

Merchiston Castle School School Care Accommodation Service

Colinton Road
Colinton
Edinburgh
EH13 0PU

Telephone: 0131 312 2200

Type of inspection:

Unannounced

Completed on:

19 September 2019

Service provided by:

Merchiston Castle School Board of
Governors

Service provider number:

SP2006008428

Service no:

CS2005101538

About the service

Merchiston Castle School is an independent school for boys which provides boarding facilities for many of its pupils. The School is situated in extensive grounds in the Colinton district of Edinburgh.

The School's conditions of registration are:

1. To provide a School Care Accommodation service to a maximum of 358 young people at any one time:

A maximum of 58 young people may be accommodated in Pringle, Merchiston Castle School, Colinton Road, Colinton, Edinburgh EH13 OPU.

A maximum of 126 young people may be accommodated in Laidlaw, Merchiston Castle School, Colinton Road, Colinton, Edinburgh EH13 OPU.

A maximum of 61 young people may be accommodated in Rogerson, Merchiston Castle School, Colinton Road, Colinton, Edinburgh EH13 OPU.

A maximum of 104 young people may be accommodated in Chalmers, Merchiston Castle School, Colinton Road, Colinton, Edinburgh EH13 OPU.

A maximum of 9 young people may be accommodated in Harvey, Merchiston Castle School, Colinton Road, Colinton, Edinburgh EH13 OPU.

2. The School care accommodation service will be provided during the School terms.

3. To comply with the current staffing schedule dated 17 August 2010 which must be displayed together with the certificate.

4. The service must comply with all relevant building and fire safety legislation.

What people told us

We spoke with pupils in all of the boarding houses during our inspection visit. We also issued a survey monkey for them to complete prior to the inspection. Generally the feedback we received was very positive with pupils telling us they felt safe, happy and comfortable within the boarding houses and across the school campus.

As our inspection was early in the school session and there were a significant number of new pupils, some were still getting used to the boarding experience. They mainly told us that they were starting to feel settled and that they'd been made to feel welcome by pupils and staff.

We were consistently told by pupils that they enjoyed the company of others in the boarding houses and enjoyed the range of opportunities they had access to.

Comments on the survey included:

"I am very happy and see no problem with my boarding life and experience."

"When I felt homesick, members of staff and students quickly came to help me."

"We should have a bit more time on your phone."

"They are good taking care of the boys. It is good to have prep time but it is very long."

We asked parents for feedback by email and their comments were mainly positive about the quality of life and experience for their children. The provision of a new parents' portal to access information was commented upon positively. Their comments included:

"I would say that the school are very good at keeping in touch with us about our son"

"There have been a couple of incidents that have occurred however the school has dealt with them accordingly which has reassured me that my child is safe in the boarding house."

"We feel satisfied that we can raise concerns and able to make suggestions about our child's wellbeing. "

"New portal has made it easier as all information in one place. Both my boys are happy and have voiced no concerns."

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support children and young people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
How good is our leadership?	not assessed
How good is our staffing?	not assessed
How good is our setting?	not assessed
How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support children and young people's wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

Pupils we spoke with told us they felt safe happy and comfortable in their boarding houses and parental feedback confirmed this. We heard and saw examples of positive support being provided by staff across the boarding houses and saw consistent evidence of warm, supportive relationships. Pupils told us they felt that they were respected by their peers and by staff.

In Pringle we saw evidence of nurturing physical contact from the housemaster to pupils which provided comfort when needed. In other houses we saw a sense of relaxation and familiarity including natural contact which reassured individuals and which helped pupils to feel comfortable. Parents commented positively on the new parental portal which gave access to a range of information about their children. Pupils had day-to-day contact with the new Headmaster which they enjoyed.

There was a very good range of opportunities for pupils to access a range of activities and sports. Staff encouraged and enabled pupils to try new activities and have new experiences which allowed them to develop skills and interests. There was a range of available resources and facilities across the campus which meant that pupils could choose how to spend their time outwith organised academic and curricular routines and events. A pupil forum met to discuss issues and we heard of positive outcomes from these meetings which contributed to the wellbeing of pupils.

Very good support was given for cognitive and sensory needs which enabled pupils to develop skills. Pupils were able to opt in or out of planned activities, depending on their personal preferences. The boarding houses had a wide range of books, games and items for pupils to use. In the junior house, day pupils used a different entrance when being collected which safeguarded the privacy of boarding pupils.

Pupils were involved in community activities as they moved up the school including supporting less able people in the local community. This was recognised and individual pupils received recognition for this. There were aspects of excellence in the range of opportunities for pupils.

These included different academic studies which pupils could access and be supported to follow as well as a wide range of sports which were coached to a high level. There was also a range of opportunities which supported pupils to develop skills in music and drama and enabled them to benefit from high levels of tuition. Across the campus there were also opportunities for different skills development which individual staff provided and supported which enabled pupils to have a very high level of experiences.

The school had a medical centre on the campus which was staffed by qualified medical personnel and visited regularly by local doctors. Pupils could attend for routine checks and appointments as well as urgent treatment in the event of accidents or infections. This meant that the health needs of the pupils received prompt and effective attention. The centre had clear links with a range of medical professionals and agencies who provided advice and support for staff as well as direct treatment for pupils. Information was shared between the house staff and medical staff but medical treatment records were confidential to the medical centre.

