

Canford School

Inspection report for boarding school

Unique reference number	SC004087
Inspection date	29/06/2011
Inspector	Wendy Anderson / Thomas Webber
Type of inspection	Social Care Inspection

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Date of last inspection	26/09/2007

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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

Canford School is a co-educational independent boarding school providing boarding for pupils aged 13 to 18 years. The school is situated in 300 acres of parkland and provides opportunities for a wide variety of sports and leisure activities. There are seven houses which accommodate boarding pupils, all set in the grounds of the school. All houses have resident housemasters/ housemistresses, two matrons, and a number of non resident and resident tutors. Christian values underpin school society which is reflected in daily life and practice. The school also welcomes pupils from other denominations and faiths.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced full inspection which assessed all the key national minimum standards in all the Every Child Matters outcome areas. The school provides boarders with a outstanding standard of care. Boarders are looked after by a very experienced staff team who ensure boarders are safe, happy and live in a nurturing and stimulating environment. This team receive excellent training which stems from the exceptional staff appraisal system. The school truly consults with the pupils across all aspects of the school life and these systems are very effective. The relationships between staff and boarders are outstanding based on mutual respect and respect for individual values and talents. The school carries out regular reviews and self assessments which then contribute to its ongoing development which ensures pupils receive high quality care. Young people's behaviour is excellent and they are a credit to themselves and the school.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the medical centre has developed a robust system of monitoring all health related records including the administration and storage of all medication. Also there are clear policies and procedure on the use of homeopathic remedies. The school has also appointed a new Deputy Head who has responsibility for pastoral care. They have ensured that Ofsted contact details are now part of the safeguarding and complaints policies and procedures. There has also been a new staff appraisal system developed which is exceptional.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The promotion of pupils' health at the school is exceptional and is supported by excellent policies and procedures, which are adhered to. The school's personal, social and moral education (PSME) programme is outstanding and is both proactive and reactive to current issue and events. This programme also includes input from the medical staff and external speakers. Boarders said they enjoyed these lessons, finding them very informative and helpful. Boarders said that they are also able to put forward ideas for PSME sessions.

Pupils receive outstanding health care at the school. There is a very robust system for the recording of all medical information including the administration of medication. There has also been the development of a through risk assessment process for those pupils who wish to administer their own medication. All medical records are monitored on a regular basis with clear evidence of any issues being robustly addressed. There are excellent links between the medical, boarding and other staff who care for the pupils which supports excellent communication between all concerned. This ensures that pupils receive high quality support which is delivered in a cohesive and sensitive manner. All medical staff are very well trained and receive regular supervision and support from appropriate sources. A large number of staff at the school have received first aid training both from external providers as well as from the medical centre staff. The medical centre has recently carried out a consultation with pupils the results of which have been incorporated in to their development plan. The medical centre is well equipped and furnished. Pupils said that they are well looked after when ill and found the medical centre staff very approachable.

The catering provision at the school is of a high standard with lunch being exceptional. Meals are well balanced and there is always a choice. The catering department receive clear information on any dietary requirements the pupils may have, either due to medical or cultural needs. The catering department has carried out consultation with the pupils and incorporated their feedback into the menus. There is also a food committee which meets regularly.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school has excellent policies and procedure on safeguarding, anti bullying, including cyber bullying, which ensure the pupils' welfare is protected. Any incident of bullying is robustly and promptly responded to and addressed. This is supported by the clear recording system. Pupils said that bullying was not an issue at the school but did occasionally happen and they were very clear on what action they and the staff would take. The school has three appointed safeguarding officers (DSO) on the staff team and a governor which safeguarding responsibilities. The safeguarding policies are understood by all staff including the support staff. All staff have received

safeguarding training at an appropriate level with the three DSOs having attended multi disciplinary training. Prefects also receive a through briefing on safeguarding prior to taking up their role. All safeguarding training is regularly updated. Excellent records are maintained on safeguarding issues and these are shared with staff on a need to know basis. The DSOs have strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The schools core focus on behaviour management is positive reinforcement, celebrating the achievement of pupils not only academically but in sport, community involvement both in the school and in the wider community. The behaviour of the pupils during the inspection was exemplary. They are a credit to themselves and the school. There is clear information on the expectations the school has regarding pupils behaviour which is supported by robust policies and procedures. Comprehensive records are kept of all major punishments and boarders said that they felt that punishments at the school are fair and reasonable. Consultation has been carried out with the pupils on current punishments.

