

Claremont School

Claremont School (St Leonards) Limited 02827000

Claremont School, Baldslow, St. Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex TN37 7PW

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Claremont is a co-educational day and boarding school for children from the age of one to 18. The nursery, pre-preparatory and preparatory schools are in St Leonards-on-Sea, and the senior school is in Bodiam. The school is an independent school for 800 pupils with up to 104 boarding places. The school provides residential care for pupils from 11 to 18 years old in two boarding houses within a short drive from the main school sites. The school offers full-time and weekly boarding. There has been a change of proprietor since the last inspection, to the International Schools Partnership (ISP).

An education inspection took place in March 2019, and the school was judged as outstanding.

A social care monitoring visit took place on 3 March 2020. The school met all the national minimum standards that were checked during that inspection.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 21 to 23 September 2021

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.

Date of last inspection: 22 November 2017

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Boarding has a hugely positive impact on students. The planning prior to boarding, the experience in boarding and how residential students move on from the school are exemplary. Residential students make excellent progress, not only in their academic achievements but in, for example, improved confidence and social skills or reaching their ideal weight.

Staff plan the induction into boarding well, personalising them for each student. Staff consider the specific interests of each student as well as their learning needs. They consider safe travel and, more recently, any COVID-19 guidance.

Residential students speak positively about their boarding experience. As well as making friends and learning about other cultures, they enjoy a wide range of meaningful and stimulating activities, such as mountain climbing and cycling. They speak positively about boarding, with some students saying, for example, 'I love it here' and 'It is like a second home'.

Residential students describe feeling more confident, and they have an improved ability to manage social relationships, thereby equipping them for adult life. All students describe staff that they trust and can approach about any difficulties or concerns. Staff respond without judgement, their focus being on resolving the issues and supporting the students sensitively and wholeheartedly.

The school nurse is a passionate and knowledgeable advocate for all students' health needs. She has formed strong partnerships with a range of external professionals to ensure that students get access to all the health services that they require. The introduction of a health lead in each boarding facility has added further support. Students are in excellent physical, mental and emotional health. Some have become advocates for mental health well-being.

Boarding staff support students to engage in their prep. Residential students said that they feel very supported in this and value having staff to turn to if they are struggling or need advice. Key staff analyse data to identify students who may not be meeting expected targets. Education and boarding staff work effectively together to ensure that each student has the right level of support. Consequently, students excel in their learning.

Staff go to great lengths to support students to reach their first-choice destination when they leave the school. When a student may need guidance or a change in pathway due to their learning needs, staff approach this holistically with the wishes and feelings of the student at the centre of decision-making.

Residential students have a voice. For example, prefects run a tea and cake club where students are free to voice their opinions with their peers. There have been positive outcomes, such as the school providing transport to boarding at an additional time and the development of a social, 'quiet' space.

Students demonstrate a mature approach to the wider world. A student group meets weekly to discuss community involvement and how they can raise money for charity, such as a local children's hospice.

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

Senior leaders have a firm grip on safeguarding, with effective oversight and monitoring. Governors with a particular responsibility for safeguarding add a further layer of scrutiny.

Senior leaders have demonstrated an excellent response to the recent concerns around the 'Everyone's Invited' campaign and subsequent media coverage. The student body has completed some first-class work to recognise the impact of inappropriate behaviour. Key staff have provided resources that are of high quality and readily accessible for all students.

Senior leaders treat residential students' welfare as a top priority. They empower the welfare team to provide any necessary pastoral care. This team, comprised of suitably trained professionals, writes succinct well-being plans, which detail how to support each student's individual needs while maintaining their dignity. Students have ready access to external counselling if they wish. Students enjoy excellent mental and emotional health and are passionate about their learning and the opportunities that the school provides.

At the core of the safeguarding culture, are the positive and trusting relationships between staff and students. Staff spend time with students so that they know them well and can identify any emerging concerns. Equally, students flag up any worries that they have about their peers. They are keen to be part of the solution, for example befriending other students who are homesick and ensuring that they are included in the wider group. This creates a fully inclusive environment.

Designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) use software to manage safeguarding events. They collect and analyse trends that inform the wider strategic planning in addition to dealing with immediate concerns.

The approach to e-safety is phenomenal. All staff and students are engaged in the process and contribute to the culture of continual learning. Residential students have an acute awareness of how to keep themselves safe online.

In general, recruitment practice is good. However, one member of staff had started at the school before the overseas check had been completed, as required by school policy. No students were deemed to be at risk.

There is a strong safeguarding culture, which includes reflection and learning from any incidents. However, the DSLs had not revisited a historical safeguarding concern, which occurred during the time of their predecessors, to consider if there was further learning, for example in record-keeping.

The health and safety manager shows strong oversight and demonstrates effective organisational skills across multiple large and complex sites. He effectively prioritises the high volume of routine maintenance work, so the average wait time for repairs is minimal. One shortfall was identified in relation to the functioning of fire doors in a boarding house. The fire doors were adjusted during the inspection. All students know how to evacuate in the event of an emergency.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

The members of the senior leadership team are exceptional. They are ambitious and confident, eager for professional dialogue and challenge. They demonstrated exceptional leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. They produced a bespoke COVID-19 handbook for students, so students knew how to keep safe. They arranged for overseas students to arrive early in boarding so that they could quarantine for the necessary period before school began.

The head of care is described as 'a whirlwind of energy, passionate and available for students and staff'. She stays in regular contact with parents, who describe the relationship as 'brilliant'. Boarding is an integral and important part of the wider school, where residential students thrive. Parents are well informed about their child's well-being, as well as their academic progress. A parent said, 'Staff are very nurturing, very caring. They are always available, very approachable. Staff go above and beyond what I expect.'

The competent boarding staff team is well trained, motivated and supported. The head of care ensures that they have training relevant to students' needs. This means that staff provide exceptional care and support so that every student can be the best they can be. A culture of excellence is embedded throughout the provision. A staff member said, 'I feel well supported and that my opinions are listened to. I know I can speak to my managers at any time if there is something I want to do or something I am unsure about.'

Senior leaders monitor the quality of boarding on a regular basis using the national minimum standards as a guide to assist this process, identifying the weaknesses and implementing clear plans for development. Other senior leaders within the ISP use effective monitoring systems to provide critique, challenge and support. This is a management team that is ambitious for continual improvement. It is open to critique and suggestion so that it can continue this journey. The development plan is realistic and advanced, to bring about further improvements, for example in training and boarding accommodation.

Students live in an environment that is maintained to a high standard. It is warm, welcoming and cosy and feels like home. Significant investment in the infrastructure has brought about positive change.

Boarding is an important part of the whole-school offer, with oversight by skilled and experienced professionals. These professionals have a clear strategic vision to further develop the provision to enhance the overall experience and progress of students, such as the recent formation of a girls' football academy.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Senior leaders must ensure that the school recruitment policy is implemented consistently.
- Senior leaders must ensure that in any review of safeguarding practice, consideration is given to whether there is further learning from historical safeguarding incidents.
- Senior leaders must ensure that boarding staff understand their roles in maintaining a safe environment.

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: 1159395

Principal: Giles Perrin

Type of school: Boarding School

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Inspectors

Keith Riley, Social Care Inspector

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