

Eastbourne College

Inspection report for boarding school

Unique reference number	SC050547
Inspection date	18 May 2009
Inspector	Liz Driver / Kevin Whatley
Type of Inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	28 November 2006

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Eastbourne College is a co-educational day and boarding school for boys and girls aged 13 to 19 years old. Eastbourne College occupies an extensive site in the heart of Eastbourne with numerous day and boarding houses located in the residential area surrounding the main school site. The ethos of the school is based on the idea of a 24 hour day and seven day week. Accommodation is offered in five boarding houses, three for boys and two for girls.

Summary

This announced inspection took place over three days and was carried out by two Ofsted inspectors and a Boarding school additional inspector. Surveys with the boarders were carried out and feedback sought from parents, although only about 10% of parents responded. All areas identified in boarder surveys and parental feedback were looked at during the inspection. Boarders were also interviewed during the inspection, together with key staff who contribute to boarding life.

The school provides excellent pastoral care with numerous avenues for boarders to voice their opinions and views. A real strength of the school is the variety of adult support available for boarders to access. Overall the healthcare provision is good, with a competent team of qualified nurses available for boarders. Areas such as child protection and safeguarding need reviewing; in general the school responds appropriately to ensuring boarders are kept safe, however the lack of written procedures does not always meet the standards. The school needs to revisit fire safety and review some current practices observed during the inspection. The standard of accommodation varies greatly, with some houses being outstanding and some satisfactory. The school has an effective system of introducing boarders into the school. Boarders' behaviour was observed to be exemplary throughout the inspection. Relationships between staff and boarders are friendly, supportive, appropriate and professional. The school has a strong management team committed to meeting the standards for boarding schools.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last full inspection carried out in 2004 the school was asked to ensure all staff received child protection training. There is an on going programme of staff training in child protection and safeguarding. Areas around medication storage, administration, stock control and recording have been addressed and now run smoothly and are monitored by qualified nurses. Parental consents for medical treatment and administration of non prescribed medicines are sought and on file. The profile of the Independent listener has been enhanced since the last inspection. All staff references are checked and verified. Written agreements regarding the role of any adults living in the boarding houses who are not employed are currently being implemented.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school's policies and procedures for meeting the needs of boarders' health are comprehensive and effective. Pre arrival information is gained and used to ensure the correct care is given. Recording systems are efficient and effective. The school medical centre provides

a full range of medical services to the pupils throughout the day with qualified nurse cover. All boarders are registered with a local General Practitioner surgery and are able to access a male or female General Practitioner. Qualified nurses are very competent and well informed of their duties in relation to privacy and confidentiality. A comprehensive Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) programme is in place. Delivery of PHSE takes advantage of the professional expertise of the qualified nurses. There are very clear policies around smoking, substance misuse and alcohol consumption with appropriate sanctions set out and followed in response to any pupils who disregard the statement. Older boarders, of legal age, are allowed to visit identified public houses at weekends in accordance with strict guidelines set out by the school. There is close monitoring of the designated local public houses used.

Appropriate first aid and minor illness treatment is available, delivered by competent qualified nurses. First aid is also administered by staff in the boarding houses, although not all house staff are qualified to do so. There are signs identifying the designated first aider in each house. Effective arrangements to secure all necessary attention, such as dental, optical, and medical, are firmly in place. All qualified nurses hold current Nursing and Midwifery Council registrations. Medication administration is in general sound, with clear procedures for staff to follow, although not all house staff are trained in medication administration. There is a robust system in place for recording medication administered by the medical centre and informing individual boarding housemasters/housemistresses, however there is not a clear process in place for house staff to inform the medical centre when they have administered medication which would lessen the risk of duplication. Consents for administration of medicines, first aid and emergency treatment are in place. There is a proven system in place for recording and reporting accidents and other incidents. Senior management monitor these records closely. The results of the boarders' survey showed the majority felt someone was always there to help them if they are unwell.

In general boarders are provided with a nutritionally balanced and varied diet. There is an excellent system in place to measure the nutritional content of all main meals. As a result it was identified that the iron content for girls was low, so fortified cereals have been introduced at breakfast. Individual special diets, to meet medical, cultural and religious needs, are catered for, with very good liaison with the medical centre. The choice of meals is good, however choices run out quickly and those pupils who arrive later for lunch do not get the same number of choices. The quality of food during the inspection was variable and this was fed back to the catering manager. The size of meals on offer is reasonable, with pupils able to have portions of their choice. They are allowed and were seen to go back for seconds if they wanted. The school council continues to work with the catering department to voice opinions and ideas. The catering department is keen to engage with pupils and does so on a regular basis, with good results. The deputy catering manager provides cooking lessons to pupils outside of mealtimes. This is enjoyed by many pupils and creates good relationships. There is adequate access to drinking water and snacks outside of set mealtimes. Boarders have access to "galleys" in their boarding houses where they can prepare snacks and drinks. There are sufficient supplies for boarders to do this.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The college has a very clearly defined anti-bullying policy that is written in a young person friendly format. The school acknowledges that there have been some issues with bullying, however a focused effort across the school has led to a significant reduction. Bullying incidents,

voiced by boarders, tend to be verbal intimidation rather than physical. All staff and prefects are very aware of actions and behaviours which may constitute bullying. The college continues to address issues associated with bullying as a priority. The introduction of peer listeners later this year will add to the provision already in place.