The school has a clear complaint procedure which contained the contact details of Ofsted. However they are in the process of updating the information for pupils on how to make a complaint. Records are kept of all complaints and these include the outcome, if the complainant is satisfied with the outcome and any actions to be taken. Boarders said that if they had a complaint they would go and talk to staff who they felt would respond quickly and thoroughly.

The school has an exceptional prefect system which is supported by robust written guidance, induction and training. The boarders said the prefects are an important and valued part of the school. They act as role models, mentors, provide excellent support for pupils and act as a conduit for pupils to feed information and ideas to senior management.

There are excellent fire systems, guidance, risk assessments, staff training and records in place which ensure pupils are protected from the risk of fire. Boarders were very clear on what they had to do should the alarms sound. Health and safety across the school campus is exceptionally well managed. There is a comprehensive risk assessment process which includes frequent reviews and updates. Wherever pupils are accessing activities outside the school site, the school insists that they are provided with all the relevant licences and risk assessment by the activity provider but also carries out its own risk assessment.

At the time of inspection the school was accommodating a young person who was not a pupil. Their welfare is safeguarded and promoted as the school retains all the information they would require for any pupil.

Pupils' privacy is respected by staff who demonstrate a respect for their privacy at all times. Boarders supported this view.

The recruitment systems at the school are exceptional and are rigorously applied to all staff, including peripatetic staff, support staff and volunteers. These systems are

supported by excellent policies which are regularly reviewed and updated and outstanding records. The school has a clear written agreement in place for all adults who live on the school site but are not employed by the school which protects pupils' welfare. They also ensure that all the drivers of the taxi firm they use are checked with the Criminal Records Bureau. The system for visitors to the school site is very robust and ensures that boarders are not placed at risk. This includes those members of the public who access the school's sports centre at allocated times.

The school has outstanding security systems for the protection of all pupils. These arrangements are frequently reviewed and updated.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are able to take part in an incredible range of activities. Boarders said that the choice of activities has greatly improved in part due to the appointment of a new activities coordinator. Boarders said that they are able and encouraged to put forward ideas for activities. They also said that there is a good balance between activities and free time so they have time to just relax and be with their friends. These activities also include community work which is an important part of school life and is seen as key to the pupils developing into effective members of a wider community. The facilities at the school are outstanding and boarders are able to access these outside of the education day. The school is set in exceptional grounds which provide the pupils with safe well maintained external recreational areas.

Boarders receive outstanding levels of personal support from staff which is one of the school's many strengths. Boarders said that they have a large number of people across the school campus they would feel comfortable talking to. They said, 'you can talk to the staff about anything' and staff will always make time for them. There is also a school counsellor whom pupils are able to self refer to. There is also evidence of pupils being able to access support from external providers where a need has been identified and all notice boards have a wide selection of helpline numbers. The school has an additional layer of support available to the upper sixth form in the form of a separate house which can accommodate six pupils who may be Oxbridge candidates or students who have outgrown communal living. Pupils retain links with their 'mother' house and remain part of this house for purposes of house identity, duties and assemblies. Pupil must apply formally and explain why they want to access this facility for or part of their final year. Parents must agree and they must undertake to be responsible for own laundry, being in house at right time, planning and organising own work and activities.

A key part of the school ethos is equality of opportunity, respect, tolerance and anti discriminatory practice. Individuals are valued and supported in their chosen faith and their culture. Overseas pupils are encouraged to share their experiences with other pupils to develop their understanding of different cultures. Overseas boarders supported this view and said that they felt valued members of the school community. There are multi cultural events organised by the school with pupils' input. Support is

available for pupils whose first language is not English as well as pupils who may require additional academic or personal support.

