

# Christ's Hospital School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	7 February 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 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**

Christ's Hospital is an independent co-educational boarding school accommodating at present 813 young people of both sexes. All pupils board at the school. The school has eighteen separate boarding houses located throughout the extensive grounds. The school's objective is to enable every student to achieve their full academic potential and develop their talents, ideas and interests in a caring boarding community which fosters respect for others, self confidence, a sense of service and a love of learning.

### **Summary**

This was a key announced inspection that focused upon the key national minimum standards for boarding schools. The inspection team comprised four inspectors from Ofsted and one boarding school additional inspector. Information on which to assess the school's performance was gathered in a variety of ways. These included the examination of documentary information that was supplied by the school, discussions with the students, student guided tours of the boarding houses, school and recreational areas, as well as discussions with a wide range of school staff.

The senior management team at the school have a wealth of knowledge and experience to support the staff and students at the school.

The school is effective at ensuring that the students who board receive the appropriate support from staff to help them achieve progress, both academic and personal.

The staff team are good with updating all of the relevant information needed to make students' time at the school a success. The staff team work effectively at gaining the trust of the students and advocate for them in a positive manner.

There are a number of key areas that require improvement. There are major concerns expressed by the inspectors regarding the schools recruitment process and issues regarding the safeguarding of young people. In addition, concern was expressed regarding the inconsistent approach to health checks and the lack of monitoring health records and medication. Inspectors also noted inconsistent practice in a number of boarding houses and guidance that was also inconsistent in content and accuracy.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The last full social care inspection of the school in 2003 resulted in five detailed recommendations and 27 advisory recommendations. These could be grouped together under the broad themes of: management of medication; availability of healthcare support; food; support to individual young people; safeguarding procedures and safe recruitment; the physical condition of the boarding accommodation; and health and safety. The school submitted a comprehensive action plan to address these recommendations. Action has been taken with regard to the shortfalls identified, significantly improving the overall quality of care afforded to the boarders.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The school has a personal, social and health education programme in place that covers a range of subjects and topics including smoking, alcohol and illegal substances. Although the programme is wide ranging and includes age appropriate material, it does need to be further developed particularly for the younger students. The health centre staff provide talks on the dangers of smoking with particular reference to the younger year groups. The Grecians (those students in the sixth form) have a good understanding of substance abuse, smoking and alcohol. They are encouraged to develop a responsible attitude towards alcohol through the role model of houseparents. The school has a clear substance abuse policy which is known to all staff, parents and students alike and is freely available in all handbooks including the parents' guide.

Boarders' health is maintained through a health centre that is staffed by a health centre manager and three nurses. The health centre has its own kitchen and a designated housekeeper prepares meals for boarders, who are inpatients, and staff. There are two wards in the health centre; one for female students and the other being for male students. Also, there are single rooms in addition to an isolation room, although inspectors were concerned to note that the nearest toilet and shower for the latter was in a corridor. The nurses oversee all matters relating to health and medication. There is a daily GP clinic, and although the GP allocated to the school is a male, a female GP is available at the clinic twice a week.

Matrons and houseparents hold a small supply of household remedies that are supplied by the health centre. The recording and stocks of medication is monitored by the nurses, although the monitoring is not recorded. The school must ensure that any household remedies that are supplied to individual houses are monitored and appropriately recorded.

Parents provide all contact details and information of known conditions, including allergies, before boarders are admitted and this is updated annually. Records are stored securely in the sanatorium and confidentiality is protected, although in discussion with students issues regarding the lack of confidentiality were raised. Such issues have been addressed by the senior management team through in service training. Key information about each student including details of parents and emergency contacts are held electronically. However, welfare plans are not kept on the system as they are considered to be sensitive. In addition, counselling records are not kept at the health centre and such information is only shared on a need to know basis.

The nurses hold two surgeries each day and hold drop in clinics for specific issues, such as the cessation of smoking. Storage of medication in the sanatorium is good and stored appropriately. All prescription medication is dispensed by the nurses in the sanatorium unless a sixth form boarder has been granted the right to self-medicate.

