

Cranbrook School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Angela Gunning
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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

Cranbrook School was founded in 1518 and is situated within the historic town of Cranbrook, in Kent. As a School within the state maintained sector, no tuition fees are payable and day pupils attend free. Boarding fees are charged by the Governors of the School. Currently, 751 pupils attend the School, (coeducational, age range 13–18) and the 240 boarding places continue to be keenly sought after from all over the world.

There are six separate boarding houses; some within the school site and some are a short walking distance from the main teaching site. The boarding provision is complimented with a 24 hour medical centre, which is run by qualified and experienced nurses and supported by the local GP Practice.

About 40% of the students are boarders, most of whom are of White British heritage. There are some students from other parts of Europe and a smaller number are from Hong Kong. The School had an education inspection in November 2007 and was judged as a good school that has several outstanding features.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection and included a two day visit to the School in September 2008. The key inspection looked at outcomes for the key National Minimum Standards for children and young people who are educated in Boarding Schools. A further meeting was held with the Headteacher in December to address some issues around the recruitment of staff. This inspection found that the young people at Cranbrook are provided with excellent individual and personal support and they are assisted very well in their educational, personal, social and emotional development.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Cranbrook School has been extremely proactive in addressing the shortfalls that were identified during the previous inspection in 2005. There are good systems in place to ensure young people's medication needs are managed well. There is a designated child protection officer who liaises effectively with external agencies and provides training for all staff to ensure the young people's safety and welfare is protected. Various other aspects of health and safety are also more robust, such as fire safety, risk assessments and visitors 'signing in' to each boarding house and showing evidence of identity.

Some of the school's facilities, such as the information and communication technology rooms, are now available to boarding students some weekday evenings and during the weekend. The induction process for new staff has been reviewed and an annual appraisal system is in place for all staff involved in boarding. There are good systems in place to monitor records within the boarding houses. The head of boarding monitors various aspects of boarding, such as punishments, sanctions and complaints to ensure consistency for the young people. A comprehensive review of each boarding house is carried out every two years on a rolling

programme, to ensure that Cranbrook School is continually monitoring and developing its boarding provision for young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The young people's physical, emotional and healthcare needs are met extremely well at Cranbrook School. There are effective systems in place to promote good health. For example, there is a strong anti-smoking/anti-drug ethos, PSHE is delivered within both the school and the boarding houses and a 'drop-in' clinic is provided in the medical centre. The school promotes the importance of physical health through an extensive sports curriculum. There is also a good peer mentoring and student listener system within the boarding houses. The school has recently been re-awarded Healthy Schools Status.

The school has an effective medication policy and procedure and provides a medical centre with qualified and experienced nurses, who provide 24-hour onsite or on-call medical or first aid care. The role of the medical centre has been developed, with increased liaison between the medical centre, the school and the boarding houses when there are concerns about students' physical or mental welfare. There is an effective medication policy and procedure in each boarding house to ensure each young person's medication needs are met. All staff are made fully aware of the young people's medical needs and record-keeping within the houses and medical centre has improved. Boarding house staff receive training and have clear guidelines in the administration of medication and first aid. There is a protocol for boarders wishing to administer their own medication including an assessment of their ability to do so. Written, parental permission is obtained in advance for the administration of first aid, non-prescription medication and required medical treatments. The young people confirm they are always given help if they are unwell.

The young people are provided with a healthy balanced diet, with varied meals that meet their dietary needs and choices. The young people confirm that the standard of food is very good, although some commented that the dinner provision could be better. A dining hall committee meets twice a term and the chef has been proactive in listening to and implementing students' wishes where possible. A survey of boarders' views is also carried out and the quality and provision of food is also questioned in each house review. The lunchtime meal is served from 12.45 on a rotating basis to ensure all year groups have an early lunch at some point during the week. Mealtimes are relaxed, sociable occasions and cultural and religious dietary needs are catered for well.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The young people's safety and welfare is protected by the school's robust child protection and safeguarding procedures. There is an effective child protection policy in place and a designated child protection officer who liaises effectively with external agencies. All new staff, gap students and student listeners receive in-house child protection training as part of their induction training. Other staff receive an up date on child protection on an annual basis. However, at the inspection in September it was noted that staff recruitment procedures did not meet the National Minimum Standard (NMS). During a subsequent meeting with the Headteacher in December it was confirmed that there are no staff employed without a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check and the school policy is that new staff that do not have a CRB check are supervised and never

have unsupervised contact with the young people. The inspection identified a lack of clarity regarding the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance in relation to the NMS on staff recruitment processes. This is not an issue specific to this school. A recommendation has been made that any person starting work or volunteering in the boarding element of the school has an appropriate check via the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) before they start work.

The young people's safety and welfare is further protected by secure accommodation. All visitors to the boarding houses are asked to 'sign in' and to show evidence of identity. There is an up-to-date alarm/closed circuit television system in place. Doors are locked at night and alarmed and at other times are accessed through individual door codes.

There are good arrangements in place to counter bullying. The school has a strong 'Behaviour and Anti-Bullying' policy and the policy on counter bullying is held centrally and accessed on the school's public drive. The young people confirm that they feel safe and free from bullying and comment 'it is a very happy and comfortable school'. There is a consistent approach to behaviour, discipline and use of punishment in the boarding houses and the school. There is a behaviour policy and all punishments are recorded and monitored by the head of boarding.

