

International College Sherborne School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Jennifer Reed / Chris Passmore
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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

The International College, Sherborne School is a fully residential college for male and female students, aged between eleven and seventeen years, who are from non-British educational backgrounds and who wish to join the British independent school system. International College is owned by the same governing body as Sherborne School; however, it is administered independently as a distinct institution, having its own sub-committee of Governors and Principal. It is independently registered by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Independent Schools Council and was accredited as an International Study Centre by the British Council in 2007. Students typically stay at International College for one year, studying on the one year GCSE programme; however, some pupils may stay for up to three years.

At the time of the inspection the college had 135 full time boarders, accommodated in four separate houses. Senior boys live on the college campus in Kings House and junior boys reside in Grosvenor House, a short distance away. Female students reside in Westcott House, which is adjacent to Grosvenor House. The college's fourth boarding house, Cheapside, is designated either for girls or boys according to enrolment trends. It has been designated a senior boy's house for 2009/10. The college also accommodates students in lodgings with host families; at the time of inspection, two girls were placed with one host family.

Summary

This was an announced inspection to assess International College, Sherborne School against the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools. The one recommendation made at the previous inspection was looked at to check the school's progress in addressing the issue raised.

The overall standard of boarding provision is good, with some outstanding features. International College provides boarders from overseas with a safe and supportive environment which acknowledges and celebrates diversity and is responsive to each boarders' individual needs, culture and beliefs. The college is adept at helping students to quickly settle in and fully participate in boarding life. Positive relationships exist between staff and boarders. Leadership and management within the college is strong; effective internal communication benefits boarders who are well looked after on a daily basis. Some minor shortfalls were identified in health care records, staff training and the premises.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Only one recommendation was made at the previous inspection in 2006, asking the college to address the inconsistencies in house routines between the junior boys and junior girls. This matter has been satisfactorily resolved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The college has a good range of policy and procedural guidance on countering major risks to the health of boarders. There is a Personal, Social, Health and Education (PSHE) programme for all year groups which is delivered during the student's induction process, within assemblies,

in year group tutorials and by specialist outside speakers, for example, the Police Force. The Police representative said, 'the school have invited us to provide education on alcohol, drugs and personal safety on a yearly basis. The college looks after the health and the welfare of the students to a high degree'. Healthy eating information is delivered by the biology department who also deliver lessons on sex education. Staff undertake 'spot checks' to reduce the likelihood of boarders smoking in the college grounds. Boarders say their good health is promoted. One boarder said, 'in bad weather we will not play football outside because we could become ill'.

Boarders receive first aid and health care as necessary. Prior to admission to the college, parents are asked to complete a medical questionnaire and give their consent for the administration of first aid, treatment and non-prescription medication. Staff receive appropriate training in first aid and the nurses at the Sherborne School Health Centre are registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. The house matrons lead on daily health and welfare matters in boarding provision. They are responsible for giving medication to boarders and making arrangements for any medical appointment required with specialist practitioners, for example, with a dentist or optician. One matron is available on the college campus during school hours to provide health support. Alternatively, boarders can choose to use the Sherborne School Health Centre as a 'drop in' service to access a doctor or nurse. If boarders become unwell in the night, they can easily summon help from their matron or boarding staff on duty. Ill boarders are taken to the health centre where they are cared for by qualified nurses.

Medical records kept meet the requirements of the National Minimum Standard. However, the system of record keeping does not include the use of an individual record for each student and thus it does not readily highlight the frequency of dosage for individual students or easily identify any emerging individual health trend or pattern. This recording shortfall is minimised by the excellent oral communication which regularly takes place between relevant college staff, matrons and health centre nurses. Medical information is shared on a 'needs to know' basis and boarders' emerging health and welfare needs are well met. Furthermore, college staff address individual welfare needs with sensitivity and diligence, ensuring that boarders receive any specialist help they may need, for example, talking with the school counsellor. However, no written 'welfare plans' have been agreed and put in place for those individual boarders with identified special welfare needs or significant emotional or behavioural difficulties. Moreover, parents are not clearly asked to identify these welfare needs within the admission information they complete.