Boarders have a good choice of meals both at breakfast, lunchtime and supper. The majority of boarders spoken with felt that they had a good choice and always get ample to eat. The boarders have also been able to contribute their views through the food committee. Catering staff liaise regularly with them, and most of the boarders felt that staff did take note of their input; where necessary specific diets are catered for. Catering staff have access to training, both external and in-house. Catering staff were welcoming and friendly, and spoke highly of the inclusive nature of the school. The inspectors sampled a number of meals and found them to be more than satisfactory.

## **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is inadequate.

Pupils indicated that they feel protected from harm by those who look after them. The school has access barriers at the entrance managed by security men, but they are generally open during the working day. There are CCTV cameras in key positions without compromising the privacy of the pupils, and pupils do not report any incidents of inappropriate visitors. There are some issues in the sports centre, managed by Bluecoat Sports, with regard to access and showering arrangements and these matters pose a risk to pupils.

Pupils reported that incidents of bullying are rare; they are swiftly and appropriately dealt with by staff, who take such issues very seriously. All pupils have signed up to the charter drawn up in 2008 with the assistance of Year 8 to combat any incidences of bullying. Behaviour management is good with clear codes of conduct in all areas of their life at school. Pupils commented that sanctions imposed are appropriate and usually fair. Pupils are rewarded informally and formally for their efforts in house, in class and in recreational activities on the field and the stage and in the choir, band and orchestras. Very good behaviour was observed during the inspection.

The house system is well-established; experienced staff and senior pupils assist with the care of younger pupils under the clear guidance of staff. Pupils are very loyal to their house and enjoy a healthy rivalry on the sports field, at music festivals and in other informal events.

Pupils in Year 13 are invited to apply and are elected as monitors, who carry out various roles in the school. They have training by an outside provider and are briefed in matters of safeguarding with written instructions.

There have been recent changes in personnel in the human resources department and a more rigorous approach to the recruitment process is being implemented. Criminal checks have been carried out, but not all the requirements of the national minimum standards have been fully adopted, particularly where staff are employed on a sessional basis. There is currently no written agreement between the school and adults resident in the boarding accommodation but not employed by the school. These shortfalls in safeguarding procedures present a risk to pupils.

A child protection policy is in place, circulated to all parents, pupils and staff and containing all the elements of the national minimum standards. There are three members of staff responsible for the policy and practice of safeguarding children in the school. They have had substantial training from the Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Boarding Schools Association and Headmasters Conference training courses. Provision is made for all staff professional development in safeguarding procedures. All staff had training at the start of 2009 and all staff spoken to understood their responsibilities and the need to report any concerns they may have. There is a whistle-blowing clause in place in the policy, guidance about the use of restraint and a stand-alone missing child procedure. Inspectors noted that one incident of a safeguarding nature while reported to the local police was not reported to the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Boarding houses are safe with well-maintained, spacious accommodation, including common room space for a variety of activities. Risk assessments are in place, but not always available in house. Houseparents confirmed they were involved in customising the generic risk assessments

for their house. Fire records are in place and pupils confirm they have regular fire practices and are familiar with all exit routes. However, inspectors noted several fire doors that were wedged open and expressed concern that a risk assessment had not been carried out on freestanding electric heaters. In addition, some of the windows in the boarders accommodation in the health centre had not been fitted with window restrictors.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Boarders receive a good level of personal support, care and guidance. Boarders feel they can access such support from a number of different members of staff, notably houseparents and matrons. All boarders have tutors with clear liaison between the school and boarding which ensures an appropriate sharing of information. Boarders can choose their tutor from Year 9, which they feel allows them much more autonomy in who they wish to gain support from.

An independent person is available for boarders to get in touch with should they wish to contact someone outside of the school. The contact details of the independent person are contained in guides. The role of the independent person does not appear to be clearly known by boarders themselves. Information relating to independent advocacy services, such as ChildLine are displayed in boarding areas.

