

Wymondham College

Wymondham College, Administration Offices, Wymondham, Norfolk NR18 9SZ

Inspection dates	23/01/2017 to 25/01/2017	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is outstanding because

- There is an exceptional approach to proactive, preventative safeguarding, based on research and developments in the field. The boarding staff act on their exceptional understanding of the potential risks to children and young people. Safeguarding concerns are followed up robustly and recorded well, and all referrals are tracked.
- Highly innovative approaches to managing bullying contribute to children and young people taking bullying very seriously.
- There is a culture of high expectation and high attainment. Targeted support is offered to the children and young people who need it. There is a robust system in place to monitor vulnerable students. Vulnerable children and young people make rapid and sustained progress from their starting points.
- The quality of the boarding accommodation has improved significantly since the last inspection.
- Children's and young people's holistic health needs are well met. They are able to access an extensive programme of after-school clubs and activities that provide a balance between studies and downtime.
- The children and young people have a range of opportunities to provide their views on the quality of the service that they receive in boarding. Parents and professionals consistently provided highly positive feedback about the boarding provision.
- Leaders and managers are inspirational. They drive improvement and encourage ambition for both staff and students. They invite and act upon robust external scrutiny. The leadership team proactively engages with a wide range of external agencies to both learn and share best practice.
- There are two points raised to help the college to improve further, both concerning recording.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that records of mediation meetings and incidents clearly state whether the children and young people are satisfied with the outcome and ensure that they have an opportunity to comment and to sign to confirm this.
- Ensure that all records of complaints clearly outline the detail of the complaint, the action taken by the college, the outcome and confirmation of the complainant's satisfaction or otherwise concerning the result.

Information about this inspection

The inspection by four inspectors took place within two hours of announcement. The inspectors visited all of the boarding houses, observed interactions between the staff and the children and young people, observed mealtimes and sampled meals. The inspectors spent time with children and young people individually and as organised groups. The inspectors spoke with staff, parents and external professionals, reviewed documentation and records and considered the results from the 105 completed Parent View surveys.

Inspection team

Ashley Hinson	Lead social care inspector
Louisa Bayley	Regulatory inspection manager
Deirdra Keating	Social care inspector
Brenda McInerney	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Wymondham College is a co-educational academy. The college caters for pupils of mixed gender who are aged between 11 and 18 years. There are currently 1,338 pupils on roll, of which there are 638 boarders. Boarding is organised into six houses, with a specific sixth-form accommodation block. Day boarders are allocated to one of the houses. There is a range of facilities, including a sports hall and gym, sports pitches, a drama studio and an indoor swimming pool. The college is located between the towns of Wymondham and Attleborough, within easy reach of the city of Norwich. The college has good road links to London and the Midlands and there is a local rail service.

The boarding provision was last inspected in November 2012.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

The boarding provision in this college is outstanding. An inspirational and aspirational leadership team has overseen a number of improvements since the last inspection. This includes the decor, the furnishings, the choice and provision of food, an expansion of activities and the engagement of students. The leadership team has overseen enhancements to safeguarding practice in the college. As a result, robust and innovative practice contributes to children and young people feeling safe and staff acting upon concerns.

There is a culture of high expectation and high attainment. Many children and young people exceed their academic expectations because of the support that they receive. The leadership team tracks children's and young people's progress, enabling them to offer targeted support to children and young people who risk falling behind academically.

The leadership team uses research-informed practice to identify, monitor and intervene to support the progress of children and young people whom they consider vulnerable. The leadership team utilises the pupil premium with high effectiveness. The combined impact is that vulnerable children and young people make rapid and sustained progress from their starting points.

The children and young people are extremely positive about the staff who support them. They also say that they get on well with their peers. Behaviour is very good, with relatively few incidents occurring. Senior leaders analyse and interpret data to identify patterns and trends. This has resulted in some exceptional insight and effective action to tackle the causes of issues rather than just reacting to the symptoms. Bullying is a rare occurrence and when it does occur the staff act swiftly to address it. The staff embrace highly innovative and creative approaches to raising awareness of bullying. The children and young people have adopted key roles in supporting an anti-bullying agenda.

