

# Cranbrook School

Welfare inspection report for a boarding school

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**Inspector** Paul Taylor / Liz Driver

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## **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>1,2</sup>

## **Information about the school**

Cranbrook School was founded in 1518 and is situated in Cranbrook, in Kent. As a School within the state maintained sector, no tuition fees are payable and day students attend free. Boarding fees are charged.

There are six separate boarding houses; some within the school campus and some are a short walking distance from the main teaching site. There are 750 pupils on role, of which 252 are boarders. The boarding provision caters for boys and girls aged 13 to 18 years. The last inspection of the boarding provision took place in December 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>good</b>
Outcomes for boarders	outstanding
Quality of boarding provision and care	outstanding
Boarders' safety	good
Leadership and management of boarding	good

## Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the boarding inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is good. There are many significant strengths in the care provided and staff have very high expectations and aspirations for students. This has a positive impact on their progress and outcomes.
- The boarding houses are well-organised and managed. The ethos of the boarding provision is based on openness, trust and respect that celebrates individuality and achievement. Boarders are seen as unique. Those with specific needs for support have this delivered in a sensitive and well planned manner.
- There is on-going reflection of practice and an ambition to improve the quality of the provision. Members of staff at all levels embrace change and look to improve how they operate. An experienced senior management team is a key driver in the search for excellence and the capacity to reflect and improve.
- There is a clear ethos of mutual respect between students and staff which permeates throughout the routines and practice delivered. Boarders are proud of their school. They know that their views are taken seriously and they have a strong sense of belonging.
- Robust safeguarding procedures and systems actively promote boarders' safety and welfare. Boarders feel exceptionally safe and secure and have adults and peers to whom they can turn to for support.
- Effective communication between staff groups and excellent health care facilities ensure boarders health needs are recognised and met to a very high standard.
- The leadership team has started reviewing monitoring processes to manage the

boarding provision. This strategic approach to drive forward improvement acknowledges the need for more consistency in terms of some record keeping.

- One minor shortfall against the national minimum standards has been identified. This relates to consistently having more detail in welfare plans so that areas of risk and how these may present, and what actions to follow, are outlined more specifically. This does not have a direct negative impact on the boarders using the provision as other support mechanisms ensure that adults are aware of each boarder's vulnerability and need for additional support.

## **Outcomes for boarders**

Outcomes for boarders at the school are outstanding. They have extremely positive relationships with staff and successfully develop often lifelong friendships with other boarders. Their confidence improves significantly while at the school and they make exceptional progress during their time there.

Boarders overwhelmingly enjoy their experience of boarding and take full advantage of what is on offer. They spoke of being proud of the school and enjoying the sense of camaraderie and community. They take part in an excellent range of activities and interests and this further develops and broadens their confidence and life experience. They successfully increase their levels of independence with well-planned support and a very well thought through process of preparing them for the next step in their lives; for the vast majority of the sixth form this means entrance to university.

Boarders thrive in an environment where tolerance and understanding of each other is embedded in the culture. This leads to a setting where support is forthcoming from both adults and peers at times of stress or a need for extra support. The nurturing environment enables them to develop their life and social skills as well as responsibilities, to a significant degree.

Boarders benefit from having their views and opinions valued and promoted to an excellent standard. They are actively involved in the day-to-day running of their houses and their views are seen as central to the operation of the boarding provision. Regular forums and meetings ensure that their views are heard by all significant individuals involved in the running of the school. The approach ensures that they are able to influence decisions regarding issues such as menus, activities and decor.

Boarders benefit from living in a school where healthy living is embraced and promoted. They have excellent medical care and prosper from having an excellent health care facility on site, with an experienced team of nursing staff. Their health care needs are therefore promoted to an excellent standard. They benefit from high quality menus and meal provision and have any individual dietary needs addressed effectively.

## Quality of boarding provision and care

The quality of the boarding provision is outstanding. Pastoral support offered to boarders is supportive and nurturing and encourages their growth and independence. Close liaison between teaching and pastoral staff ensures that boarders needing extra support have this attended to swiftly and effectively.

Boarding staff are committed to their tasks and are able to offer high standards of guidance to those boarders who need it. Specific, sensitive and well thought out strategies to support behavioural needs are implemented where needed.

The staff team and curriculum in the school ensure that boarders have an excellent and varied range of activities available to them. Numerous clubs and sports are readily available and the wide range offers something for every boarder. Examples of activities include lessons in varied musical instruments, numerous sporting activities, trips abroad and involvement in drama and art clubs.

Administration of medication is monitored by the medical centre to ensure that boarders receive the medication they need. Support offered to the boarders by the nursing team is of a very high standard.

Facilities are of a high standard and are the subject of an ambitious and active refurbishment program. The program has significantly improved accommodation in areas of the boarding houses which had been identified as needing attention in the school's development plan.

Catering standards are of an excellent standard and there is unanimous positive feedback from boarders with regards to the quality of the food. Catering staff are made aware of any specific dietary needs and these are met discreetly and effectively.

Boarders are able to contact friends and loved ones via email, telephone landlines, mobile telephones and video contact facilities. Allowance is made for boarders to contact loved ones abroad at different times of the day if there is a significant time difference between the United Kingdom and the country in which their family are living.

