

Oxford International College

Oxford International College Limited

Oxford International House, 1 to 5 London Place, Oxford OX4 1BD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

The school is set over two teaching sites in the centre of Oxford. It provides GCSE and A-level courses for students aged from 14 to 18 years; the majority of whom are international students. The school has 341 boarding places across four halls of residence. At the time of the inspection, 329 students were on roll at the school, with 304 students using the boarding provision. The school uses the term 'students' to describe those attending the school.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 19 to 21 October 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Students enjoy boarding and say that they have made some really good friends. They like the house parents and wardens, who they feel they could go to with any worries or concerns. Students are happy with the support that they receive and have no concerns regarding their living accommodation. They feel listened to and have various forums to share their views and ideas. Feedback from staff ensures that students know when their ideas are implemented, and they are given explanations as to why some requests may not happen. Examples of change include improving the dining space and food provision.

Students receive a well-planned induction to the school. Staff ensure that students are well informed on cultural matters, for example British etiquette. Students are signposted to well-being services and are encouraged to build friendships with peers during a well-planned induction week. This allows students to feel valued and helps them to settle. Support is well considered for students' individual cultures and identities. The menu caters for different cultural and religious dietary needs, and students are regularly asked to share their views on what food they would like to be available. Information posted around the school and the halls of residence directs children to key staff and groups, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender forum.

Students are prepared for their futures, and there is a strong emphasis on their academic progression. They are supported to learn about the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, visit universities and access work experience which is linked to their preferred career paths. For example, some students will be visiting a hospital and completing a first-aid course. This helps students to learn new skills and gives them an insight into their chosen career.

Students' emotional well-being is supported through a strong and diverse pastoral team. Students receive support from staff if they have any worries or concerns, and they make good use of counselling services. Regular individual welfare reviews provide students with the space to share how they are managing the pressures of education, being away from home and any problems with their relationships. Meetings between school staff to discuss vulnerable students provide a platform to consider how to best support the student moving forwards. Staff liaise closely with parents and offer support in relation to any emotional difficulties that their child may be experiencing.

Practice in relation to the storage and administration of medication is not fully compliant with national regulations. Locked cupboards to store medication are not available in all halls of residence, and medication records are not clear enough to reduce the risk of errors. For example, staff were unaware of the reasons why medication was prescribed for a student, and they failed to obtain new supplies. This was rectified during the inspection.

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

Students say that they feel safe attending the school. They like the halls of residence and have trusting relationships with the boarding staff. The boarding staff have a good understanding of student vulnerabilities. They are aware of risks relating students who may be living in a foreign country for the first time, and they know how to report any safeguarding concerns they have within the school structure and to the local authority if required. Safeguarding arrangements in the school are strong and any child protection concerns are swiftly shared with partner agencies. However, there is no current clear guidance on how to report child protection concerns or allegations that may happen in the students' home countries.

It has been a difficult year for students and staff, which the school has managed well. Many students have not been able to return home due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine restrictions. The welfare team has been particularly supportive of students who have lost contact with family members and those who are now seeking asylum in the United Kingdom.

Child protection and safeguarding incidents are managed promptly in the school. However, records in relation to incidents are variable in quality. In some instances, sufficient detail is not recorded about conversations that took place or agreed actions. Staff promote the emotional well-being of students and provide additional support when they need it. Senior leaders monitor students closely to ensure that they are safe and settled.

Leaders recognise that bullying can occur within the groups of students. This is managed effectively and a full study of students' and staff's attitudes has led to changes in policies and approaches to managing potential conflict. In the main, students integrate well with each other and say that the political differences of each other's countries do not matter as they are all friends.

Students are protected from avoidable risk through excellent monitoring of all health and safety aspects across the school sites and halls of residence. Delays in some work being undertaken to rectify a water leak have now been addressed, and plans have been made to redecorate in the coming weeks. Good links with the owners of the halls of residence mean that maintenance concerns are usually addressed swiftly. Safer recruitment practice is followed for all staff across the school. However, where halls of residence are shared with other schools and colleges, and students come into contact with their staff, the school cannot evidence that it has checked that the other agencies are following safer recruitment practice.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The leadership in the school is aspirational. There is a clear focus on students succeeding academically. Students' timetables are demanding and have a clear education focus. Extra-curricular activities include a debating club, music and sports.

Boarding staff help students who may be struggling to form friendships by supporting them to engage in these groups. Volunteering opportunities are available for all students to develop potential career skills and give back to the local community.

Boarding staff say that they feel well supported by the senior leaders in the school and can approach them as needed. The head of boarding regularly visits the halls of residence and holds meetings to discuss students' needs or staff's concerns. These sessions often include relevant training and development for staff. The head of boarding manages any conflicts between staff. Supportive discussions are documented effectively, to improve relationships and working practices.

Leaders are aware of the progress that students make. There is a close link between the principal, the head of boarding and head of welfare. Weekly meetings provide a holistic overview of each student's academic and welfare needs. Where concerns are identified, action is taken to support the student, such as one-to-one time with staff and counselling.

There have been some shortfalls in the quality of oversight of key records and systems across the school. This means that records have not been clear and decisions relating to actions taken to support students have not been documented effectively. These gaps in monitoring have not had any direct impact on students' support and welfare. The school has been through a rapid expansion in recent years. Senior leaders' roles have become more stretched, which has led to the gaps in oversight which were noted at the inspection.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools:

- All medication is safely and securely stored and proper records are kept of its administration. Prescribed medicines are given only to the boarders to whom they are prescribed. Boarders allowed to self-medicate are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so. ('Boarding schools: national minimum standards', 3.4)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. ('Boarding schools: national minimum standards', 13.8)

Recommendations

- Senior leaders should ensure that where there is shared access to buildings by other schools or colleges, and students may come into contact with their staff, that those institutions have followed safer recruitment practice (NMS 14.1).
- Senior leaders should devise guidance on the process for referring allegations of abuse that have happened in countries other than England. (NMS 11.1).

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: 1257929

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Kim Terrar

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

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