Boarders enjoy good quality meals served within a well organised dining room. Staff encourage boarders to develop their social skills during mealtimes and these are pleasant social occasions. However, boarders do not enjoy queuing outside the dining hall in adverse weather conditions. The three weekly menus are regularly updated and provide a balanced and nutritious international diet. There is plenty of food and boarders can always go back for more. Care is taken to include boarder's preferences and the kitchen serves traditional dishes of particular countries to celebrate significant events and to meet religious needs. For example, during Ramadan, the kitchen provides meals before dawn and after dusk. One boarder commented about the meals, 'we have a big choice of food we can eat in one day. For example, we have chicken, fish, macaroni, rice, vegetables and fruit; and we can have Nutella (a chocolate spread) as much as we want!' Boarders have access to drinking water and are able to make snacks in their boarding house kitchens. However, during school hours, only the boarders from Kings House, located on the college campus, can return to their boarding house to make themselves

snacks. The boarders have requested that hot drinks are provided at the mid-morning break and the Principal is considering practical arrangements to implement this request.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Boarders are protected by clear policies, robust health and safety and recruitment practices, and by the vigilant and cohesive care they receive from staff. Bullying is not tolerated by the college and the incidence of bullying is low. One boarder said, 'I am not bullied because of strong rules'. The student manual and handbook provides boarders with clear information about the unacceptability of bullying; the topic is also discussed with students within PHSE tutorials and assemblies. Additionally, the college seeks boarders' views about the incidence of bullying from questionnaires. Bullying is taken seriously by the college and any incident is rigorously dealt with. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of diversity issues when making decisions on how to effectively deal with bullying and seek ways to deal with individual behaviour. Both staff and students benefit from the e-bullying training recently undertaken. Bullying awareness is also included in the induction child protection training provided to new staff.

With the exception of the two independent listeners, all staff have completed basic child protection training. Furthermore, the designated child protection officers within the school have completed more in-depth training in safeguarding. Staff know how to respond to any suspicion or allegation of abuse and how to keep boarders safe. Safety is a key theme within the students' induction process and the college runs a 'street awareness' course for all students. Internet access is monitored and restricted, including access to multi-lingual sites. One boarder said, 'staff look after us all the time; we haven't had any dangerous situations but I think that the staff do everything to avoid them'. However, boarders personal privacy is respected in boarding. Staff supervise students without intruding unnecessarily into bedrooms or bathroom areas at sensitive times.

Both students and parents receive comprehensive information about college rules which tells them how to make a complaint. Boarders say they feel at ease to approach boarding staff or their tutors to discuss any concern they may have and report that issues are usually quickly resolved. The Vice-Principal meets regularly with each student, providing them with an individual opportunity to discuss any worries or complaints. The Principal promptly deals with any formal complaint received; these are rare in relation to boarding practices. Boarders believe that discipline is fairly given. All serious incidents and subsequent punishments are recorded in good detail and are monitored by senior staff, ensuring any disciplinary action taken by staff is appropriate and boarders' welfare is safeguarded.

The college recruitment and selection procedures are robust; all of the necessary checks are undertaken prior to staff commencing employment within the college to assess their suitability. Any unaccompanied visitor to the boarding houses are closely supervised by staff to ensure boarders are kept safe. Key pads are fitted to entrances to boarding houses to prevent unauthorised access to boarders' accommodation. However, boarders residing in Kings House who wish to spend time in their common room, are required to walk across the college site to access the common room which is located separately from the boarding accommodation. A risk assessment has not been undertaken to assess whether reasonable measures have been taken to prevent or deter unauthorised public access to the grounds, although to date, unwanted visitors have not been a problem.

Robust health and safety policies and procedures and rigorous risk assessment and reviewing processes contribute to keeping boarders safe. The college considers potential health and safety matters in relation to accommodating international boarders and takes any identified preventative action needed to ensure boarders' safety. For example, the health and safety officer keeps a supply of appropriate electrical adaptors for safe use in England, to replace any irregular adaptors brought into college; boarders' electrical equipment is checked for compliance with British Safety Standards. Regular fire drills are undertaken, ensuring that boarders know how to safely evacuate college buildings in an emergency. Fire safety equipment is regularly checked and newly appointed staff complete a fire awareness course.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders enjoy taking part in the good range of organised recreational and sporting activities. For example, the activities programme enables boarders to go horse-riding, swimming, bowling and to play golf. Boarders say they particularly enjoy playing football and basketball and going on the arranged Saturday trips to visit local towns and cities. The imaginative sports programme involves all boarders in house competitions each term, whatever their level of sporting ability. Boarders appreciate the relaxed nature of Sundays and the space it provides for free time.