The peer listeners system offers boarders an opportunity to gain support or advice from their peers. Peer listeners are trained and clearly know the boundaries and responsibilities of their tasks.

The school clearly places a high regard to boarders being treated with equality. Boarders did not voice concerns that they are discriminated against. Boarders have recently been involved in contributing to the development of a school charter. The charter includes statements associated with respect, dignity and helping others with all boarders being encouraged to sign it. The historical idea of hierarchy amongst boarders has considerably reduced with boarders feeling they are treated fairly by their peers. Boarders clearly identify with the unique school traditions and feel unified by association.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarders are encouraged to make representations formally and informally about the operation of boarding. There are numerous informal opportunities as they see their tutors regularly and are encouraged by houseparents to express their opinions and preferences on many subjects including activities and visits. There are mixed opinions on the effectiveness of the school council, although the food committee is seen as the most effective voice of the students. There is a strong sense of commitment and responsibility by students towards their fellow peers and the Christ's Hospital family. Overall the strong relationships between staff and boarders promote a culture of discussion, where matters are for the most part managed effectively.

The main means of contact with parents is by email and the school does permit the boarders to have private mobiles, provided they do not use them in lessons, prep, at formal occasions or late at night. The school works hard to ensure they have an effective partnership with the parents of all of the students. Communication with parents is, for the most part, effective and improving, but more ways could be found to take account of their views and to encourage them

to provide feedback. Some parents commented that communication was difficult with some of the boarding houses. However, the overall view from the majority of parents is that the school do keep in contact and share any concerns or issues they may have about students on a regular basis.

The induction process is well-established and sixth formers and monitors stated that there is an effective induction when new pupils start at the school. There is a great deal of nurturing towards new students who are well-supported by staff, who help them to find their way around and settle into the school routines. There is a formal induction programme for all new students who are not permitted mobiles during their first three weeks at the school. This is to help each student settle in to the unique way of life at Christ's Hospital.

Clearly, this can be very hard for parents, although they are encouraged to contact houseparents and matrons on a regular basis to discuss any particular issues. While the majority of new students spoken said they felt it had probably helped them to settle in to their new surroundings, it was noted that in some houses students were allowed to use their mobiles during the first three weeks, which caused difficulties for some students and staff alike. Parents are welcome to visit the school and encouraged to attend matches and match teas, concerts and plays throughout the school year.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

A robust approach ensures boarders have their pocket monies safely kept and monitored. Boarders are not allowed to bring in large amounts of cash. The school culture is based firmly in trust and mutual respect. A small number of boarders raised concerns that there had been some petty theft, however, the level of such incidents appears low. Boarders have access to lockable storage cabinets.

Boarders benefit from a very good standard of accommodation. Since the last inspection a refurbishment programme has seen the quality and consistency of boarding accommodation improved. All boarding houses are suitably furnished with domestic fittings being well-decorated and maintained throughout. All bedrooms are of a good size whether shared or single occupancy; no more than four boarders share rooms. Boarders are able to request who they share with, within reason, and move into double or single-bedded accommodation once they progress past Year 10. Boarders are enabled to personalise their own rooms and have access to an appropriate amount of bathing and toilet facilities. A reasonable amount of space and comfort is available, with communal areas providing good recreational and entertainment facilities. Older boarders, who progress into the sixth form, benefit from a high standard of accommodation which allows for greater autonomy and self-development.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

The organisation of boarding clearly contributes to the welfare of boarders. Boarders are appropriately segregated into the same gender and age living groups. Boarders in the sixth form are placed in mixed residential houses, although they are suitably separated by floors or landings. All bathing and toilet facilities found within residential houses offer appropriate separation and privacy.

The physical appearance and condition of each of the houses is generally similar and maintained to a good standard; the sixth form houses are particularly good.

