

Shebbear College

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Michelle Oxley / Christina Maddison
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Address	Shebbear College Shebbear BEAWORTHY Devon EX21 5HJ
Telephone number	01409 281 228
Email	hm@shebbearcollege.co.uk
Registered person	The Governors, Shebbear College
Head of care	Robert Barnes
Head / Principal	Robert Barnes
Date of last inspection	16 November 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 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

Shebbear College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school with a Methodist Church foundation. It has a kindergarten, junior and senior school. The college occupies 85 acres. The campus is on the edge of a small rural village in the North Devon countryside. Facilities include rugby pitches, a sports hall and internet access in boarding houses. Boarding accommodation is in three houses one for junior boys, one for girls and the other for senior boys.

Summary

The purpose of this inspection is to carry out an assessment of boarding provision against National Minimum Standards. The recommendations from the last inspection carried out 16 November 2004 are also followed up. Boarders at Shebbear College receive a good standard of care. Sound management of boarding houses ensures that boarders receive the attention they need. The management of care is outstanding. The staff team are a close knit group who are committed to supporting boarders' needs. Boarders enjoy school and value the experience of living in a supportive and friendly environment.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The Statement of Boarding principles have been expanded to provide accurate and up to date information to prospective boarders and other interested parties. The child protection policy has been developed and the Head of Care has made links with the local safeguarding board. This means that there are mechanisms to deal with child protection concerns outside of the school, as well as inside. A formal complaints process has been successfully implemented which means that the school is able to evidence how they listen to boarders and how their concerns are addressed. School council is now used to gather views of boarders and to inform the operation of boarding. Stringent medication records are held. This limits errors occurring. The food has improved to provide more choice. A variety of options for a substantial supper are available to boarders. Health and safety for boarders has improved because fire safety equipment is tested at the recommended intervals. There have been improvements to the standard of accommodation provided to boarders. A rolling programme to replace furniture is underway. New shower blocks have been installed, these provide ample hot water.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The local GP has a long standing relationship with the school. He works closely with the school nurse, in order to ensure that the health needs of boarders are met. All boarders receive a medical on joining the school. The GP will consider any health information passed to the school from parents during the admission process. The GP visits the school once a week, he holds his surgery there each Monday morning. Boarders can either access him here or at his local surgery independently. The GP has access to a full range of services and can refer boarders to more specialist services if required. A communication book is used to pass messages between the school nurse and the boarding houses. This ensures that staff are aware of any health issues. All visits to the nurse are logged and a record held. If boarders are ill, they may stay in the

boarding house and the nurse will supervise them. When this is insufficient, the nurse will ensure that they receive her care in the medical centre. Beds are set aside for this purpose. Medication is held in the medical centre, homely remedies are approved by the GP. Some older students look after and administer their own medication. Their ability to do so is risk assessed and agreed with parents. Staff in the boarding houses are trained in first aid. There have been some changes in the type of medication held since the last inspection. Some controlled drugs are now stored, because of this, the wooden cabinet and keypad outer door lock are no longer sufficiently secure. Reactions to the food are varied. Some boarders were satisfied with all the meals, others were not so complimentary. Boarders are provided with a two cooked items plus cereal and toast or fruit for breakfast. A main meal is served both at lunch time and in the evenings, a salad bar is always available. Lunch and tea always offer a vegetarian option. The food provided is ample in quantity, boarders can return for second helpings. Nutritional values have been considered and each meal is served with fresh, locally sourced ingredients, including fruit and vegetables. Snacks and supper are taken in the boarding houses. A very good variety of food is in stock, including freshly made cakes, fruit, cereal and bread for toast. Boarders are able to comment on the food through boarders' council or by writing in the chef's comments books. Staff and boarders feel that there had been improvements in the quality of the food served and that kitchen staff are responsive to constructive criticism.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The school sets out to protect children and young people systematically. The Head of Boarding takes the lead in ensuring that all staff including ancillary workers are trained in child protection at induction and on an ongoing basis. She keeps up to date with the latest developments and ensures that these are passed on. Staff know that they can take their concerns to the Head of Boarding, the Head, independent listener, or the Governor with responsibility for child protection. All staff are provided with information about how to deal with concerns through the child protection policy and procedures which are displayed in relevant parts of the building. There is a policy in place called "A comprehensive code of safe practice". This sets out the detail of how staff are to approach their role, in order to provide protection to the young people and themselves. To illustrate this, when cleaning boarders' bedrooms, domestic staff make sure that the door is wedged open. Domestic staff can also record any issues they identify in a concerns book which they share with the Head of Boarding. Boarders do not identify bullying as a problem. They express maturity and an understanding of these issues and feel able to approach staff if they are concerned. Staff have created an open dialogue about bullying and consider that when bullying does occur, those who bully others should receive guidance and care, as well as those who have been bullied. An ethos that promotes mutual support and respect helps to ensure that boarders behave in a positive manner. Young people were at all times polite, helpful and articulate in conveying their views. Disciplinary measures used in the boarding house mostly involved domestic duties. Sanctions are used in conjunction with rewards, particularly in the girls' house where all manner of treats can be earned. On the whole boarders feel that punishments are fair. Policy documents are in place to guide staff in the use of discipline. Boarders receive information in the handbook. A formal complaints policy is in place. Boarders know how to complain formally but most would prefer to approach either their house parent or the Head of Boarding. Boarders feel that they are listened to and that their complaints would be dealt with fairly. On the whole boarders feel that their privacy is respected. However, whilst boarders say that they respect each other's privacy in their rooms and always knock, staff do not do the same on every occasion. Staff are provided with some excellent guidance

