

Charterhouse

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Kerry Fell / John Chivers
Type of inspection	Key

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Registered person	Governing Body of Charterhouse (The)
Head/Principal	Reverend John S. Witheridge
Nominated person	Mr Nigel Cooper
Date of last inspection	15/11/2004

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

The school is an historic school that celebrates its 400th anniversary in 2011. It is a day and boarding school for boys from 13 years and for girls from 16 years. Boarding provision is arranged over 11 boarding houses. Female boarders study in the main school houses and are integrated with the male boarders during the day, but have separate sleeping accommodation in halls of residence.

The school is set in extensive grounds, and boarders have access to a range of high quality sports facilities.

There is easy access to main rail and road routes to London and Portsmouth, and to Heathrow and Gatwick airport.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this announced full inspection all of the key standards were inspected.

Good quality medical facilities are provided by the new medical centre, which is staffed by registered nurses. Updated procedures and training support matrons to follow sound medication administration procedures. Boarders have strong views about the quality and quantity of the food, and are able to share these with the catering company. Boarders do have access to adequate quantities of good food throughout the day, that offers choice and meets any specific dietary requests.

This is a good school, in which boarders welfare is promoted by a strong approach to countering bullying and child protection. Boarding staff have good relationships with the boarders, and boarders can list a range of people who they can talk to if they are worried or have concerns.

Boarders are clear about the school's high expectations about behaviour, and sanctions and rewards, and are happy to voice their concerns. They know how to make complaints to the school.

Boarders are provided with adequate but variable boarding facilities. However, boarders are happy with the houses that they live in. The organisation of the boarding houses supports the boarders well, and staff have specific roles and they understand their roles well.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has been proactive about making improvements since the last inspection. A number of welfare initiatives have been introduced that better support boarders, these include house councils in all boarding houses, compulsory training for all housemasters/housemistresses and the masters handbook.

Action has been taken to respond to recommendations made at the last inspection.

Policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated in the administration of medication, responding to accidents, countering bullying, complaints and child protection. Training has also been introduced in relation to the administration of medication. The management of medication has been improved to meet current best practice guidelines. Medical facilities have been improved by the completion of the new medical centre.

Very good welfare plans are in place, which ensure that boarders with a specific health or emotional need are well supported.

Procedures with regard to the recruitment of staff have been greatly improved, and personnel records contain copies of job descriptions and evidence to demonstrate that all required recruitment checks are completed. A whistle blowing policy has been introduced.

Boarders are clear about the school's high expectations with regard to behaviour and its sanctions policy. Changes to extra school and labour punishments were made following a school council initiative.

The deputy head teacher, and the assistant bursar oversee health and safety and report to the governor-led health and safety committee. Health and safety and risk assessment is robustly managed, and better safeguards boarders. A qualified fire officer is now in post to oversee fire safety and the school takes action to address recommendations made by the local fire service.

The introduction of assistant housemasters and house tutors further ensures that boarders are well supported by staff.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Boarders health and welfare is promoted by the school's policies and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme. The school takes a strong stance with regard to countering health risks and has a clear policy in place that covers the abuse of drugs and alcohol both in and outside of the school. This is widely displayed around the school.

The PSHE programme is wide ranging, and covers the areas detailed in national

minimum standard 6. The programme is supplemented by the use of external speakers and courses, covering topics such as sexually transmitted diseases and safe driving.

The school provides good medical care to the boarders. Nursing cover is provided throughout the day, with a registered nurse on call overnight. General practitioners also hold a routine surgery at the school each weekday. The new medical centre improves on the good facilities provided by the current medical centre.

Matrons are trained in the administration of medication and first aid and are supported closely by the medical centre staff. Good procedures ensure that medication is administered only to those boarders for whom it was prescribed. Staff keep good records of medication received from the pharmacy and of all medication administered, however medication that is brought into the school by boarders or their parents is not routinely logged in.

Boarders are able to gain medical and emotional support easily. Counselling services are provided by both the school counsellor and a private counsellor, and further specialist and academic support is given by the learning support team and the chaplaincy. Housemasters/housemistresses write detailed welfare plans for boarders with emotional or medical needs, that describe clearly how to offer specific support. These are appropriately shared with staff. Housemasters/housemistresses and matrons demonstrate a good understanding of the needs of the boarders resident in their houses.

Staff ensure that parents share important medical information with the school, and obtain consent for medical treatment and the administration of homely remedies.

Catering services are provided by an external company who have worked with the school for ten years. A food committee ensures that boarders views of the food are shared with the catering manager. Changes have been made following requests made by boarders.

Some boarders have strong views about the quantity and quality of the food served, stating that the food can run out, and that it was not as varied and healthy as they would like it to be. Others felt the opposite. These views had already been shared with the school via the food committee or individual complaints. Meals did not run out during the inspection, and no concerns were identified about the quality of the food being served.