There are effective health and safety policies and procedures in place. All boarding houses have an up to date fire risk assessment, which is up dated every year. Fire drills are carried out with all the boarders and staff on a termly basis and there is formal checking of fire safety systems on a weekly basis. Regular fire safety checks are carried out to ensure the safety of the young people and staff. All boarding houses completed a risk assessment following the previous inspection and all boarding houses now have a premises risk assessment. The bursar or estate manager check and update these and the health and safety advisor for the school inspects the boarding houses and reports the findings to the health and safety committee.

There are good measures in place to respect the young people's confidentiality and privacy. All staff are made aware of the school's policy on respecting confidentiality and privacy. Staff knock on bedroom doors before entry and adhere to the Every Child Matters agenda. The School has a clear and up to date complaints procedure, which is made available to the young people and their relatives. The complaints policy and procedure has been reviewed, up dated and agreed by the Governing body in April 2008. The young people confirm they feel able raise concerns or complaints and know they will be listened to.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The young people are provided with excellent individual and personal support to ensure their needs and wishes are met. They confirm there are a range of adults in the boarding houses and school to whom they can seek support from. There is an effective peer mentoring and student listeners system. Also, the medical centre provides a 'drop in clinic' as well a 'listening ear' to young people if they have concerns or issues they want to discuss. One young person said 'I like boarding because it feels like a community where you know everyone'. One parent considers that the school provides 'excellent pastoral care'.

There is an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities provided, such as a weekend programme of events and a variety of after-school clubs. Some of the school's facilities, such

as the information and communication technology rooms are now available to boarding students some weekday evenings and during the weekend.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Cranbrook School has very good systems in place for the young people to communicate their views and make suggestions, choices and decisions. The young people confirm they are able to communicate their views in various ways, such as house council and school student council meetings, the dining hall committee and the student listeners. One young person said 'almost every day each Head of House has lengthy chats with the house, giving us an opportunity to express our views'. There is also a three yearly full boarding house review, where the views of all young people, staff and parents are sought.

There is appropriate support given to the young people to have contact with their family and friends. The young people confirm that they are able to maintain regular, private contact with their families and friends, via the house phone, mobiles or email.

A comprehensive induction process is undertaken to ensure the young people join the School in a planned and sensitive manner. For example, all Year 9 Boarders have a two-day induction programme before the beginning of the academic year. Year 12 boys visit junior boys' boarding house to initiate Year 9 students into life in a senior boarding House. The new sixth form students also have some form of induction. The young people said 'the staff are excellent at being understanding and helpful when they were homesick'. Parents consider 'there is a good process and communication in preparation to joining the School' and that 'tremendous effort is put in by housemaster, matron and staff to welcome pupils'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Cranbrook School provides a good standard of accommodation for boarders. All the boarding houses were seen to be clean, tidy and well maintained. There is a rolling programme of planned refurbishment and redecoration in place; although, it was noted that there are inadequate toilet and washing facilities in Cornwallis boarding house. This issue is currently being addressed with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, with a bid to fund this improvement.

There are good arrangements to protect boarders' possessions and money. Each young person has a lockable safe in their bedroom for protection of valuables and money. Bedroom doors can be locked at the weekend if the young people are away. The young people said 'there had not been any theft and 'there is no problem at all with items going missing'.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

In many respects the organisation has a number of features that are outstanding. However, the impact of not applying the National Minimum Standards regarding recruitment, due to a lack of clarity regarding the DCSF results in the organisation being judged as good. The promotion of equality and diversity at Cranbrook School is good and there was no evidence of discrimination seen for any individual. For example, there are inter-house activities that mix gender and ability; provision is made for particular and special diets and different festivals are celebrated.

Cranbrook School has excellent systems in place to monitor the residential provision within the boarding houses and the head teacher has a good overview of these system and delegates appropriately. The head of boarding is now part of the extended leadership group and monitors various aspects of boarding, such as punishments, sanction and complaints. The bursar or estate manager regularly check risk assessments for each boarding house to ensure the young people are kept safe. The head of boarding monitors various aspects of boarding, such as punishments and complaints. A comprehensive review of each boarding house is carried out every two years on a rolling programme.

There are sufficient numbers of staff available for the supervision of boarders, the activities they are involved in and the different age and gender groups. The head of house induction procedure has recently been reviewed and all new boarding staff, including gap students receive a thorough induction, which is regularly reviewed. Job descriptions have been reviewed and up dated. There is an annual appraisal system linked to job descriptions for all staff involved in boarding. All boarding staff are given a staff handbook and each boarding house has a common boarding policies folder to ensure consistency of practice.

The school's statement of boarding principles and practices are included in the details that are sent to all parents and is available on the school website. The boarding handbooks are in the process of being reviewed and updated in each of the boarding houses. It is recommended that the school's behaviour policy and use of punishments and rewards is included in these, so that boarders will be fully informed of the school's behaviour policy and practices.

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):

- include the School's behaviour policy and use of punishments and rewards in the new Boarding Handbook for each house (NMS 4)
- provide adequate toilet and washing facilities in Cornwallis boarding house (NMS 44)
- carry out robust recruitment procedures (NMS 38)