The medical centre had accommodation which could be used to treat pupils on a 24 hour basis. Administration of medication was mainly properly dealt with and all medication was seen to be stored securely. Pupils were assessed to self administer medication, depending on their age and the type of medication involved.

Food and nutrition intake was monitored. Food was of a high standard and pupils influenced menus through a forum which involved representatives from all parts of the school. Snacks and drinks were available in the boarding houses. A health booklet was available for pupils. All pupils receive a comprehensive health assessment at admission. Cultural needs were taken into account with regard to menus and overall food provision.

There was also spiritual health awareness. The Chaplain was very skilled and supportive to pupils who needed it and provided individual support as well as community influence across the campus. The school had the services of a counsellor who provided confidential opportunities for pupils to discuss worries or anxiety. This meant they could confide in someone and receive personal advice if they needed it.

The staff team provide a warm and nurturing environment and this should be sure to include the use of normal physical comfort and support in natural ways for all year groups not just the younger pupils. There was a need for clarity of guidance for staff for physical contact with pupils including providing reassurance and comfort.

We discussed staffing levels and the need for ongoing assessment of staff deployment to replace the previous use of staffing schedules and ensure there was always sufficient staff to provide individual attention for pupils if this was needed.

The system in place to record outcomes of child protection incidents was not effectively used by all staff. Some records of bullying were not clear and did not express clear outcomes for the pupils concerned or describe the actions taken by staff. We comment further on this issue in key question 5.1.

We discussed some medication administration recording situations which would benefit from development and improvement and the medical centre was happy to action these. Some identified errors were noted and medical staff were following up on these.

We suggested there could be better recognition for pupils doing volunteering in the local and wider community. We advised there could be options for pupils to achieve Saltire awards and Youth Achievement awards for work they were involved in.

Some pupils said they would like more access to 'seconds' at mealtimes. Senior staff were aware of this and the development of dining facilities was underway at the time of the inspection visit.

How good is our leadership?

This key question was not assessed.

How good is our staff team?

This key question was not assessed.

How good is our setting?

This key question was not assessed.

How well is our care and support planned?

4 - Good

Basic information about pupils was gathered and held at the time of their admission and was updated and adjusted as necessary. A policy was in place to provide guidance for staff to identify concerns and needs for individual pupils and describe actions which should be taken to meet the identified needs and provide necessary support.

Some support plans were in place and these covered a range of issues including medical, emotional and learning support needs. The format of plans was good and there was evidence of comprehensive assessment work having been carried out. The content of plans was described using wellbeing indicators from Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) standards and the content was good and contained an appropriate range of information.

School reports had young people's' comments included and support plans provided evidence of pupils' involvement in their plan and its content.

The electronic information system used by the service held information about all pupils and identified those with specific needs. The content of the system also noted achievements which were recorded and recognised. They were also celebrated through school assemblies.

The electronic information system should be developed to make it easier to use for staff across the whole campus. We saw that its use was not consistent and the standard of information varied.

The threshold for initiating a support plan at Stage One should be reviewed, clarified and adhered to in all cases, with support plans drawn up. These plans should always give clear guidance and be shared to ensure the quality of care and support once a need has been identified. This should include all aspects of child protection and incidents where individual pupils are bullied or feel intimidated.

The content of support plans did not always give clear guidance to all staff across the school campus involved in caring for and supporting individual pupils with identified needs. These would include house staff, academic staff and those involved in supervising events and outings such as music and drama staff and sports coaches.

There was a need for clear evaluation of the outcomes of actions taken to provide support in line with the content of support plans. This would ensure that plans were used to ensure support was consistently provided and that all relevant staff were aware of them. It would also ensure that plans were only kept in place as long as they were required. As currently happens with Child's Plans and Support Plans, routine audits of all of these plans by senior staff would support this evaluation and allow for the different levels of support required at different age groups to be more clearly monitored.

In some records it was noted that restorative practices had been used to deal with incidents and repair relationships between pupils. There was a need for a simple description of the restorative work undertaken to enable staff to fully understand what had taken place.

Areas for improvement

1. The service provider should further develop its use of the system used to gather, store and share information. The system is accessible to all relevant staff and provides alerts when new information is added and it should now be used routinely to describe ways of helping individuals to feel safe, comfortable and happy.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that 'If I am supported and cared for by a team or more than one organisation, this is well-coordinated so that I experience consistency and continuity' (HSCS 4.17)

2. Support plans should be more consistently put in place for any pupil concerns. The purpose and content of these plans should be clear to best support the pupil with identified needs, including child protection concerns and should be shared with the pupil, their parents and relevant staff.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me'. (HSCS 1.19) and 'My care and support is consistent and stable because people work together well.' (HSCS 3.19)

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How well do we support children and young people's wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Children and young people experience compassion, dignity and respect	5 - Very Good
1.2 Children and young people get the most out of life	5 - Very Good
1.3 Children and young people's health benefits from their care and support they experience	5 - Very Good
How well is our care and support planned?	4 - Good
5.1 Assessment and care planning reflects children and young people's needs and wishes	4 - Good

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