Boarders have access to snacks, such as toasted sandwiches and fruit in their boarding houses, and can buy 'tuck' from the school shop.

Although there are strong views about the food, boarders have access to adequate quantities of good food throughout the day, that offers choice and meets any specific dietary requests.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school has made clear improvement in its approach to the safeguarding of boarders. A strong approach is taken to counter bullying which is reflected in its policy. Boarders in year 9 are supported to develop anti-bullying charters in each boarding house and the school undertakes bullying awareness questionnaires with the boarders. The school is also proactive about countering cyber bullying, and provides a strong course to year 9 boarders.

The school is realistic about the incidence of bullying, and takes steps to raise awareness and ensure that boarders are supported. Case tracking following concerns raised to the inspectors evidenced that the school's response to incidents of bullying were in line with its procedures. Serious punishments are given to bullies, and support and counselling is offered to both the victim and the bully. Boarders do not complain of being bullied and only a small number of questionnaires reflect that boarders experience bullying. As a result boarders do not experience high levels of bullying and are educated and supported to counter any incidents. Boarders have a strong view that staff respond promptly to incidents of bullying.

Boarders are protected by the school's good response when they are made aware of any concerns of abuse. Records are kept of all concerns, and the school liaises with the local authority on any response made. All staff receive training in child protection including peripatetic music staff. Monitors and heads of houses also understand their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding boarders and referring any disclosures of abuse.

Boarders understand the school's rules, rewards and sanctions. Although some boarders feel that the school rules are 'harsh', the school is very clear about its high expectations with regard to behaviour and its sanctions and rewards policy. These are displayed in the boarding houses, and are made clear in handbooks and on the school website. There is a clear system of decision making as the seriousness of the offence and therefore the punishment increases. Records of all punishments are kept and include information about the offence and the punishment given. The pastoral deputy head can easily evidence the reasons for the school's decision to give serious ('school' or 'house') punishments and suspensions or exclusions, although these are rare.

Boarders know how to raise concerns, and are proactive about doing so. Boarders feel that their concerns are responded to and evidence is available to support this view. The school can evidence how it responds to serious complaints from parents. The complaints procedures encourages complaints to be resolved on an informal basis in the first instance.

The school has a range of prefects that are known as monitors. Monitors are clear about their roles, and are supported by written guidelines and procedures and a sound induction to the role. Monitors are well supported and monitored by staff,

ensuring that they do not 'abuse their powers'. Sanctions can only be recommended by monitors and must be agreed by staff. Records of these are held.

The school has good regard for fire safety, risk assessment and protect boarders from safety hazards. Boarders are aware of the fire evacuation procedures, and have these reinforced by regular fire drills. There is a clear system in place for evacuating buildings, which is supported by comprehensive fire risk assessments. Good fire safety records are maintained, and recommendations from the fire safety service are responded to by the school.

A robust approach is taken to risk assessment, and these are overseen by the health and safety committee. High risk activities are supervised by appropriately qualified adults.

Although not all windows above ground level are restricted, the school undertakes a risk assessment of their accessibility, this is kept under review. Boarding houses are kept free from hazards by regular risk assessment and review. The school has made improvements to lighting of footpaths, and has a clear map of out of bound areas that are unlit after dark. Plans are in place to pedestrianise the school area so as to improve safety for boarders walking to and from the boarding houses and around the school.

The school has made improvements in its recruitment procedures, which helps to ensure that only suitable staff are employed. Files sampled demonstrated that all staff are subject to criminal records bureau checks, as well as other recruitment checks required under national minimum standard 38.

Clear policies are in place to safeguard boarders from unsupervised contact from adults or public intrusion. Boarding houses are secured by key pads, and the school has a clear policy with regard to adult access to boarding houses. The school employs 24 hour security staff who monitor access to the site. Steps are taken to deter unauthorised access to the school and CCTV is used to monitor external areas.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Although boarders have a busy schedule from Monday to Saturday, boarders enjoy a wide range of clubs, opportunities and activities. The boarders state that this is a strength of the school. Sport is a strong feature of the school with boarders taking part in a major and minor sport. Weekend co-ordinators organise activities for boarders which include leisure activities and cultural trips.

Boarders are well supported by the range of staff and support services offered to them. Boarders list a number of staff and other boarders who they would talk to. Formal routes of support are available through counselling and learning support services. Boarders are happy to approach housemasters/housemistresses, matrons and tutors, as well as heads of houses and other senior boarders. The chaplaincy

provides emotional as well as spiritual support to the boarders, and demonstrate an empathetic approach to the support offered.

