daily routines. Boarders' needs are identified at admission and reviewed throughout their time in the school. Boarders access a wide range of opportunities, which they would not otherwise experience. The ethos and culture of the school is one of respect, empathy and understanding of individual's needs and challenges.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the national minimum standards for boarding schools. The details are

listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of the boarding provision, covering two boarding houses, took place within three and a half hours of notice given to the school. The inspection activities included meetings with: groups of boarders, boarding staff, safeguarding officers and the senior management team. Consultation took place with parents and external professionals. Observations of the premises, activities, meal times and boarding routines and a school assembly formed part of the inspection. Information was gathered from documents, policies, records and Parent View, which represented feedback from 10 parents and carers.

Inspection team

Louisa Bayley

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

This is a co-educational day and boarding school for children aged 4 to 19 years facing learning challenges. The school is a proprietary. It is situated in 10 acres of grounds in the village of Brettenham, Suffolk, 14 miles from Bury St Edmunds and 30 miles from Cambridge. The boarding accommodation is housed in two buildings on the school site. Boarding is provided five nights per week during term time for pupils aged from 9 years to 19 years. There are 43 pupils on roll with 25 boarders.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement a system to ensure boarders are clear about matters that constitute a complaint. Provide boarders with written responses to any such complaints, detailing the outcome and establishing whether the complainant is satisfied with the outcome.
- 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 school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as referenced in the 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 7.1)
 - 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)
 - There is clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff. (NMS 13.1)
 - 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)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for boarders

Good

Outcomes for boarders are good. Boarders genuinely enjoy each other's company and value their social time together. They say that boarding gives them the opportunity to spend time with their peers, which they would not otherwise be able to do. They are supportive of each other and express that they learn to develop empathy and understanding of each other. A boarder said: 'I understand when someone is upset and I know when to give them space or to help them.' Boarders benefit from a strong culture of promotion of equality, overcoming barriers to access a range of experiences and opportunities.

Behaviour is exceptionally good in the school. Boarders are polite and courteous and treat adults and each other with respect. The relationships between staff and pupils are mutually highly respectful. A boarder said: 'Staff are really nice. They put in 110 per cent effort to make sure we are happy. They go the extra mile for us.'

Boarders are encouraged and supported to develop the skills they need, in social interaction, confidence and independence, in preparation for moving on. Parents say that their children learn independence skills, which help them to mature and take responsibility for themselves. Many pupils in the school have had a history of facing challenges and difficulties. A parent said of their child's experience in the school: 'It is the first time he has ever felt like he belongs.' Boarders identified a number of areas they have progressed in, including managing anger issues, independent travel and learning to be more tolerant of others. One boarder said: 'I have learned to share and compromise; at home I don't have to share with anyone but I do here.'

Boarders enjoy a range of activities, with a good selection of choice, which help to develop their skills, confidence and interests. Senior boarders enjoy weekly trips to the local gymnasium, taking responsibility for keeping themselves fit. There are physical activities for all boarders to participate in, as well as creative and developmental opportunities. Many activities have community aspects. For example, the school band plays at a local festival, for a public audience. This gives them the opportunity to showcase their talents and build their confidence.

Parents and boarders say the school provides access to a number of health and medical services. Professionals accessible within the school include a counsellor, speech and language therapist and an occupational therapist. This further enhances the outcomes for pupils.

Quality of boarding provision and care

Adequate

The quality of boarding provision is adequate. Good practice is evident; however, there is shortfall against a national minimum standard. This shortfall does not compromise boarders' health or safety.

The school provides telephone numbers of external agencies for boarders to contact in case of issues or distress. However, boarders were unaware that there is an independent person available to contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school. Discussion with boarders highlighted that, although they feel able to talk to staff about issues, they would benefit from having the option to talk to an independent person.

Parents and boarders are very positive about the care provided in the boarding houses. There are good induction systems, taster days for new boarders and the use of a buddy system, to help new boarders settle in. Effective links between academic and pastoral staff support boarders in all aspects of their school life.

Boarders benefit from a wide range of leisure activities. Academic staff provide activities each day after school, promoting their understanding of boarders outside of the classroom. Activities include; design and technology, cooking, team games, band, sports, residential trips, running club and Karate. Boarders were particularly positive about fire crew club. Each week, fire officers run an activity in the school, which boarders describe as 'totally unique'. A boarder said: 'Fire crew is excellent and completely original, other schools do not get the chance to have that activity. We learn drills, how to respect each other and the equipment, first aid, how to use a defibrillator and how to resuscitate. We go on trips to fire stations and get to put the equipment on.' A parent talked of the positive impact this activity has had on their child, supporting development of their confidence and co-ordination skills. Activities are age and development level appropriate, with older pupils participating in activities that support development of their independence skills.

Staff consider boarders views and wishes when organising and reviewing the boarding provision. Boarders identified changes that have been made as a result of their preferences. An example of this is the arrangements in the dormitories, changing configurations to ensure that all boarders are happy. Staff have also made changes to mealtime arrangements as boarders had made requests to have a lighter tea time meal and additional food at supper time. Boarders say they feel listened to and their opinions are valued.

Boarders say they know how to make a complaint or raise an issue with staff and are happy to do so. Although boarders generally feel that staff deal with concerns, staff do not always make them aware of the outcome of an issue.