The boarding regime combined with the high level of commitment shown by the staff team ensures that boarders well-being and development is central to their practice and promoted to an excellent standard. 'This is such a good place to board, everyone helps each other' was a comment made by one boarder.

## **Boarders' safety**

The safety of students is good. The school gives a high priority to safety; the physical environment of the boarding provision is safe and secure. The school has effective security systems and all visitors are supervised when on the premises. There is also a closed circuit television system and car registration identification system which also ensure additional security. All staff have first aid training and additional support is provided from the health centre. Risk assessment and management of risk is effective. Health and safety is for the most part, very well managed and students and staff are clear about evacuation procedures. A fire door to a kitchen was found to be propped open in one boarding house; this could pose a risk to boarders in preventing the spread of fire. A number of door wedges were seen in other boarding areas. Other boarding areas have automatic self-closing fire doors. There is an active refurbishment plan in place which aims to have all doors in boarding areas upgraded with the self-closing devices. All activities and environmental features are routinely and robustly assessed. Boarding students have excellent opportunities to try new and challenging activities in a safe and structured way.

The school operates a robust and effective recruitment process which ensures that all adults who have contact with pupils are subject to all necessary checks prior to employment. Additionally, comprehensive and thorough checks are carried out on other adults, such as spouses and partners, who may live on site or who visit regularly.

Child protection awareness is given a high priority. There is a senior designated member of staff responsible for child protection. This member of staff is vigilant and conscientious and ensures close contact with key agencies and the local safeguarding team. Boarders report that bullying is not a problem; they feel safe, secure and cared for very well. They spoke of feeling valued and respected and are confident that staff would notice any signs that a boarder was unhappy, or that this would be reported to staff by other boarders. Boarders clearly see it as the role of everyone at the school to look after each other and take action to ensure that they are all safe and happy. They can seek help from adults as well as trained peers on any issue. This underpins the culture of community support.

Clear behavioural expectations are in place for all pupils at the school. Boarders say these are fair and reasonable. High standards of behaviour are observed around the campus with pupils showing politeness and respect to adults and peers alike.

Some welfare plans are not always detailed or do not always highlight the specific risks that a boarder may pose to themselves. While members of staff are aware of the individual's vulnerability, plans do not necessarily outline the exact nature of the risk involved. However, the vast majority of welfare support plans are of a very good standard.

## **Leadership and management of boarding**

The leadership and management of the boarding provision are good. Strong leadership is in place with new recording systems and more robust monitoring strategies in the process of being implemented. Any weaknesses are identified through self-evaluation and action plans put in place. The senior management team is reflective about practice and is ambitious to drive forward improvements and quality which are already of a high standard. An active governing body ensures that key issues receive close attention, scrutiny and discussion.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose which outlines the aims and aspirations of the school. In addition the school has a detailed and very informative website.

There are enough experienced staff on shift in boarding areas to ensure that boarders are supported and guided. Clear policies underpin practice and established routines and expectations ensure an orderly and well organised boarding community. The experienced staff team receive on-going training which ensures they have the skills and knowledge to ensure that the boarder's well-being is protected and promoted to a high standard.

Boarders' views are valued and encouraged and the school has an accessible and easily understood complaints process. Boarders are confident that they are listened to and respected. Individual needs of boarders are very well known and difference is celebrated and seen as an opportunity to learn from each other.

Communication with parents is very good and records demonstrate that parents are kept informed of any issues or concerns regarding their children. The school actively seeks the views of parents as part of the quality assurance and self-evaluation process. This approach ensures that the school is proactive rather than reactive when engaging with parents and stakeholders.

Any shortfalls are of a minor nature and the systems operated by the school ensure that the well-being of boarders has not been compromised by these shortfalls.

## **National minimum standards**

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools.

- The records specified in Appendix 2 (Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards) are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.3)

## **What should the school do to improve further?**

- ensure that all aspects of fire safety are adhered to in all boarding areas, in particular ensuring that door wedges and other objects are not used to prop fire doors open.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



04/10/2012

Dear Boarders

### **Inspection of Cranbrook School**

As you may know, a team of inspectors recently inspected the boarding provision at your school.

We spent time in the boarding houses, joined you for meals, met with groups of you, met with members of staff and examined numerous records.

We have been very impressed by the standard of boarding that you receive and by the pride you have in both your school and your boarding houses. It is clear that you have a strong feeling of looking out for each other and that there are excellent systems which ensure you can speak to members of staff or your peers, if you need to discuss anything which may be troubling you.

You have an excellent team of nursing staff who make sure you have the support you need if you are injured or unwell. Your house masters, tutors and MACS also ensure that you have people around you to help on a day to day basis.

You have an excellent range of activities and clubs available to you and it is clear to us that you all develop responsibilities during your time at the school. We did not receive any complaints about the food during our visit and we were impressed by the quality and variety of the menu offered to you. Meal times which we attended were well ordered and sociable events.

Very minor shortfalls were identified during the inspection. These relate to record keeping and ensuring that consistent recording is kept in all the houses and also ensuring that fire doors are not propped open in the houses which do not yet have automatic door closers.

We are very impressed by the senior management team and your house masters. It is clear to us that they have a plan and ambition to ensure that your boarding experience is promoted to as high a standard as possible.

Many thanks for your openness and welcoming approach during our visit to your school.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Taylor / Liz Driver