Wherever possible boarders are protected from the risk of harm or abuse. All staff receive child protection training. The school's designated child protection officer and headmaster work closely with relevant agencies to ensure correct practice. However, this practice is not fully supported by the schools policies and procedures. For example, the school's whistle blowing policy was not well known by staff whilst a missing boarders protocol was not in place. The school addressed these shortfalls during the inspection.

During the inspection the standards of pupils' behaviour was seen to be high. There are clearly written and practised sanctions that the boarders are very well informed of. In practice, the number of sanctions applied is low. Boarders feel the use of punishments is fair and consistent. Boarders appeared happy and demonstrated, throughout the inspection, a high level of respect for their peers and staff at the school.

There is a clearly written complaints procedure for parents, staff and boarders to access if necessary. The policy for parents does not currently refer to the contact details for Ofsted. All complaints are addressed within acceptable timescales with a clear sense of commitment. Feedback from parents indicate that complaints are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner.

The school has prefects who understand their roles fully and the limits of their responsibilities. They are provided with job descriptions and receive training from senior management. Boarders see prefects as a positive and additional support in the school. The prefect system works well, with house prefects adding to the improved image of the upper sixth as caring and supportive.

The school has clear procedures for fire safety that includes fire risk assessments, fire evacuation drills and the checking of fire fighting equipment. Staff and boarders are well informed of action to take in the event of an alarm sounding. Some aspects of fire safety practice were found not to have been followed; for example, fire doors being wedged open and poor signage of a fire escape.

Boarders are protected by risk assessments for high risk activities. Boarders are competently supervised with appropriate safety measures in place. Identified high risk activities are instructed or supervised by adults holding relevant qualifications. Throughout the inspection boarders were happy with the respect they received from staff and the level of privacy they were given. There are good systems in place to protect boarders from unwanted visitors. Not all boarders consistently use the signing in and out process. CCTV around the school site provides very good coverage of the main boarding and school areas. The use of the CCTV is appropriate, although there is no current policy in place. Staff are very visible and monitor movement around the site closely.

Staff recruitment checks are thorough and robust. The school has a clear policy on recruitment following safer recruitment guidance. All staff undergo the same robust recruitment process prior to employment and are in receipt of job descriptions and contracts. Written agreements between the school and any adult not employed by the school but living in the same building as boarding accommodation are currently being implemented.

There is a comprehensive health and safety policy in place that is overseen by the health and safety officer. There is a maintenance team who visit the houses very regularly. All portable appliances testing (PAT) is carried out to ensure electrical equipment is safe for use. During the inspection there were some health and safety concerns identified which the school rectified immediately. There is a lack of consistency across boarding houses regarding health and safety in relation to window restrictors. Some windows above the ground floor that may pose risks had no restrictors or alternative safety measures and some on the ground floor had restrictors that may not be needed. Some restrictors had been removed by boarders. In one house the temperature of hot water was found to be extremely hot.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The school engenders a vibrant and supportive atmosphere where each individual is encouraged to enjoy and learn. The school has a very good approach to providing boarders with a wide range of support and opportunities that encourage them to achieve academically and socially to their fullest potential.

Free time at weekends is structured, with town leave at designated times. Generally boarders felt there were sufficient activities arranged, although a small number of boarders and parents felt free time was too restrictive and the choice of activities could be improved. The deputy head confirmed this was to be looked at in the near future.

Boarders felt that staff are caring and supportive and that they had numerous adults they can go to for advice and support, including the Chaplain and independent counsellor. The survey also highlighted other numerous adults that boarders felt comfortable going to for support and advice. This is a strength of the school. The communication between external support and the school is very good.

All school policies embrace non discriminatory practice. Since girls have been admitted to the college there has been a significant change in embracing equality. Both headmaster and deputy headmaster are fully committed to ensuring equality for both genders and are working hard to move this forward. There are still some areas that girls feel are not fully equal, that the school is aware of, and the school is working hard to ensure these are addressed positively.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school fosters a whole school community approach which boarders have embraced. There are excellent systems for listening and obtaining the views of boarders. Boarders are able to have a say about the running of the school or enable change to take place. Regular opportunities exist for boarders to have a voice from house meetings to the school council. The school demonstrates a positive attitude to boarders' families and parental contact. Contact with family and friends is encouraged. Feedback from parents about communication with the school was very positive. There are excellent support systems in place to ensure new boarders feel welcome. Each new pupil has a buddy who helps them through the first few weeks. Feedback from boarders about support on joining the school was very positive. Parents reported pastoral care provision as being excellent, with excellent communication about welfare issues.