The International College excels in providing individual boarders from a wide range of different cultures with an outstanding level of personal support. The ethos of the college ensures a very positive commitment to equality and diversity issues and great care is taken to avoid inappropriate discrimination in any form. Each boarder is treated as an individual, with due regard given to understanding and respecting each student's cultural background and beliefs. All boarders are encouraged to make new friendships across cultures and integrate with students from different countries. The college recognises and demonstrates its special duty of care to ensure that all boarders are respectful of difference and sensitive to the needs of others. Religious, cultural and racial issues, festivals and citizenship are discussed in PSHE sessions and students are encouraged to contribute and celebrate their diversity. The college makes special arrangements to meet all boarders' religious, cultural and racial needs. For example, the whole college takes part in celebrating Chinese New Year and special meals are provided before sunrise and after sunset during Ramadan for Muslim boarders.

A wide range of staff are available for the boarders to turn to for personal guidance and the standard of pastoral support provided is excellent. For example, the boarders are supported by boarding house staff, matrons and tutors on a daily basis and they have a three weekly individual meeting with the Vice-Principal. Boarders can also arrange to talk with one of the college's independent listeners or the school counsellor if they prefer to speak with someone outside of the college. The size of the college enables staff to quickly get to know each boarder and find ways to make sure their welfare is promoted and safeguarded; students say they are happy. One student said, 'I can talk to the house-parent, they are very nice'. All staff undertake an extended induction period to prepare them for teaching and caring for overseas students. All new teachers have received some training in English as a Foreign Language (EFL); students benefit from the support given to teachers to help them deliver lessons to multi-lingual and multi-cultural classes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are a number of different ways boarders can have a say and contribute their views to the operation of boarding practices in the college. The boarders' participation opportunities are meaningful and not tokenistic; responses and actions are taken by the college as considered appropriate. The college undertakes surveys with boarders, for example, to gain their views about the incidence of bullying; boarders have also been asked to complete a health and safety audit of their bedrooms, to ensure their satisfaction with their rooms. Students are elected to different forums where they express their opinions, for example, the Student Representative Council, the Dining Hall Committee and Junior Common Room Committees. Boarders are proud of their contributions and enjoy their participation; they appreciate the formal responses made by the college to their representations and suggestions. One boarder said, 'Yes, I am free to have a say about anything....they seem to be willing and ready to listen.....nice people'. The college undertakes an annual questionnaire with parents, sent out in eight languages, to seek their views about the operation of the college; most parental responses are very positive.

Boarders are able to maintain regular contact with their family and friends overseas. Most boarders use their mobile phones to make telephone calls, or use email or 'Facebook'. A multi-lingual internet safety net allows boarders to use 'Facebook' and other sites in their own language safely. Payphones are provided in boarding houses, which offer sufficient privacy for personal calls.

The college has an established and well practised induction process for overseas boarders which works extremely well. Boarders quickly integrate into boarding life and understand the expectations of behaviour within the college and learn the social skills they need to take part safely in English society. For example, during their induction, the college makes sure students know how to safely cross the roads and are made aware of 'stranger danger'. Each new boarder is given suitable written information about boarding routines and rules within their student manual and planner. New boarders can seek guidance from staff and their peers if they do not understand anything. They are supported by second year students who act as mentors and help them to settle in. Boarders report that they enjoy very positive relationships with college staff; they say staff are approachable and they can identify a number of different people to speak to about any issue. This is commendable, given at the time of this inspection, approximately 80% of boarders had only been boarding at the college for a matter of weeks. One boarder said, 'I have everything I need for my every day life here and people are totally friendly; all staff here are very friendly and we are in good relationships'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The college provides boarders with suitable lockable storage for their personal possessions and staff talk to new boarders about looking after their valuables during their induction. Laptop locking systems are also available if boarders do not wish to lock them in their cupboards and if required, valuables can be kept in a safe. Boarders trust college staff to enter their rooms to undertake domestic and maintenance work. One boarder said, 'I can leave anything in my room and no one touches it; if I leave my money the cleaner will take it to the housekeeper so it is safe'.