in a code for safe practice. This sets out how to deal with issues, such as appropriate dress, showering and changing and one to one situations. Shower cubicles offer privacy and are screened appropriately, toilet doors are fitted with privacy locks. Recruitment and selection checks for all new employees are stringent and include Criminal Records Bureau and reference checks. Staff employed before 2002 have police checks. The relevant guidance does not provide a guide for best practice to schools because it does not stipulate the requirement for full enhanced disclosures from the Criminal Records Bureau. Nevertheless, the school has complied with the guidance currently in place. Measures are in place to ensure the security of boarding houses. House parents take responsibility for carrying out the lock up procedure and ensure the buildings are secure at night. Access to boarding houses is restricted, boarding accommodation is exclusively for boarders. Anyone other than a boarder who visits must log in and out. Health and safety, including fire safety, are given a high priority at the school. Comprehensive and stringent systems are in place to protect children, staff and visitors. These include fire safety equipment checks, fire drills, electrical appliance checks, and vehicle checks. The school has a dedicated health and safety officer, designated staff are involved in risk assessments and contractors attend to overall maintenance of the property. A health and safety policy is available to staff and the premises as a whole are risk assessed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The school operates a pastoral system which sets out to provide emotional and practical support to boarders. This offers students and parents a point of contact through the tutor, who in turn links in with other key staff. Boarders see their tutors every day. On a less formal basis it is apparent that all of the staff team, across boarding, education and ancillary staff, work in collaboration to offer support. A good deal of importance is placed upon knowing each boarder well and being able to detect any distress or problems at an early stage. Young people feel that they can talk to staff about concerns, in particular the majority felt they could confide in the Head of Boarding. The school has a new independent listener. Boarders have been given information about him and know how to make contact. The pupil group consists of children from various races and religious backgrounds. They particularly include children from Hong Kong. Parents like the fact that their children are enjoying a multicultural experience and feel that this is a valuable aspect of their education. Staff are sensitive to the needs of students who are experiencing a new culture and who are far away from their families. Some staff take the time to learn a few words of the boarders' native language, in order to provide a little comfort. A range of religious festivals from a round the world are celebrated for instance the boarders have just celebrated Diwali. Boarders do not feel that they are discriminated against in terms of gender, race, culture or religion. The school day ends at 17:00. Boarders have sufficient free time outside of the school day and prep. There is an onsite sports hall and music room available in the evening. Girls are not currently permitted to use the sports facilities due to some recent welfare concerns. The Head of Boarding recognises the need to address this issue. Trips out are organised at weekends and boarders are supported to pursue hobbies and interests. The boarding houses are networked which means that boarders can have access to the internet from their rooms. Security levels are currently high and some safe sites are being blocked unnecessarily. This is causing frustration to some boarders. The school is aware of the issue and seeking a way to continue to safeguard boarders from unsuitable material, whilst allowing them to take full advantage of this beneficial facility.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders are able to contribute to the operation of boarding. They are listened to when they express their views to staff. Boarders have raised a range of issues, such as activities, food, snacks and bedtimes. At a more formal level boarders' council meets every two weeks. Representative of the boarding houses are able to express the views of their peers through this forum. A pay phone is situated privately within a booth in each boarding house. Cards for these phones are available to boarders to buy. Most boarders used mobile phones or ask the house parent if they can quickly use the house phone for free. The preferred method of staying in touch with families is email. Boarders are currently having difficulties in getting email out through the school's server, this is due to difficulties in creating an account, nevertheless, new instructions for accessing email are being sent to boarders in order to rectify this.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarding accommodation is set over three houses. One for girls, and one each for older and younger boys. Considerable investment has been made to improve the standard of accommodation and there is an ongoing development plan. This includes a complete overhaul of the younger boys' house. Bedroom furniture and décor across the houses is satisfactory, with a higher standard in houses for older boys and girls. Floor space and storage space is sufficient. There is a good proportion of single room accommodation available to older boarders. Bedding is clean and sufficiently warm. All rooms are personalised by their occupants. All three houses are networked allowing controlled internet access from rooms for those with lap tops. Communal furnishings in all houses are very good, with new modern furniture and fittings including leather sofas and flat screen television. Kitchen facilities are provided for preparing snacks and supper and in two houses, boarders have access to a washing machine. All three houses are adequately lit and all areas, except the shower block in the younger boys' house, are well ventilated. This is set to be addressed as part of the school's development plan. There are some problems with the heating in Pollard house which staff have been trying to resolve. In two rooms at the extremities of the building, the heating was not working. All areas of boarding are impressively cleaned to very high standards. Domestic staff are meticulous and take pride in their work.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Parents, staff and boarders have access to a good range of information including the schools aims and ethos. This sets out how support is given to boarders. A boarders handbook, mission statement, school prospectus and a handbook for each boarding house, is available. The successful and safe operation of boarding at Shebbear is underpinned by strong leadership that promotes a caring, systematic approach to welfare. The staff team is close knit, communication between boarding staff is excellent. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined through good written information such as job descriptions and flow charts, setting out the organisation of boarding. Boarding staff know what is expected of them. They receive guidance from competent and committed managers. Outside of teaching time, Boarders are sufficiently supervised by experienced and competent staff who they can contact at all times. Gap year students are used in addition to House parents.