Boarders' health is promoted because of comprehensive health care arrangements and safe and effective administration and handling of medicines. Boarding staff support individuals to attend medical appointments as needed and they liaise closely with parents to communicate health needs.

The boarding accommodation provides suitable sleeping and personal hygiene areas. The communal areas are small and appear cramped. However, boarders have a positive view of the accommodation and say it feels 'homely' and 'cosy'. Parents say that the accommodation could benefit from updating but they say that the school spends money on the pupils, which is more beneficial than cosmetic decoration. The accommodation is warm, well lit and ventilated and provides boarders with the resources they need.

The food is of good quality, providing a balanced and nutritious diet. Staff ensure special diets and allergies are well considered. There are plenty of choices and pupils say that if they do not like what is available, staff will make them an alternative. There are salad options at midday and evening meals. Fruit is readily available and boarders have good access to food and drinks outside of meal times. The quality of the food is rated highly by boarders.

Boarders' safety

Inadequate

The boarders' safety is inadequate. Although the shortfalls identified have not harmed or put boarders at risk of harm, there are steps that must be taken to ensure boarders' safety. However, the shortfalls have the potential to put pupils and staff at risk if not addressed.

Fire evacuation drills ensure that pupils and staff are familiar with evacuation procedures. The school has annual checks conducted by an external fire company to ensure that fire prevention and response systems are in working order. During the inspection, it was clear that the school had not planned remedial works for recommendations raised by the company. The fire service clarified that the recommended works were not urgent and shortfalls identified did not pose an immediate risk of harm to adults and pupils in the school. The senior management team arranged

for a company to address the work immediately in response to the issue when it was raised during inspection. However, the school had not assessed the urgency of the works required to establish this, meaning that risk assessments or systems to ensure boarders' safety do not work.

The school has a fire risk assessment; however, this does not comprehensively cover the potential risks in the school as required by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Potential risks are not identified and systems are not in place mitigate potential risks.

Electrical assessments carried out in the school raised recommendations for remedial works. The school were unable to locate certificates to confirm completion of the work. The senior management arranged for an electrical company to come into the school immediately this was highlighted during the inspection, to ensure the remedial work previously identified had been addressed. The inspection process established, through discussion with a qualified electrician, that there were no unresolved high-risk works. However, lack of effective record keeping means that the school do not have appropriate means to robustly monitor and ensure work is carried out.

The safeguarding policy does not clearly state procedures for reporting allegations against staff and the Local Safeguarding Children Board has not ratified the policy. Additionally, some aspects of the policy do not provide clear guidance. This lack of clarity regarding procedures could compromise pupils' welfare. The school has a designated safeguarding teacher and a deputy safeguarding teacher. Both staff have received training at appropriate levels to ensure they understand the responsibilities of their roles. Safeguarding concerns are managed and confidentiality is adequately maintained through sound recording systems.

Boarders say that bullying is not an issue. A boarder said: 'There is a zero tolerance to bullying here.' Staff manage behaviour well and the school uses positive reward and reinforcement to promote and acknowledge good behaviour. There are no incidents of pupils going missing and physical restraint is not used in the school.

Staff are recruited through safe recruitment procedures and visitors follow procedures to show identity and sign in. Regular visitors to the school, such as the fire officers who carry out the weekly fire crew activity, are suitably checked.

Leadership and management of boarding

Adequate

The leadership and management of the boarding provision are adequate. The shortfalls against the national minimum standards do not have a detrimental impact on boarders' safety and well-being.

Parents, pupils and staff understand the boarding aims, which are evident in everyday practice. There is a good level of information about the school available to parents and external professionals. Additionally, the school offers informal occasions for parents to meet and address questions to the senior managers. Special needs symposiums hosted at the school give further opportunities for parents to gain information on specific topics.

Staff promote equality and diversity throughout their practice. All staff treat pupils as highly individual; they develop a good understanding of each individual's needs. Staff collate comprehensive information at the point of admission and this helps to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.

A sufficient number of appropriately trained and experienced staff ensure routines within the boarding provision are well organised and established. The school has implemented and regularly reviews all required policies to underpin the boarding provision. There are good links between

education and pastoral care and staff work across both remits, which enhances their knowledge and understanding of pupils across all aspects of their school lives. Staff say they are well supported, however there is no formal supervision system in place and staff do not benefit from a regular review of their boarding practice.

There is a lack of clear leadership of the boarding provision. Managers do not monitor the quality of the provision or the impact boarding has on pupils. There is no development plan to identify and secure improvements. As a result, there are no systems in place to affect change, other than in response to daily issues.

External professionals say they have positive relationships with the school. The majority of parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire have positive views of the boarding provision and their relationship with the school. The discussions held with parents as part of the inspection process further confirm this.

There is a formal complaints process in the school, however, none have been made. Pupils say they raise issues with staff rather make a formal complaint.

The school has acted on the recommendation from the previous welfare inspection. They have provided lockers to ensure that each boarder has a safe, accessible place to keep personal possessions.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	124890
Social care unique reference number	SC024588
DfE registration number	935/6058

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.

Type of school	Independent boarding school
Number of boarders on roll	25
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	9 to 19
Headteacher	Mrs Kim Salthouse
Date of previous boarding inspection	15/09/2009
Telephone number	01449 736404
Email address	admin@centreacademy.net

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