The staff frequently seek children's and young people's views via surveys, suggestion boxes and student forums. In one boarding house, the staff provided new curtains and more sports tournaments following student consultation. The children and young people spoke of improvements to the school wi-fi access following feedback from the school council.

The staff support the children and young people to become more independent as they get older. The staff educate and train them to provide support to their fellow boarders. This empowers children and young people, giving them an active and valuable role in the boarding community and generates a culture of nurture and support.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The children and young people receive outstanding care and support in the boarding provision. The support is personalised and in line with their needs. Leaders and managers ensure that comprehensive welfare plans provide guidance for the staff when

children's and young people's individual needs are complex. The children and young people feel supported by the staff. One child said, 'There is always someone to support you.' The children consistently spoke of a 'family feel' within the house environment. Another child said, 'It's a home, not just somewhere you go to school.' Feedback from parents is overwhelmingly positive. They feel that their children are happy and safe boarding at the college. Many parents spoke of their children flourishing and trying new experiences and building new skills.

There is an extensive programme of refurbishment for the boarding provision. The college has made enormous progress in improving the quality of boarding accommodation since the last inspection. The children and young people say that their belongings are secure and that they have access to personal safes and lockers. The houses are clean and welcoming. The children and young people in each boarding house take pride in creating an individual identity.

The refectory provides an excellent range of freshly cooked, healthy meals, including an extensive salad bar. The children and young people and their parents inform the catering manager of any particular requests. The children and young people spoke of working with the kitchen staff to make cakes for their friend's birthdays. A group of boarders provides regular feedback regarding the food. They sample potential menu items and assist in decisions about new meals. This inclusive approach helps the children and young people to feel that boarding life is a more personalised experience.

Nurses maintain strong oversight and monitoring of medication administration. They provide a monthly audit of records and stock. Centralised recording that is shared electronically ensures that systems in the boarding houses work safely. When errors are made, the staff know what to do.

A well-being manager and a multidisciplinary team provide coordinated planning and support to the children and young people and the staff. This team works to upskill staff in meeting the children's and young people's needs. The team has been pivotal in bringing together external services. Consequently children's and young people's physical and emotional health needs are being well met.

The staff ensure that the children and young people receive an extensive programme of after-school clubs and activities. The children and young people spoke positively about the friendships that they have made through their clubs. As well as sporting and academic clubs there are creative sessions, such as 'cooking club'. These clubs support special interests and help children and young people to realise their potential and build talents, or simply to try something new. This supports them to develop their confidence and individuality while providing a balance between studies and downtime. Parents say that their children are very happy and safe boarding at the college; many spoke of their children flourishing and trying new experiences and building new skills. Parents and children and young people cite these extra-curricular activities as a significant element in children and young people settling into boarding when they first arrive.

Room sharing risk assessments have clearly identified the children and young people for whom room sharing is not suitable. These are concise and detail actual risks and actions taken.

The children and young people have a range of opportunities to provide their views on the quality of the boarding service that they receive. There are individual boarders' councils in each house. There is also an overarching boarders' council and a further principal's council. The principal's council regularly meets with the principal. The children and young people report that the staff carefully consider their views and are able to give examples of the staff acting on those views and suggestions.

Leaders and managers regularly seek the views of families. Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the prompt communication between home and school. One parent said, 'They pick things up before you even know about them.'

The children and young people have ample autonomous opportunities to contact parents. The use of phones, the internet, laptops and letters provide a variety of methods for keeping in touch. Parents and children and young people report that staying in contact is easy and meets the needs of the individual.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Staff are creative in the way that they promote children's and young people's understanding of a wide range of safeguarding subjects. One young person said that boarding house assemblies cover 'inspiring topics'. Another said, 'We had a speaker from a charity called "One Punch Can Kill". The presenter was a lady whose son had been killed in a bar fight. It really made you think.'

