

Chigwell School

Inspection report for Boarding School

Unique reference number	SC018008
Inspection date	26/04/2010
Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	Chigwell School, High Road, CHIGWELL, Essex, IG7 6QF
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Registered person	Chigwell School Trust
Head/Principal	
Nominated person	Michael Punt
Date of last inspection	11/10/2006

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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 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

Chigwell school is situated to the north of Chigwell village, twelve miles from central London, set in its own grounds of over 70 acres. The school was founded in 1629 and caters for 732 boys and girls aged from seven to eighteen. The junior and senior schools share the same site, facilities and educational philosophy. Pupils come from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds. Both the junior and senior school are predominantly day schools with only a small number of international boarders. All attend the sixth form in preparation for accessing higher education.

The school aims to provide a high quality rounded education through which pupils have opportunities to discover interests and talents across and beyond the school curriculum so that they can play a full part in the life of the school and the world beyond. The school aims to support pupils to achieve and fulfil their individual and collective potential, develop a love of learning and are challenged to think critically and creatively for themselves.

Boarders at Chigwell School contribute significantly to the life of the Sixth Form enabling a positive experience of living and working with students from all over the world.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced inspection undertaken over three days as part of the three-year inspection cycle for boarding schools. The inspection looked at the key boarding school national minimum standards under the Every Child Matters outcome groups. The overall outcome judgement is good with outstanding features. Measures to help boarders enjoy and achieve and to make a positive contribution are outstanding. Meeting boarders' needs for being healthy, staying safe, achieving economic wellbeing and the organisation of boarding are all good. Only one recommendation is raised by this inspection in relation to organisation.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has undergone changes in management and governance and undertaken significant work to meet the recommendations arising from the previous Commission for Social Care Inspection report dated October 2006.

At that time the school was asked to make changes to its child protection policy and improve how such information was made more widely available through the boarders' handbook. The boarders' handbook was required to include details to

whom boarders could direct a complaint. The school was asked to provide a secure place for boarders to keep their possessions. The effectiveness of the schools recruitment checks for boarding staff, including those from overseas required improvement and more robust record monitoring systems needed to be introduced to confirm that boarding practice was being effectively managed and that young people were being kept safe.

The school has put in place and taken the required actions to monitor practice and effectively safeguard students.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Boarder's health is promoted exceptionally well. Staff are aware of the health needs of pupils and boarders. The health centre and catering provision are very good with the potential for excellence.

Food, diet and catering are being exceptionally well addressed by contracted caterers who work as an integrated service alongside the school support staff. Regulatory compliance is demonstrated by the catering operation in maintaining food safety and excellent hygiene.

The quality of catering including the variety and balance of meals is remarkable considering the limitations being imposed by the current redevelopment and refurbishment of the schools main dining accommodation and facilities. Uninterrupted daily menus comprise of healthy options, international cuisine and a vegetarian choice. Any special dietary requirements are individually catered for by informed catering staff.

Boarding pupils have a tried and tested, responsive mechanism through which they can influence the type and variety of meals they receive. Catering staff listen, understand and proactively respond to boarder's requests for a menu more complex than traditional English food. Mealtimes at the school are frequently innovative with themed international evenings that celebrate the cultural diversity of the international sixth form boarders. They can be educationally competitive, by allowing the schools different houses an opportunity to engage in 'celebrity chef' style cooking competitions. In these ways boarders and pupils are introduced to understanding and enjoying the nutritional and social functions of mealtimes.

Boarders actively participate in regular sessions of physical activity through an extensive range of inclusive activities that take into account the preferences and sporting interests of different nationalities. Boarders are encouraged to access challenging activities to promote an active lifestyle.

The school provides a very well established, excellent quality, health care provision that addresses the needs of junior and senior pupils. Medical staff are insightful, sensitive and qualified. There is regular access to local medical practitioners who

actively support the wide range of boarders health needs including the provision for out of core hours cover. The available medical facilities are of an appropriate scale given the size of the school and its boarding cohort. Unambiguous health related policies and procedures effectively support the quality of the provision made by Chigwell School. Pupils and boarders are actively informed about the dangers of illegal substances.

Medical staff have an active involvement in the practical delivery of the schools personal, social, health and education programme with excellent reciprocal relationships being reported between the medical and boarding staff. The quality and consistency of any nursing care provided is enhanced by this cooperative practice.

The school facilitates liaison between school nurses and the parents of all pupils. The importance of confidentiality is promoted within the guidance provided by the schools policies. Pupils and boarders may access specialist health services, including a qualified school counsellor, with support from nursing and school staff.

Pupils' health and safety is promoted by the high proportion of first aid trained staff and first aid boxes evident at key points throughout the school.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Effective well developed systems promote the safety and welfare of boarders. These are responsive to changing circumstances thereby emphasising the importance the school places on child protection. Effective policies and procedures underpin safeguarding expectations with practice guidance being circulated to all school staff and parents. The school has forged positive working links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board to consult on best practice. Emerging internet threats and social networking related issues are understood and realistically evaluated to minimise potential on-line danger to boarders.