Information is available which guide staff in the principles and practices of boarding. In most cases the houses operate generally similar practices, notably daily routines. However, there are also a number of disparities in the manner in which individual houses address boarding practice. For example, the practice of carrying out health checks on boys in their first three years at school differs from house to house. Such practice is not confirmed in policies or procedures.

An excellent process of risk assessment is in place to address trips and outings away from school which is extremely robust and useful.

A suitable process of monitoring is in place to address punishments, complaints and accidents. Recent reviews have been undertaken which has led to a more obvious and streamlined process of monitoring. This has subsequently seen the use of sanctions and punishments become more consistent.

Assessments in respect of safeguarding matters, such as when boarders visit unsupervised venues is not considered appropriately.

The supervision of boarders is appropriate. Boarders feel they are monitored very closely, although the actual numbers of staff on duty at any given time are relatively low. When boarders are taken on trips outside of school they are accompanied by an appropriate number of staff. When specific outdoor activity trips take place, suitably trained staff are deployed who have the necessary qualifications and experience.

Staff are generally provided with information regarding their roles and responsibilities. Handbooks are available which describe all aspects of boarding provision, however, some information is out-of-date, such as contact details for Ofsted.

All staff who undertake boarding duties are provided with induction training. Additional training is provided through inset days with key boarding staff being encouraged to pursue Boarding Schools Association (BSA) courses. Annual appraisals ensure house parents are meeting standards of boarding care.

The promotion of equality & diversity is good. The diverse student population is drawn together from across the social, economic and ethnic spectrum. The school ethos and tradition clearly unites boarders in a number of ways no more so than with the uniform, daily routines and marches. The approach toward limiting the amount of pocket money boarders may bring to school greatly reduces the risk of prejudices occurring due to any monetary privilege. Boarders who have different religious or cultural beliefs or interests are enabled to pursue them.

## **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):

- develop further a personal, social and health education programme for all for students that includes all elements of the national minimum standards. (NMS 6)
- ensure that any household remedies that are supplied to individual houses are monitored and appropriately recorded. (NMS 15)
- ensure there is a written policy for health checks and that such checks are carried out in a consistent manner throughout the school. (NMS 15)
- ensure that the school recruitment process is in line with Standard 38 and that all pre employment checks are carried out prior to commencement of employment. (NMS 38)
- ensure that all adults who teach or lead activities on a sessional basis and who have contact with pupils at the school have an enhanced criminal background check undertaken, or are kept under sufficient supervision to prevent substantial unsupervised access to boarders, and are able to be identified. (NMS 38)
- ensure the school has a written agreement with any adult not employed by the school but living in the same building as boarding accommodation. (NMS 39)
- ensure that the Foundation undertakes a risk assessment of the Bluecoat Sports Complex to assess the risk of establishing substantial and unsupervised access to boarders by members of the public. (NMS 41)
- ensure that the Foundation reviews the changing arrangements in the Bluecoat Sports Complex to ensure that boarders have separate showering facilities for each gender and the facilities are not shared by staff, adults or visitors. (NMS 45)
- ensure that all issues of a safeguarding nature are reported to the Local Authority Safeguarding Board (NMS 3)
- ensure that all fire doors are kept closed or fitted with self closing device and not kept wedged open. (NMS 26)
- ensure that all windows accessible to boarders above the ground floor in the health centre are fitted with window restrictors. (NMS 47)
- ensure that all students are aware of the independent person and that there is easy access to the person. (National Minimum Standard 14)
- ensure that the school council is used effectively as a common theme from students is that they feel they are not listened to. (NMS 12)
- ensure that all houses adopt a consistent approach to new students not having mobile telephones during the first three weeks at the school. (NMS 19)
- ensure there is a clear and consistent approach to all aspects of boarding practice given discrepancies from house to house (NMS 10)
- ensure that risk assessments in respect of safeguarding matters, such as when boarders visit unsupervised venues are appropriately undertaken, recorded and monitored. (NMS 23)

- ensure that all staff with boarding duties are provided with up to date written guidance on the school's boarding policies and practice. (NMS 35)