Discussions with the children and young people from each of the boarding houses demonstrate that they feel safe. They can each name a number of adults whom they can talk to about their worries or concerns. The children and young people know the name of the independent listener and how to contact him if they need to. One young person said, 'We feel that the staff care about us. We know that they are not just here for the money, they really do care.'

There is a robust system to monitor vulnerable students and a system of 'team around the child' is put in place when additional risks are identified. This gives the children and young people a number of avenues to raise concerns or to discuss their worries with the staff that they feel comfortable with, or in a more anonymous way with the independent listener.

Bullying is taken very seriously in the college. All of the children and young people spoken to said that they have not had any issues with bullying. They are clear that staff would deal with any concerns of bullying quickly. One young person said, 'Bullying is really mean, particularly if you live here. They [the staff] do not tolerate it.' The parent of one young person, who had been upset by an incident in the boarding house, spoke of how impressed she was at the way that the staff had managed it. She said that a mediation meeting had taken place and that the incident had been dealt with 'very sensitively'. The parent reported that her child is now 'more confident, happy and relaxed'. A point identified for the college to improve is to ensure that records of mediation meetings and incidents clearly state whether the children and young people are satisfied with the outcome and to provide an opportunity for the children and young

people to comment and to sign to confirm this. Currently, the excellent practice that is in place in managing some incidents is not clearly captured.

Staff are highly innovative in approaching the subject of bullying. Nine children and young people have completed anti-bullying ambassador training, through an accredited and certificated course. These ambassadors have completed safeguarding training. They are currently researching potential bullying hotspots by carrying out 'climate walks' around the college. This is helping them to identify potential problem areas where bullying could occur or where children and young people could potentially be isolated. The ambassadors are very proud of their roles and fully understand the responsibilities that they have been given. Their comments include:

- 'I have started to look at things differently and changed the way that I listen to others.'
- 'I love the role here. I always like to have something to do. I just love the responsibility.'
- 'It's nice to know that if someone was uncomfortable or upset about anything that you can help.'
- 'The majority of concerns we deal with are about feeling isolated and homesick, and identifying someone to talk to.'
- 'We will be mentors and bullying ambassadors.'

Systems to manage behaviour have moved from being sanctions-based to being more about restorative work and helping children and young people to understand the impact of their behaviour on others. The reward system helps children and young people to focus on attainment, behaviour and positive contribution. The children and young people understand the system for rewards and they talk positively about their in-house rewards. Behaviour managers have analysed and interpreted data to understand when there have been issues. They have taken action to put in support for children and young people when these issues have been identified. An example of this is the introduction of a well-being manager and a counsellor to provide additional resources and expertise to meet the children's and young people's individual needs. Staff have introduced other projects to help children and young people to develop their enjoyment of school, to reduce particular times of anxiety and to engage and energise the children and young people on an individual basis.

Staff and young people are clear about the expectations of internet use. They sign acceptable use contracts and know that they are accountable for the material that they access on the internet. The children and young people have benefited from lessons, assemblies and external speakers on the topics of internet safety, sexting and child sexual exploitation.

Safeguarding concerns are followed up robustly and recorded well, and all referrals are tracked. The support that is put in as a 'team around the child' enables those children and young people who are vulnerable to receive care, nurture and access to emotional and mental health support. The staff have received accredited youth mental health training to help them to manage and meet the children's and young people's needs. Staff receive training in the 'Prevent' duty, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and internet safety. They talk knowledgeably about these issues and they

can give examples of how they have followed up concerns in these areas, demonstrating their professional curiosity and ability to apply their learning to real situations.

The safeguarding team, along with the pastoral support team, retains robust oversight of the safeguarding concerns in the school. There are key links with external professionals, including substance misuse agencies, sexual abuse support agencies, police, children's services and mental health services. The safeguarding team and the well-being manager assess the risks to vulnerable students and work with boarding house managers to put in risk reduction and management strategies. There is an exceptional approach to proactive, preventative safeguarding, based on research and developments in the field. This helps to ensure that all children and young people, including those who are vulnerable or at risk, are safe, physically and emotionally nurtured and that they receive the support that they need.

