

Claremont School

Baldslow
St Leonards-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN37 7PW

3–4 March 2020

Overall outcome Boarding provision

The school meets all of the national minimum standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

The overall experiences and progress of children

- Boarders enjoy and benefit from their boarding experience. Many speak about the value of making new friends from different countries, cultures and faiths. They embrace the opportunity to learn about and value difference. This is an area of particular focus and celebration for the director of boarding.
- Some groups of boarders are under-represented; for example, the number of boys vastly outweighs the number of girls and a high proportion of boarders attend the associated football academy. Those boarders from minority groups have mixed opinions on the impact of this. Some say that they enjoy the difference while others feel that they sometimes miss out on desired activities because there is not enough interest. Boarding staff are aware of this and have introduced a range of consultation mechanisms to inform the activities programme.
- The recent changes to the boarding arrangements are welcomed, particularly by the small group of junior boarders, who describe their house as 'cosy'. They like living alongside the older girls, who they find 'helpful and caring'. This arrangement was instigated by the director of boarding, whose aim is to embed a family feel across the boarding provision.
- Currently, there is some disparity in the overall quality of the boarding accommodation. Some areas of the boarding houses have been identified by leaders as requiring further financial investment and improvement. Consequently, a plan of repairs, renewals and in some areas, refurbishment, is under way. A group of sixth-form boarders have recently had free rein to redecorate a basement area as their own common room space.
- Boarding staff are keenly aware of the individual and specific support needs of the boarders. In these circumstances, written plans guide the staff to provide the necessary support and intervention. Those records sampled included boarders who have additional learning and/or medical needs.
- Boarders understand the school's rules and behavioural expectations. There is clear policy and guidance in respect of their use of free time; for example, stricter return times and out-of-bounds areas for younger boarders. The diverse backgrounds of the boarding community bring some challenge for the boarding team in this regard, particularly when some boarders have been used to much higher levels of freedom before joining the school. Boarders would benefit from strengthened consultation opportunities on such matters to increase their understanding of why and how such guidance is in place.

- Similarly, there is a need to place a stronger focus on educative approaches in respect of acceptable behaviour, particularly in relation to boarders' use of social media. When bullying incidents have occurred in this regard, leaders have been swift to take decisive action. In serious cases, temporary and permanent exclusions have been used. Although assemblies, boarders' meetings and posters are used to convey the school's stance on bullying, there is further work to do to fully embed a culture to prevent lower-level incidents from being tolerated and consequently, escalating.

How well children are helped and protected

- Boarders say that they feel safe and protected in their boarding house. Their positive relationships with staff mean that all boarders spoken with identified a trusted adult whom they can go to in times of need.
- Safeguarding arrangements are clear, with roles and responsibilities known to all. Additional deputy safeguarding lead roles have been created and safeguarding policies have been updated, in line with statutory guidance.
- Staff across all disciplines were able to demonstrate a sound understanding of their own safeguarding responsibilities. The designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) are suitably trained and they make appropriate and timely referrals and consultations to external safeguarding agencies. School bus drivers work to a code of practice and alert school staff to any behaviour issues that occur on such journeys.
- The DSLs continue to remind all staff to use the electronic reporting and recording mechanism, 'My Concern', in their efforts to encourage all staff to report any concern that they may have about any pupil, regardless of its seemingly low-level nature. This approach is underpinned by a whole-school safeguarding audit completed last summer, that resulted in highlighting areas for targeted action/improvement.
- The school follows safer recruitment practice guidance and seeks to make continuing improvements to be satisfied that staff are safe people. An example of this is by encouraging staff to register with the online Disclosure and Barring Service Update Service, for which the school will pay the cost. Routine checks are diligently completed on the single central register to ensure continuing compliance.
- Complaints policies and procedures are communicated to parents, boarders and third parties. Parents spoken with said that they are confident in raising concerns; many have been satisfied with earlier, informal processes and have therefore not needed to escalate matters. The recording of formal complaints, including any investigation and outcome, is clear, but there are missed opportunities to collate and record issues and concerns that have not met the formal threshold. This is a missed opportunity for leaders to consider and learn from emerging topics and issues at the earliest possible stage.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

- Significant changes have occurred to the leadership arrangements for the boarding provision since the last inspection. A newly appointed director of boarding is introducing well thought-out changes that started with how the two boarding houses are now occupied. Consequently, junior boarders now live alongside girls in one boarding house. The other boarding house is dedicated to senior boys.
- Leaders have listened carefully to the views and wishes of the boarders in delivering

this change. For example, a small group of senior girls did not want to move. This group has remained in situ, with their own dedicated area within the house.