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 that all boarding house staff knock on boarder's doors and wait for a response before entering (NMS37)
- ensure that the child protection procedure includes the contact details for the local safeguarding board (NMS3)
- consider vetting existing staff to the same standard as new staff (NMS38)
- ensure that girls have the same access to leisure facilities as boys (NMS 46)
- ensure that boarders can easily access e-mail, in order to contact parents (NMS 19)
- ensure that every boarder has adequate heating in their room (NMS 40)
- improve the ventilation in the younger boys shower room (NMS44)

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for boarding school

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders' health is promoted (NMS 6)
- safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records (NMS 7)
- boarders' receive first aid and health care as necessary (NMS 15)
- boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill (NMS 16)
- boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems (NMS 17)
- boarders receive good quality catering provision (NMS 24)
- boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals (NMS 25)
- boarders are suitably accommodated when ill (NMS 48)
- boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered (NMS 49).

Ofsted considers 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders are protected from bullying (NMS 2)
- boarders are protected from abuse (NMS 3)
- use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate (NMS 4)
- boarders' complaints are responded to appropriately (NMS 5)
- the operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare (NMS 13)
- boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school (NMS 22)
- boarders are protected from the risk of fire (NMS 26)
- the welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school (NMS 28)
- boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities (NMS 29)
- boarders' personal privacy is respected (NMS 37)
- there is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders (NMS 38)
- boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures; all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises are supervised (NMS 39)
- boarders have their own accommodation, which is secure from public intrusion (NMS 41)
- boarders are protected from safety hazards (NMS 47)

Ofsted considers 2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders have access to a range and choice of activities (NMS 11)
- boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination (NMS 18)
- boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands (NMS 27)
- boarders have satisfactory provision to study (NMS 43)
- boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas (NMS 46)

Ofsted considers 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

Annex A

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school (NMS 12)
- boarders receive personal support from staff (NMS 14)
- boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families (NMS 19)
- new boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in (NMS 21)
- boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school (NMS 30)
- there are sound relationships between staff and boarders (NMS 36)

Ofsted considers 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders' possessions and money are protected (NMS 20)
- boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation (NMS 40)
- boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation (NMS 42)
- boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities (NMS 44)
- boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day (NMS 45)
- boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school (NMS 50)

Ofsted considers 51 the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- there is clear leadership of boarding in the school (NMS 8)
- crises affecting boarders' welfare are managed effectively (NMS 9)
- the school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare (NMS 10)
- risk assessment and school record-keeping contribute to boarders' welfare (NMS 23)
- boarders are supervised adequately by staff (NMS 31)
- staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site (NMS 32)
- boarders are adequately supervised at night (NMS 33)
- boarders are looked after by staff which have specific boarding duties, and have received adequate induction and continued training (NMS 34)
- boarders are looked after by staff which follow clear boarding policies and practice (NMS 35)
- the welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 51)
- the welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

Ofsted considers 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.