

Wymondham College

Sapientia Education Trust

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

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Wymondham College is a co-educational academy. The college caters for pupils, irrespective of gender, who are aged between 11 and 18. There are currently 1,298 pupils on roll, of which there are 569 boarders. Boarding is organised into six houses, with a specific sixth-form accommodation block. Day students are allocated to one of the boarding houses. Facilities include a sports hall, gym, sports pitches, a drama studio and an indoor swimming pool. The college is located between Wymondham and Attleborough, within easy reach of Norwich.

The boarding provision was last inspected in January 2017.

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 May 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding

The boarding school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Date of last inspection: 23 January 2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

This is an environment in which children absolutely flourish. They receive significant help to reach their full potential. Children spoke with unreserved positivity about their experiences in the boarding provision. They experience a strong sense of belonging and are highly enthusiastic about the quality of care and support that they receive.

Children and staff model the college's principles of pride, passion and positivity. Children feel included and valued because they are actively encouraged to contribute. Native-speaking children act as tutors in modern foreign languages to other children. Children who have particular interests are encouraged and enabled to act on them. For example, children arrange inspirational school visits such as from the first all-female team to cross Antarctica using muscle power alone.

Children fully support the ethos of the college through charitable work. Examples include campaigns to raise awareness of male mental health issues and providing charity boxes filled with essential products for children experiencing poverty at local schools and colleges.

Leaders and managers enable the children to participate in innovative and inspiring activities. For example, children have the opportunity to become well-being mentors to provide support to other children. Older children can attend formal training to become mental health first aiders, providing yet more vital support for their peers.

The well-being team has expanded, and its work embedded. Creative healthcare structures are firmly rooted throughout the college. These structures help the staff and the children to detect early warning signs of health concerns. Children who are experiencing emotional distress or struggling with their mental health receive excellent help at the right time.

The college works seamlessly with external agencies to coordinate specific support for children who have more complex needs. The college staff work with charities to promote social mobility, resulting in significant and sustained improvement to children's lives. A professional said, 'All of the children we place there are disadvantaged children. The benefits of being at the college are measurable. It is unrelentingly positive.'

The staff encourage children to reach their full academic potential through education, employment and apprenticeships. The college has strong working relationships with a range of external agencies. This network provides a broad educational offer for every child. High aspiration is engrained in the culture of the college. Teaching staff are readily available to provide additional support, help and guidance, ensuring that children make academic progress. Exam results show that 86% of students achieved

at least a grade 4 in mathematics and English, and 34% achieved an 8 or 9 in at least one subject at GCSE. At A level, 84% of students achieved A* to C.

Excellent opportunities and experiences are available to children, including a trip to represent at the European Parliament and an Argentinian exchange. Children participate in a range of sports at the college, benefiting from coaching from committed staff who enable children to develop their skills. The staff actively encourage children to identify activities that interest them and to make improvements to the activity programme, giving them ownership and choice. The depth and breadth of experiences and activities enable children to experience an abundance of cultures, faiths and religions.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Children feel safe. They can easily identify named and trusted staff with whom they would speak if they experienced uncertainty or needed support, advice or guidance. Good communication and joint working across the staff disciplines ensure that there are always staff available. Children who live away from home benefit from this holistic approach.

Staff are vigilant and attentive. Many children described a personalised approach to their boarding experiences. Children described how the staff get to know them well and can tell when they are having a bad day.

The safeguarding team has developed and improved. The children know the team and how to report concerns or access support. The team provides a strong response to any safeguarding concerns. Coordinated working between the college and external agencies enables protective actions that safeguard children effectively.

The quality of record-keeping following allegations about members of staff has improved. Internal investigations are conducted transparently, and all lines of enquiry are comprehensively investigated. This provides protection for children and staff.

Consequences of unacceptable behaviour are made clear. Children are made fully aware that repeat occurrences will not be tolerated. The staff report incidents, listen to children and pass on concerns effectively. Bullying is well managed. The staff follow up concerns and take strong action.

Good records of bullying incidents enable identification of patterns and trends. The records show that incidents are dealt with fairly. However, the records do not consistently capture the rationale for decision-making. This limits the value of the records should children wish to access them in the future.

Staff take immediate action to safeguard children from potential self-harm. Multi-agency meetings take place and individualised actions are identified. However, some risk management strategies lack rigour. One record lacked clarity on the risk posed and the actions expected of staff. In a second case, no risk management strategy

was located. These omissions mean that staff may not have all the information that they need to respond to the risks posed. An internal audit of safeguarding practice by the trust had already identified these shortfalls as areas for improvement.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers are dynamic and aspirational. They have high expectations of the children, the staff and themselves. Leaders and managers inspire confidence in their staff, whom they support to excel as strong leaders.

The college's excellent leaders and managers are ambitious. They possess drive and determination and are committed to making improvements. This has led to the college achieving the highest children's average point score in its history in the most recent A-level results.

Leaders, managers and staff implement action research. Leaders and managers support strong and confident staff to develop new ideas and to explore and undertake their own research. They do this to test new theories and ways of working with a view to improving the quality of the service and the lives of the children. For example, staff used messages from research to change the approach to managing the use of mobile phones in boarding.

Boarding is an integral part of college life. Members of the senior leadership team routinely work in boarding houses. This ensures that they have an exceptional understanding of the boarding experience.

Heads of house have a thorough understanding of children's needs, experiences and academic progress. Routine meetings take place between academic leads and the boarding staff to maintain a persistent focus on the children who require support.

Staff supervision and support are emotionally intelligent. The impact of the work that the staff do in managing the needs of children in distress is recognised by line managers and reflected on. This contributes to a skilled staff team that can develop strong relationships with the children.

A comprehensive quality assurance process provides feedback and evidence from a variety of sources. This feedback gives leaders and managers a wide-ranging overview of the quality of boarding. These processes have identified the areas for development found at this inspection, demonstrating the effectiveness of monitoring.

The college's governors provide critical challenge and scrutiny. They visit the boarding provision regularly. Governors have an excellent understanding of boarding and its strengths and areas for development. Governors are an active and integral part of the comprehensive quality assurance process.

Feedback from parents is overwhelmingly positive. Families whose children have

needed additional support from the well-being team said that the boarding provision is excellent. Feedback from external agencies, and in particular from agencies working with the college to support disadvantaged children to access and benefit from boarding, is extremely good.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that risk assessments fully reflect the risk and identify the necessary actions to reduce the risk.
- Ensure that incident records capture the rationale for the actions taken.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC055089

Headteacher: Mr Dan Browning

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

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