- The change of ownership since the last inspection has brought significant change and improvement to governance and quality assurance. Matters relating to health and safety are scrutinised by designated leads from the wider organisation. Leaders and managers throughout the school are held to account.
- Boarding staff are particularly positive about their leadership arrangements. One reason for this is the more targeted approach now given to their own professional development. Boarding staff appraisal processes are becoming more embedded. Another reason relates to the recently introduced boarding staff meetings that bring both boarding teams together to discuss and compare topical issues.
- The director of boarding is a member of the school's senior leadership team. Consequently, she takes every opportunity to demonstrate her passion and drive for the boarding provision to be a critical element of the school's overall provision. Her boarding development plan is both realistic and ambitious.

Compliance with national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the following national minimum standards for boarding schools

- Boarders' health and well-being (NMS 3)
- Safety of boarders (NMS 6)
- Child protection (NMS11)
- Promoting positive behaviour and relationships (NMS 12)
- Management and development of boarding (NMS 13)
- Staff recruitment and checks on other adults (NMS 14)
- Staffing and supervision (NMS 15)
- Securing boarders' views (NMS 17)
- Complaints (NMS 18)

Areas for improvement:

- Ensure that all areas of the boarding accommodation are of the same good standard.
- Consider additional consultation mechanisms for boarders.
- Strengthen the educative approach for boarders in respect of their use of social media platforms.
- Further develop the skills and expertise of the boarding team.

School details

Unique reference number	114640
Social care unique reference number	1159395
DfE registration number	845/6010
Inspection number	10144869

The inspection of boarding provision 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
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	710
Number of boarders on roll	91
Headteacher	Principal: Mr Giles Perrin Headteacher of senior school and sixth form: Mr Ed Dickie Headteacher of preparatory and nursery school: Mr Gavin Bunker
Head of boarding/residential provision	Mrs Francoise Armstrong
Telephone number	01424 751555
Website	www.claremontschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiries@claremontschool.co.uk
Date of previous boarding inspection	22 November 2017

Information about this school

- The International Schools Partnership became the school's proprietor in 2018.
- The school is a non-selective, independent, co-educational school for pupils aged from just under one to 19 years.
- There is a football academy within the school. Many boarders join to attend this provision.
- A new director of boarding was appointed following the proprietor change.
- The majority of boarders are from overseas. A small group speak English as an

additional language.

- Two boarding houses are situated a few miles from the main school sites. The majority of the boarders attend the secondary school.
- There is a strong link between the boarding teams and school nurse. A small number of boarders have additional education, health and care plans.
- At its first boarding inspection in October 2017, the school was judged outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) and was conducted without notice.
- Complaints and concerns, received by the DfE, related to leadership and management, the safety and well-being of pupils, bullying incidents, the school's own complaints procedure and exclusions.
- This inspection considered the relevant national minimum standards for boarding schools and was aligned with an education inspection, for which there is a separate report. A number of meetings with leaders were undertaken jointly by both inspectors.
- The primary and secondary school sites were visited, meetings were held with senior leaders and both boarding houses were visited. Opportunities were created for inspectors to meet with groups of day and boarding pupils from across the age ranges. Boarding staff members were also spoken with. Informal opportunities were used to speak with parents and school bus drivers at the start and end of the school day.
- The proprietor's representative and safeguarding governor were interviewed jointly by both inspectors, by telephone.
- Joint meetings were held with the designated safeguarding leads and the deputy headteacher of the senior school, responsible for behaviour.
- Documents relating to complaints, behaviour and safeguarding were scrutinised, as well as the single central record.

Inspection team

Sophie Wood, lead inspector

Social Care Regulatory Inspection Manager

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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