Although the four boarding houses offer different sizes and styles of accommodation, all provide a good standard of accommodation. Kings House is the largest boarding house and it is centrally located on the college campus. Cheapside, a small boarding house is close by; Westcott and

Grosvenor, adjacent boarding houses, are just a short walk from the college. All boarding houses are well furnished, decorated and maintained to a good standard on a rolling programme of refurbishment. Houses are well lit and ventilated and reasonable measures are taken to ensure boarders' safety. Boarder's bedrooms may be single or shared and boarders are able to decorate and personalise their rooms. Each bedroom provides boarders with sufficient space and storage facilities. When rooms are shared, care is taken to ensure appropriate age groups are placed together. The college tries to place boarders of different cultures together in shared rooms, to encourage their use of English. The common rooms are comfortable and provide sufficient space for boarders to spend time together and relax. The common room for Kings House, 'The Barn', is separate from the bedroom accommodation and is opposite the boarding house. All houses have a sufficient number of toilets, showers and bathrooms, with a plentiful supply of hot water. Boarders do not have to queue to use these facilities. Cleaning standards are high and boarders report their satisfaction with their boarding accommodation. However, some boys toilets are in cubicles and the partitions have sufficiently large gaps above and below to be susceptible to invasion of privacy.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management within International College is strong. The college strives to deliver exemplary practice and has a detailed action plan in place with clear objectives to improve outcomes for students. The Principal, Vice-Principal and Head of Boarding lead the development and delivery of sound boarding practices which ensure international boarders are well looked after. There are clear lines of accountability and delegation and the Senior Management Team (SMT) are supported by the Governing Body. Designated Governors take an active role in monitoring the standard of boarding provision, for example, by making unannounced visits to boarding accommodation and undertaking 'spot checks'. The size of the college contributes to the effective oral communication systems in place which provide clear oversight and monitoring of boarders' welfare. Written records kept in boarding houses are adequate, but some documents contain only a basic level of information. Risk assessments are robustly undertaken and regularly reviewed, contributing to keeping boarders safe.

A comprehensive written statement of the College's boarding principles and practices and information on the college website is available to parents and boarders. Staff can easily access policies and practice guidance and they are clear about their roles and responsibilities. The staffing structure in boarding provides boarders with adequate levels of supervision. The Graduate Resident Assistants, Assistant Tutors, House Tutors and Matrons support the housemaster or housemistress leading the boarding house. Boarding teams are cohesive and benefit from the clear leadership provided by the SMT. There is always a senior member of staff on call at all times to support staff in their duties. Staff benefit from regular training opportunities, provided both in-house and by external providers, for example, the Boarding School Association. Weekly staff meetings are held, ensuring staff are kept informed of new developments. However, minutes of these meetings are not kept to disseminate to staff who may be absent, or to highlight agreed action points.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Boarding provision is well structured, providing appropriate protection and separation of boarders by age and gender. The college takes steps to integrate international students in boarding and ensures that there are no identifiable minority groups within the college who are excluded or suffer from discrimination.

The whole ethos and operation of the college reflects a well developed understanding and commitment to meeting the needs of international boarders and providing culturally sensitive and appropriate support for boarders for whom English is not their first language.

With parental agreement prior to admission, the college places students in lodgings with host families when boarding houses are full. At the time of inspection, two students were placed with one host family; they reported that they were very satisfied with this arrangement. Students in lodgings leave on rising and return at 9pm; all meals are taken in college and after lessons, students return to a designated boarding house. The host families are recruited by an agency who undertake the necessary checks on adults and the accommodation to ensure suitability. College staff also visit all potential lodgings and interview the adult who will be responsible for the accommodation, to assure themselves that they are satisfied with this provision. Thereafter, regular visits are made to check the standard of the accommodation. At least once per term, a member of staff formally discusses the lodging with the student and records the student's assessment; action is taken on any concern raised. Students can also speak to staff at any time. The college provides host families with written guidance about their responsibilities, in line with college policies and procedures.

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 the medical referral information provided by parents records significant welfare needs and review the adequacy of records kept in relation to individual boarder's health and welfare needs and issues [National Minimum Standard 7]
- ensure a written and agreed individual 'welfare plan' is put in place for any boarder with special welfare needs or significant emotional or behavioural difficulties [National Minimum Standard 17]
- review the availability of snacks to all boarders at reasonable times other than main mealtimes [National Minimum Standard 25]
- provide independent listeners with training on responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse [National Minimum Standard 3]
- assess risks in relation to the measures in place to prevent or deter unauthorised public access to the main college site [National Minimum Standard 41]
- review the suitability of toilet cubicles with partitions and take any necessary action required to ensure that there are not sufficiently large gaps above or below to be susceptible to invasion of privacy [National Minimum Standard 44]