

Cherwell College

St George's Mansion, George Street, Oxford OX1 2AR

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

This boarding school is situated in the heart of Oxford city centre. The purpose-built boarding accommodation is separate from, but within easy walking distance of, the education site. The majority of residential students come from overseas under tier 4 student visa arrangements. The college provides GCSE and A level tuition either on a one-to-one or a small group basis. Admissions run throughout the calendar year and include intensive study and revision programmes during school holidays. At the time of the inspection, there were 28 boarders. An education inspection took place on 28 September 2017 with an overall judgment of good. This was the first inspection of the residential provision since registration.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 February 2018

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: first inspection since registration

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is good because:

- A senior management team has close oversight of day-to-day activities. They are on hand for support, advice and guidance. They have a clear vision of the future direction for the college.
- Residential students enjoy their boarding experience. They form friendships with peers from all over the world. They form trusting relationships with staff.
- Staff are not risk averse. Residential students engage in a wide range of activities. Staff take swift and decisive action when they have any concerns about a residential student's welfare.
- Staff have high expectations of behaviour. Most residential students understand and respect the boundaries. Staff use appropriate sanctions to help modify any negative behaviours. The strategies are successful.
- Parents and carers and professionals speak highly of the quality of boarding and the prompt response to any queries.
- Residential students demonstrate a concern for the wider community, for example by being active participants in community cleaning campaigns.
- Senior leaders ensure that admission plans are well thought out with clear expectations regarding who takes responsibility for the appointment of education guardians and for airport transfers.
- Residential students make good progress, with the vast majority going on to their first choice of university.
- Residential students enjoy a wide range of meaningful and stimulating activities.
- Staff treat all residential students with dignity and respect. They are sensitive to their diverse needs and the differing cultures.

The boarding school's areas for development:

- Staff do not manage all medicines that residential students bring in from overseas. Staff obtain parental permission for prescription medication but not for homely remedies. There are no clear written procedures for medication errors, self-medication, stock reconciliation or residential students over 18 years old.
- Residential students do not have lockable storage in their bedrooms. Some students leave their passports, money and bank cards unsecured, without locking their rooms.
- The designated safeguarding lead does not, in the event of a concern, keep a detailed chronology of concerns and the action taken. Staff have not

developed individual written risk assessments or welfare plans for any students, although some may require it. Some incident logs lack detail, and there is dependence on an email trail.

- Some record keeping needs improving. The head of boarding does not keep written records of supervision. Staff do not keep written records of the reasons for specific health appointments. Some incident logs lack information, with a dependency on email exchanges as an audit trail.

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. (NMS 3.4)
- Reasonable protection is provided for boarders' personal possessions and for any boarders' money or valuables looked after by the school. (NMS 9.3)
- The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (NMS 11.1)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.8)

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Residential students enjoy trusting and secure relationships with the staff and each other. They have a sense of belonging. One student said, 'the staff are very kind, polite and nice. My conversations with them make me feel like I'm talking with a friend so I feel more at ease and I can also speak out what is on my mind.' An education guardian said, 'staff take a lot of notice and give a lot of attention to the students. They have an extremely personal approach and really do care. They are like a big family.'

Residential students enjoy a range of meaningful and stimulating activities within the boarding house and further afield. Staff with particular interests take a lead in promoting activity, such as reading clubs. An activities coordinator arranges enrichment trips and healthy exercise, for example football, swimming and

badminton. Residential students speak positively of the opportunities available to them. They say they have a choice and do not get bored.

Students have a voice in this college. They have numerous ways to make their wishes known, either formally or informally. Residential students do not feel the need to resort to the formal complaints procedure. Staff listen and respond. For example, they have provided a badminton activity and a refrigerator in the common room, at the request of residential students. The senior leaders have contracted a new catering company who provides a diverse range of good quality, healthy food for different cultures.

Staff welcome new students, making them feel at home even if they arrive from another country during night-time hours. New residential students enjoy a comprehensive induction programme that familiarises them with the boarding arrangements and local community. An education guardian said, 'the students are fully integrated into British life and culture'. Of particular note is the concern residential students show in the wider community, such as over the cleanliness of a local bridge. They join campaigns to improve the environment, including a community clean-up and by using recycling bins within their own communal areas.

Parents speak positively about the boarding provision. One parent said, 'I am totally satisfied with the excellent en-suite boarding facilities as well as the well-balanced nourishment and the pastoral care provided by welfare officers.' Another parent said, 'the boarding experience is positive, catering good and rooms of high specification'.

Staff keep residential students in good physical health. They register them with a local doctor's surgery and support them with appointments if necessary. Staff ensure that there are suitable arrangements in place, in agreement with parents, such as for dental care. Staff are alert to any emotional or mental health needs as well. They support students to tell them how they are feeling and make appropriate referrals to other agencies if necessary. Staff do keep records of all health appointments, but there are no clear chronologies or welfare plans, when needed, to provide an oversight for individual students.

Some residential students bring in medicine from overseas. Senior leaders have not established a policy for this, and these medicines go unchecked. Some students self-medicate and staff do not risk assess this. Residential students do not have appropriate storage facilities in their bedrooms for medication. There is not a policy in place in the event of a medication error. Although staff gain parental permission for prescription medicines, there is no system in place to gain parental permission for homely remedies. When staff administer medication, there is no system in place for stock reconciliation. Senior leaders had already recognised the shortfalls and arranged for key staff to do medication training. This was happening during the inspection.

Staff ensure that residential students have contact with their parents, including when there is a time difference for international students. Students say they do not get

lonely. They are dedicated to their education and the boarding experience. Staff measure achievement and progress carefully. The vast majority of residential students go on to the university of their choice.