There are excellent relationships between staff and boarders, with staff having a sound understanding of individual pupils' needs. Boarders show high levels of respect for house staff. Staff are respectful of boarders and work hard to provide a friendly and caring environment. Boarders express excellent links between the school and the boarding provision.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Overall Eastbourne College provides satisfactory boarding provision. There is a clear variation in the standard of facilities. Physically some houses are outstanding and some are satisfactory. Mainly the girls' accommodation is better than the boys. Some boys' houses are undergoing upgrading as part of an ongoing decoration programme. Considerable investment has been allocated to improve the external structure of the houses over this last year and now work is being carried out internally. Feedback from girls and boys were that they are very happy with their accommodation. All accommodation provided is comfortable, well lit and welcoming. Some areas in boys' houses were seen to be messy.

All houses have sufficient numbers of toilet and washing facilities, again of an excellent standard in some and satisfactory standard in others. Shortfalls identified that need addressing include; ensuring extraction fans in toilets are working, addressing the mildew problem in some showers, ensuring there are hand drying facilities in all toilets that are hygienic, and ensuring the hot water is of a safe temperature. Graffiti also seen in one house needs to be addressed.

All boarders have a lockable storage facility, some with lockable drawers, and some have lockable tuck boxes. There is a programme in place to ensure all boarders have a lockable drawer they can use. This was not raised as an issue by any of the boarders. There are a number of systems in place for boarders to store money in a safe and secure way. Individual housemasters and housemistresses have clear procedures for storing, and for boarders having access to money.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Numerous examples of integration, education and respect of different cultures were seen throughout the inspection period. However, a small number of boarders said they had experienced racial discrimination from their peers. The headmaster and deputy headmaster will continue to review any discrimination within the school. The college has a disability policy with a statement of intent plus an equal opportunities policy for staff and one for pupils that is sound. The clear inequality of boarding accommodation is being addressed by the school, although it is not a concern for the boarders.

Eastbourne College has strong leadership and management. The newly appointed deputy headmaster has taken on the main responsibility for the boarding provision and has instigated changes that have benefited the boarders. The staff team who deliver pastoral care are valued and committed to the boarders' welfare. The Governors are very well informed of all aspects of boarding. The style of management ensures staff are clear about their tasks and responsibilities. The school is proficient at providing boarding pupils with individualised care and support. The school provides a clear statement of boarding practice and principles to parents and boarders. A wealth of information is available for pupils and parents on the school's website.

The organisation of the boarding houses is appropriate, with experienced staff on duty at all times. Houses are arranged so there is appropriate age and gender segregation. Boarders know which staff are on duty. Supervision is sound, with good numbers of staff always on duty. Staff induction has improved and continues to develop. The school ensures staff have access to a comprehensive written handbook on boarding policies and practices. Some key policies are currently being developed and are therefore absent from this handbook. The school has prepared contingency plans to address any crises that relate to the welfare of the boarders that are fully reviewed at health and safety meetings. Environmental risk assessments are in place for the boarding houses.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure all staff who administer medication and first aid are suitably trained to do so (NMS 15.7)
- ensure a robust system for informing the medical centre of medicines given in house is in place to avoid duplication (NMS 15.12)
- ensure all boarders have a good choice of food irrespective of what time they arrive for meals (NMS 24.3)
- review the college's child protection and safeguarding policy to include whistle blowing and missing boarders procedures (NMS 3.2, 3.4 and 3.9)
- ensure the newly written missing boarder policy is known to staff (NMS 3.9)
- ensure parents complaints policy contains the contact details of Ofsted (NMS 5.4)
- ensure a suitably qualified person is consulted regarding the use of restrictors on windows (NMS 26.1)
- ensure there is a more robust signing in and out procedure in place for the college and individual houses (NMS 3.9)
- ensure there is a system for checking and replacing the window restrictors in boarding houses in order to prevent unauthorised access and to promote safety especially windows above ground floor ensuring they meet fire regulations (NMS 47.3 and 41.5)
- ensure all fire exits have clear signage in accordance with local fire safety recommendations (NMS 26.1)
- ensure all toilets are adequately ventilated and clean with hygienic hand drying facilities (NMS 44.3 and 44.4)

- ensure the water supply in all boarding houses is of a safe temperature (NMS 47.2 and 44.6)
- ensure standards of accommodation across all boarding houses are reasonably similar and that they do not differ significantly in appearance and quality (NMS 10.2)