A knowledge and application of child protection related policies and procedures is adopted by all school staff, including contracted support. Safe practice is supported by comprehensive recording and regular staff training. Safeguarding practice at the school is sensitive, discrete and effective. Confidentiality is respected. The designated senior member of staff has received advanced child protection training. Collectively these measures contribute to the effective safeguarding of pupils and boarders.

The potential for oppressive behaviour including bullying is treated very seriously by everyone at the school. Awareness is increased through the circulation of engaging policy documents for promoting anti-bullying and anti-cyber-bullying. Pupils and boarders report that they are happy at the school because there is no tolerance of bullying behaviour.

An effective school complaints procedure is in operation. Boarders and parents know where to locate details about how to make concerns known or formally complain.

This process is well managed and monitored. No complaints have been identified from any source during this inspection suggesting a very high degree of user satisfaction.

Good behaviour management is evidenced by pupils and boarders embracing the school code of conduct, positive school ethos, rules and social expectations. Pupils and boarders are kind and helpful to each other and evidently strive to represent themselves and their respective houses in the best possible manner. The school has in place explicit policies that address suspension and permanent exclusion. Boarders clearly understand the sanctions that apply in the case of indiscipline. Records relating to any necessary disciplinary measures are transparent and regularly monitored by the headmaster. The staff code of conduct specifies those situations in which the applied physical restraint of pupils may be necessary.

Policies and procedures relating to health and safety within the school are very effectively managed by a knowledgeable management team and a pragmatic health and safety officer. Established safe practice is evidenced by robust in-house recording and audit trails complemented by the attention to detail provided by the school's contracted support services.

There is an obvious culture of risk assessment operating in the school underpinning all aspects of practice and confirming that due diligence is effectively recorded for all areas of potential risk. A streamlined health and safety committee regularly provides feedback from this critical area of practice to the school governors.

The security of the school site and boarding houses effectively safeguards pupils and boarders against intruders. Those measures in place for challenging unauthorised persons on site are practical but do not deter legitimate visitors. Boarders say they feel safe. Security measures are conspicuous but not overpowering or out of keeping with the age or function of the establishment.

Boarder's personal privacy is effectively promoted and respected by the schools policies and practice. Staff are expected to knock on doors and avoid uninvited intrusion of boarder's private space. Boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the schools complete recruitment checking procedures and there is always onsite supervision for all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises.

The school employs an effective vetting and selection procedure for all staff including those with boarding responsibilities and contracted support staff. Improvements have been recently introduced to more effectively monitor references and Criminal Records Bureau checks for all staff and governors.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are encouraged to have an active say about their experience of the school and boarding. This is made possible by communicating directly with their boarding house staff, house meetings and through end of term satisfaction questionnaires. International boarding students at the school also actively contribute their views through a sixth form forum. Many changes have been introduced as a result of listening to the boarders' views effectively improving levels of satisfaction at mealtimes and with access to recreational activities.

Boarders are able to develop interests in an impressive range of individual sports, activities and hobbies with staff guidance that encourages them to refine their talents and excel both educationally and socially. Pupils, including boarders, are encouraged to understand complex environmental issues and support various charities and good causes both locally and internationally

All boarders resident at Chigwell school are from overseas. They are extremely well supported by being comprehensively informed about the school before their arrival and by an enhanced induction process upon arrival. The Head of Boarding is particularly well placed to support boarders by also holding the post of International Student Liaison Officer. Overseas students receive extensive and where needed ongoing support in English as an additional language alongside the main school curriculum.

Boarders are able to maintain contact with their parents and family either by mobile phone, house telephones or by email and other information technology routes provided through the schools systems. Boarding staff maintain regular communication with overseas parents and educational guardians and will readily pass on messages. Boarders have access to appropriately promoted help-line phone numbers in addition to the schools own counselling and advice services.

There is outstanding provision of and access to age appropriate activities on and off site. Pupils and boarders are introduced to cultural and recreational activities in a way that gives them confidence in their own abilities an opportunities for taking responsibility for themselves and mentoring others.

Educational visits are competently organised and risk assessed. The school uses adventure activity with registered providers and specialist services that provide copies of their risk assessments. This practice confirms that the safety of Chigwell students is always considered a priority for recreational trips away.

The school provides an environment where tolerance, equality and diversity is fully integrated and accepted. Pupils and boarders knowledge of other cultures and easy acceptance of difference is an outstanding feature of the school. This has enriched and enlivened the sixth form community within the school. Whereas there is no evidence or reporting of onerous demands being placed on boarders, the

international nature of boarding at Chigwell focuses upon overseas students who have been recognised as high achievers and who aspire to access a United Kingdom university education. This confirms that boarder's commitment and work ethic is particularly high, especially evident with those students who have secured bursaries to fund their place at Chigwell School.