Concerns about staff are identified and referred to the designated officer. The college takes action when concerns are identified and makes changes to policies and procedures as needed to provide enhanced clarity for the staff. An example of this is the change to the safeguarding policy for staff who have left in respect of their contact with the children and young people. The staff say that they feel comfortable about raising concerns about colleagues, should the need arise, in order to safeguard the children and young people.

Restraint is not used in the school. Staff have completed de-escalation and restraint training but behaviour is managed without resorting to restraint.

There have been no incidents of children and young people going missing. The staff know and understand the protocols to follow should an incident occur. There are robust measures in place to monitor all children's and young people's whereabouts and particularly good systems in place to monitor those who are identified as more vulnerable. Heads of boarding houses contribute to management strategies to reduce the risks to children and young people on an individual basis.

The college follows robust safe-recruitment processes. Staff and their families who live on site have agreements and declarations in place and are police checked. This contributes to children's and young people's safety and helps to ensure that only suitably checked people have access to them.

There are robust systems in place to ensure the safety of the site and accommodation. Systematic checks, regular reviews of risk assessments and clear accountability of the health and safety team, estates team, grounds staff and boarding and teaching staff mean that their roles, and expectations of them, are well defined. Given the size of the site, these arrangements are extremely impressive. The knowledge of the health and safety manager and his team is extensive and completely supports the physical safety of the children and young people.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

Highly trained and experienced leaders and managers lead the boarding provision effectively and efficiently. They inspire not only the children and young people but also

the staff. Their approach nurtures collective ambition and children and young people make progress as a result.

Boarding is an integral part of the whole college. Heads of houses are qualified teachers and have responsibilities linked to academic study. Many of the other staff in the boarding provision also have professional teaching qualifications. There are regular pastoral meetings with key members of staff. The children and young people report good relationships with the staff.

The boarding and teaching staff work seamlessly together as a 'whole-school' team. The boarding staff closely monitor children's and young people's personal and academic progress. They celebrate this progress in displays and reward assemblies in the boarding houses.

Leaders and managers are visible and known to staff and children and young people alike. There is natural, easy interaction between senior managers and the children and young people. Leaders and managers routinely walk the floor and lead by example. They model aspirational, child-focused approaches. The principal is one of many staff and sixth formers who act as mentors for children and young people.

The staff show pride in the service and the quality of their practice. They are engaged and aspirational. All of the staff receive regular one-to-one sessions with their line manager. Heads of boarding houses receive more frequent sessions. This includes individual sessions with their line manager and separate sessions with the principal at least half termly. Leaders support the staff to develop professionally, with staff working through the levels of the organisation and into senior management roles. This assists with the stability of the service and enables good practice to thrive. Leaders and managers reward innovation, commitment and creativity.

All staff are up to date with safeguarding training. There is a responsive approach to training provision, with both internal and external providers delivering this. This includes training in relation to mental health support, which staff described as having a significant impact on their understanding. The staff are able to translate theory into practice. They act on what they learn.

The arrival of the new principal was said by one person to have 'revitalised' the service. The principal engages with a wide range of external agencies, including the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Evidence from research underpins practice across the college. There is no complacency. There is regular monitoring of the quality of care. This includes feedback from families and children. The principal invites challenge through external scrutiny. Leaders and managers commission experienced professionals to complete this work, which has contributed to a comprehensive development plan. This is making a difference to the children and reflects a commitment to ongoing improvement.

Parents express high levels of satisfaction with the prompt communication between home and the college. There have been relatively few complaints about the college. The actions taken in response to the complaints received are appropriate. However, some records lack clarity. A point identified for the college to improve is to ensure that all records of complaints clearly outline the detail of the complaint, the action taken by the

college, the outcome and confirmation of the complainant's satisfaction or otherwise concerning the result.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children's and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	136481
Social care unique reference number	SC055089
DfE registration number	926 5400

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	Boarding school
Number of boarders on roll	638
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 18
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Taylor
Date of previous boarding inspection	12/11/2012
Telephone number	01953 609 000
Email address	enquiries@wymondhamcollege.org

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