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

Students say that they can talk to the staff around them about any worries or concerns. Equally, staff are alert to any changes in behaviour or communication that could indicate that a residential student needs additional support. Staff are good at providing support but do not detail this in individual welfare plans or risk assessments. The staff team is small and all members are aware of the support strategies and control measures, so no student is deemed to be immediately disadvantaged by this shortfall.

Staff are proactive in educating students about risk, for example teaching them about e-safety and fire safety. Students demonstrate a mature attitude and keep themselves safe. Some students, who are aged over 18, do not like the curfews. The college is considering the balance of safeguarding and free time, and any impact on students who are not yet 18 years old.

The vast majority of students behave well. There are no instances of residential students going missing, offending criminally or misusing substances. Staff set high expectations and use sanctions to rectify poor behaviour. Recently, they have introduced a house system with points to reinforce the expectations through a positive reward system.

Staff educate residential students in British culture, while celebrating the diverse range of countries represented at the college. There is no bullying, and staff do not tolerate racism in any shape or form. Senior leaders take robust action, including using the exclusion policy, if they consider there is any discrimination.

Staff are alert to emerging risks. They respond swiftly and promptly to keep residential students as safe as possible. This includes liaising with others who, in some cases, are overseas. Staff safeguarding practice is good. Staff manage the risks well and protect students from harm. However, the designated safeguarding lead does not keep detailed written chronologies of concerns, in accordance with statutory guidance. This means that the decision-making progress is not always evident. No residential student was deemed at risk at the time of this inspection.

Senior leaders have listened carefully to advice given at the registration visit and strengthened the recruitment process. They follow safer recruitment principles and ensure that they only employ adults deemed suitable to work with children. They understand their responsibility to have a written agreement between the college and any person over 16 not employed by the college but living in the same premises. This is at an advanced stage in determining the terms of the accommodation,

guidance on contact with residential students and the responsibility to supervise visitors.

The designated safeguarding lead is trained to a suitable standard, along with a number of deputies. They are available to deal with any safeguarding concerns, even if these occur after hours. They demonstrate a good knowledge of what to do in the event of any concern to ensure that students remain safe and do not come to any harm.

The proprietor has a procedure in place in the event of a concern about staff. There have been no allegations against staff since registration.

Staff are on hand to monitor and advise on relationships to ensure that they are not exploitive. They give guidance to residential students, such as how to respond to repeated text messages. They have other control measures in place if necessary, such as regular welfare conversations or individual personal, safety and health education. However, staff do not formally document the issues in risk assessments or welfare plans and the control measures they have in place.

Staff respond well to incidents, keeping others informed including parents and education guardians. They take action to prevent recurrence. Senior leaders review procedures and tweak them if necessary. Some incident logs lack detail, with staff relying on an email trail. Senior leaders are aware of this and have plans to improve the system.

Key staff keep the physical environment safe, with all necessary health and safety certification in place. Residential students know how to evacuate the premises in the event of fire or other emergency. Staff ensure that students practise this regularly and challenge any students who do not take it seriously. Staff arrange for fire professionals to provide training to residential students. Senior leaders are considering whether the evacuation procedure fits all circumstances, such as lone working.

Residential students are safe and secure in the boarding premises. A swipe card system and visitor sign-in ensures that those entering the premises are monitored appropriately. Closed circuit television is used for external security and in some communal areas. Residential students have privacy in their individual bedrooms, with en-suite facilities. They can lock their bedrooms if they wish to. A parent said, 'privacy is respected but there is always close monitoring and the system of using swipe cards increases security and the safety of students'.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The proprietor and his team lead the college effectively and efficiently. He has recently appointed a head of boarding with relevant experience. She is showing good leadership, and residential students describe how they have quickly formed a good

relationship with her. She deploys staff effectively and provides the necessary support. However, she does not have regular formal supervision.

The proprietor is at the college daily and has a good grasp of issues, especially safeguarding and the quality of care. Other professionals speak highly of the swift response to any concern or issue. He understands the strengths and weaknesses of the college and has a strategic plan for future development. Leaders and managers have built effective relationships with others, especially education guardians, who speak in the most positive terms of the relationship.

Senior leaders have good admission procedures in place. They gain the relevant information before inviting a potential resident student for interview. They have clear expectations of who takes responsibility for the appointment of guardians and document this in the terms and conditions for the placement. Staff have safeguarding at the forefront of their minds even at admission, ensuring that responsibilities for airport transfers are clear and establishing how the residential student will make that journey safely.

Staff say that they feel supported and well trained. There is sufficient challenge and professional development. Staff share ownership of the care and practice, and there is good communication throughout the team. They are aware of the potential pitfalls of email communication, with plans to streamline documentation as the number of residential students grows.

The physical environment is maintained to a high standard, with students encouraged to keep their rooms tidy, supported by cleaning staff. Some students do not secure their passports, quantities of money and bank cards in their bedrooms, with some rooms left unlocked. Although this is a vulnerability, there are no incidents of loss or theft.

Leaders and managers have high expectations of themselves and the residential students. They are role models, promoting a culture of respect towards others, society and the environment. They celebrate the cultural differences of the range of international students who board.

Staff are focused on the needs of residential students, putting them at the centre of their practice. They are ready to stop other tasks to listen to the students and guide them. A parent said, 'staff try extremely hard to be responsive to the individual needs of each student, and to provide comprehensive and good welfare. They are always at hand, and always attentive.'

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC473682

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Stephen Clarke

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspector

Keith Riley: social care inspector



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