There is an appropriate level of provision for private study within boarding houses and various areas around the school. Development plans seek to further expand this provision. Recreational areas and facilities are in place that encourage learning and cooperation through group recreation. Boarders and pupils have ample room to spread out around the school and say they do not feel confined to individual houses other than during formal study periods.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The school demonstrates its commitment to securing boarders views and applying this information in practical ways that improves young people's experiences. This is made possible through the use of house meetings and annual reviews. This practice underpins the high levels of satisfaction and the special experience young people who board enjoy at Chigwell School. There are excellent relationships between boarding staff and boarders.

A good balance is struck for international boarders when experiencing British 'traditional' values and living in Britain as a modern western society. This helps to enhance the importance of multicultural cooperation and learning. International boarders are helped and encouraged to learn about their world through acquired knowledge, observation and direct experience.

Boarders can maintain contact with their families either by mobile phone, house telephones and emails outside of lesson time. The school maintains contact with families using modern information and communication technology. Boarding staff maintain excellent communication with parents or guardians and enable two way contact to be maintained. Those parents consulted consider Chigwell school to be a carefully chosen safe place for their children to live and study.

New boarders are introduced to the school sensitively and exceptionally well prepared and supported by committed staff and trustworthy peers. Their induction routine quickly establishes them into their boarding houses, the sixth form group and into the wider school community and social life. Boarders confirm that they do not have time to feel homesick because of the schools broad activity programme and weekend activities. They are exceptionally well integrated.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school site is notable in its orderliness and cleanliness when considering its age and history. There is visible evidence of dedicated maintenance and support services across the school site and grounds and this encourages scholars to appreciate their surroundings and facilities.

The living arrangements for boarders range in quality from very good, comfortable and homely in the girls boarding houses to just satisfactory in the current boys accommodation. Existing accommodation is comfortable, adequately heated and lit with good standards of maintenance and cleanliness. Boarders have sufficient personal space and sleeping areas have good quality beds and bedding. The decoration of individual rooms and small dormitories reflect the interests and tastes of boarders who sleep there.

Girls boarding facilities have been very well maintained and have been decorated to a good standard and level of comfort which make the female boarders happy to use them and call their houses home. The school provides each boarder with a lockable and secure place where they can keep their possessions.

The school has ambitious plans for redeveloping the less homely boys boarding into two smaller boarding houses. This project was well underway at the time of this inspection with the physical move scheduled for September 2010. Existing boy boarders were somewhat ambivalent about the future move but recognised the improvement in location and personal facilities it would achieve.

Toilets and bathrooms in all boarding houses are clean and adequate in number, with suitable locks. Young people report no concerns or privacy issues.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The statement of boarding principles and practice accurately represents the service provided for boarders at Chigwell School. Parents are able to make an informed decision about their children attending the school from the comprehensive information they receive and by being able to make visits to the school. The way in which potential students from overseas are helped to prepare for joining Chigwell school is exceptional. Traditional caring family values, as promoted by the current boarding house structure are valuable contributors to helping students develop a feeling of belonging at the school very quickly.

There is presently a very strong commitment by the governors and senior school management for the maintenance of boarding as an intrinsic component of the service provision being made by the school. Boarding is a relatively small but significantly influential feature of the school which enriches and enlivens the calibre

of the sixth form. Boarding at Chigwell School is clearly focussed and managed very well. The role of houseparent's and their staff comprehensively supports boarders social and academic needs. Communication and cooperation between all boarding staff is good.

The monitoring of boarding records is good. Emphasis is placed on recording and sharing information within the boarding team to disseminate and develop good practice. Boarding staff are committed to improving their knowledge and practice to further enhance the experience and satisfaction of boarders.

Supervision of boarders is effective because staff know where young people are at all times and actively take responsibility for monitoring their safety, irrespective of the boarders age. Houses have sufficient staff to cover boarding hours and the family group arrangement facilitates consistent practice. Policies and procedures further inform how care is provided. The school actively promotes individual self responsibility and caring for others by young people but this does not detract from effective levels of staff supervision always being provided.

Boarding staff receive an effective induction and all statutory training. They can access further training opportunities that would enhance boarding practice and specific areas of knowledge. Staff are very well supported by their Director of Boarding, who by providing clear guidance and commitment has developed a specialist boarding service; a hallmark of which is the consistently high quality of care.

Although the school has in place an educationally oriented staff appraisal system this does not effectively report upon boarding practice. This is an area for further development.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school comprehensively demonstrates within all aspects of its practice its commitment to equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all. This is particularly relevant and within the schools boarding cohort where international students are attracted to learn at the school in a spirit of cooperation and acceptance. The overseas boarders contribution is considered as valuable and enriching to the calibre of the sixth form and the school as a whole. Boarders are active raising awareness of other countries and cultures and supporting those less fortunate by undertaking charitable fundraising events.

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 there is in place an appropriate process for the regular review of the performance of each member of staff with boarding duties by a more senior or experienced member of staff. (national minimum standard 34.5)