Boarders are well integrated in to their school and boarding houses. The school has regard for equality and diversity, and makes every effort to make boarders feel accepted and valued. There is a nominated person who is responsible for the arrangements made for overseas students coming into the school. The school's written strategy focuses on facilitating integration and the recognition of different cultures. The school may set up friendship groups to encourage groups of boarders from the same cultural or religious background to socialise and to celebrate religious or cultural festivals.

The school's learning support team ensures that boarders receive support to enable them to study well, and welfare plans guide staff on how to offer support to boarders with specific emotional or medical support needs. Matrons speak highly of the integration of boarders in the houses, many commenting on the good cohesion in the houses.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders are consulted and can raise their views in a number of ways. Representatives raise the views of boarders on a number of committees including the food committee, and on school and house councils. A number of initiatives have also been undertaken by the school to gauge the boarders' experiences including questionnaires on bullying, and on boarding. A small number of boarders felt that their views were not acted upon by the school, however this was not supported by the views of the boarders met during the inspection.

Boarders can maintain contact with their families. Although some telephones are not in the most private of areas, boarders do not raise concerns about them and in most cases have access to mobile telephones or email. The school provides overseas boarders with access to internet telephone services. Housemasters and housemistresses maintain contact with parents.

The school has a strong induction procedure, with very good attention being paid to the induction of overseas boarders. New boarders join the school a day before the rest of the school returns, and older boarders are assigned to support the new boarders. Every step is taken to reduce homesickness, and new boarders met during the inspection stated that they had not felt homesick. Boarders stated that after a few weeks they have made a number of friends and do not feel that they necessarily need to be assigned older boarders as they are happy to approach housemasters/ housemistresses and monitors directly.

Overseas boarders are encouraged to mix with other boarders, and in the first days boarders are asked to wear name badges. Tea parties and barbecues are held to

welcome new boarders to the houses. As a result boarders are introduced well to the procedures and the operation of the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school supports boarders to keep personal possessions safe by providing them with access to lockable storage space. Housemasters and housemistresses can also store passports and travel documents safely, and boarders can deposit money in the house bank accounts for withdrawal during the term. Sound records are kept of these transactions.

Although satisfactory, boarding provision is variable. The school has a rolling programme of maintenance and refurbishment, and one boarding house has been fully refurbished to a very good standard. Facilities and standards in this boarding house and those accommodating the female boarders are high in comparison to some of the older boarding houses which were in need of redecoration, and had some worn furnishings. However, it is noted that the majority of boarders and parents do not raise concerns about the boarding houses.

Boarding houses provide adequate toilet and washing facilities, and in most cases boarders are happy with these. Boarders do not raise concerns about having to queue for showers or toilets.

Boarders are therefore provided with adequate boarding facilities, in some cases these are very good, and they are happy with the boarding houses that they live in.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff, boarders and parents are informed about the school's principles and practice. An up to date prospectus is available, and is supported by information shared via the school's website. These documents share clearly the school's principles of boarding practice, and includes the complaints policy.

Boarders are supported by the organisation of the boarding houses and are looked after by staff with specific roles and who understand their role. Boarders feel that boarding staff are approachable. Staff confirm that they have job descriptions and are inducted into the role. The introduction of assistant housemasters has ensured that there is a progression of experienced staff into the role of housemaster, and enable staff to gain experience before they decide whether they wish to be a housemaster.

Boarding houses accommodate boarders from each year group, and female boarders during the day. Boarders are happy with this arrangement and are well integrated. Staff and boarders describe the houses as happy and well integrated.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a nominated person who is responsible for the arrangements made for overseas students coming into the school. Induction for overseas students supports all students to integrate well. Housemasters and housemistresses write welfare plans to inform staff on how to offer support to boarders with specific health or emotional support needs.

Boarders are supported by sufficient numbers staff who are experienced and are themselves supported well. A good handbook is provided to boarding staff, and new boarding staff receive an induction into their role. The role of matrons in the boarding houses have been formalised, and support and training improved. Staff confirm that they receive training, and good levels of support, supervision and appraisal. Housemasters/housemistresses have to attend compulsory training. All staff have job descriptions. Duty rosters ensure that boarders are adequately supervised and staff are supported by wing monitors on each floor of the boarding houses. Good systems are in place to cover staff absence or to offer additional support when needed. Boarding staff speak highly of the support that they receive from each other. House tutors offer additional support to matrons and housemasters.

Boarders benefit from clear management systems. The school governing body oversee the running of the school, and receive reports from the head teacher which enables them to monitor the school's welfare provision and health and safety arrangements. Records and logs demonstrate that the pastoral deputy head has a system of monitoring in place, that is linked directly to the annual appraisal programme.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all medication brought into the school by boarders or their parents are logged to provide a good audit trail. (NMS 15)