There are no onerous demands placed upon boarders. Due to the in depth knowledge the staff have of the boarders in their care, staff are able to quickly identify boarders who may be experiencing stress or worry and appropriate support is put in place.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Consultation with pupils is outstanding. The school has numerous avenues for pupils to contribute to the operation of the school. These include a school council, food council and an environmental committee. The school has also carried out surveys with the pupils on health care, food, punishments and activities. Boarders said that they felt these systems were effective and were able to provide numerous examples where things had changed as a result of consultation or the committees. They also said that another avenue was via the prefects who will represent their views with house parents and senior management and the tutor system.

Boarders said they were able to maintain good contact with family and friends. Most of the boarders have mobile phones but they also have access to email and Skype. Overseas boarders said that additional arrangements are made for them where their home is in a different time zone. Parents supported this view and said that staff are quick to respond to phone calls and emails. There are also regular news letters from the school as well as from individual houses so that parents feel involved in the lives of their children.

The induction of new boarders to the school is excellent. New boarders are provided with comprehensive written materials as well familiarisation days and contact with their mentors over the holidays prior to their arrival. New boarders said they found these systems very useful and it helped prepare them for life at the school. All this information is frequently reviewed and updated with input from the last intake of new boarders.

The relationships between boarders and staff are outstanding. Boarders were very positive about the staff who care for them both in the questionnaires and the discussion groups. Parents were also very positive about the staff. Boarders live in an environment which is warm, supportive, friendly and relaxed where they are enabled to freely express their views and develop as individuals.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school makes provision for boarders to be able to securely store their possessions. Each house operates a house bank for boarders' money and clear

records are kept of all deposits and withdrawals which include the boarder's signature. There are lockable storage facilities for each boarder in their dormitory, however it is their choice if they use this or not. Boarding staff regularly advise the boarders to use these facilities. There have been occasional thefts but these have been robustly dealt with by staff. All passports and visas are stored securely.

The accommodation at the school is of a high standard which is underpinned by a robust rolling programme of refurbishment. The school continues to invest large amounts of time and capital to ensure boarding houses are homely welcoming environments for the boarders to live in. Since the last inspection as well as ongoing refurbishment there has been an increase in the communal space provided for boarders. Maintenance at the school is dealt with very quickly. Boarders are extremely proud of their boarding houses.

The school has two shops on site, one which provides uniform and stationery and the 'Grubber' which has a wide range of food items, toiletries as well as a coffee shop section which has a television and music. Boarders said that they used to feel that the prices at the shops were too high and they raised this with staff. This has now been addressed and prices are comparable to the high street

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school provides parents, boarders and staff with an extremely comprehensive statement of its boarding principles and practice which accurately reflects the current aims and work of the school. In addition there are very good booklets about each house.

There is excellent management and leadership at the school which ensure the practice and development of boarding enhances the life of the boarders. Boarding is organised vertically by gender and shared room/dormitories are arranged by age. Boarders felt that this system worked very well. Senior management at the school are readily accessible to pupils, parents and staff. All parties were very complimentary about the senior management team.

All of the records at the school are robustly monitored to ensure pupils' welfare is promoted. This monitoring identifies trends, any areas of concern and/or development which then inform future development.

Boarders are appropriately supervised by staff and the increase to the amount of time the matrons are in the houses will enhance this. Boarders said they always knew how to contact staff both day and night. When pupils are leaving the school site the school adheres to the DfES guidance.

The induction, supervision and training of staff is excellent. The boarding staff are very clear on their roles and responsibilities which enhances the boarders' experience. Boarding and house staff meet regularly through a variety of forums to

ensure staff are kept informed of any specific issues relating to the house or the pupils. All staff undergo a staff appraisal which is excellent and includes input not only from their peers but also the pupils and their parents. From this a development/training plan is devised. Training at the school is given a high profile to ensure that the pupils receive a high standard of care. This is all supported by outstanding guidance on boarding practice which is cross referenced to the school policies and procedures.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. It is at the core of the schools' ethos and evident throughout policies, documentation, operational conduct of the school and ethos of the school. The school not only respects, values and enables the individual but encourages the individual to share their experiences with the school community. This is closely linked with the pupils becoming part of the school and productive members of the wider community.