

Caterham School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Margaret Lynes / Lucy Ansell
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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

Caterham School was founded in 1811 for the sons of congregational ministers. Originally based in South East London, it has been at its present site since 1884. While the school continues to be influenced by the traditions of congregationalism, it has an open attitude to religious expressions different from its own, and welcomes students from a wide variety of different faiths or no faith at all.

The school provides coeducational facilities following the merger of the boys' day and boarding school with the Eothen School for girls in 1995. It is located close to the facilities of the town of Caterham, with easy access to major road and rail links. The school enjoys extensive grounds and recreational facilities.

Boarding accommodation can be provided for up to 170 pupils between 11 and 18 years of age. At the time of this inspection there were 90 male boarders, accommodated in two adjoining boarding houses, junior and senior; and 63 female boarders in one boarding house with separate junior and senior areas.

Summary

This was a key announced inspection that focused upon the key National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools and the recommendations made at the last inspection. Ofsted inspectors were accompanied by a Boarding School Additional Inspector. The inspection resulted in just two recommendations. The first is to ensure that all medication, including homely remedies, is securely stored at all times. On just one occasion, for several minutes, this was noted not to be the case. The other recommendation relates to safeguarding training. All staff receive this training annually, but it is not a standard part of their induction. This means that new staff may be in post for up to a year before they attend the training. It was noted, however, that no staff are permitted to work in the boarding houses unless they have undergone safeguarding training. The two recommendations notwithstanding, the school offers an outstanding level of care to the boarders.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection of the school, in 2006, resulted in five recommendations. These related to the need to amend the medical consent form, and to have a clear record of staff authorised to dispense medication; the need to report back on the outcome of the survey of boarders' views on the food; the need to ensure the radiators in the girls' boarding house were an appropriate temperature and need to remove wedges from fire doors. Action has been taken with regard to all of these recommendations, thus improving the overall quality of care afforded to the boarders.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' health is promoted. The school has a good PSHE programme, with different delivery methods to suite the varying age groups. There is a contingency plan in place to deal with any

major health issues. Staff have access to policies relating to alcohol, smoking and the use of illegal substances by boarders.

Good health records are maintained for each boarder. They are thorough and are regularly audited. Staff in the health centre promptly relay any dietary, medication or health information to boarding and catering staff so as to ensure that all relevant information is shared. Individual care plans are in place where needed. There are good procedures relating to, for example, obtaining parental consent to emergency treatment. A considerable number of staff are trained in first aid. Boarders receive health care as necessary and the local GP surgery visits the school regularly. Boarders can choose a male or female GP and make their own appointments if they wish. They are enabled to self medicate where this is appropriate. Boarders stated they know how to call staff at night, and feel that they are supported in relation to health and personal problems, including homesickness.

The health centre is newly built, specific to purpose and well equipped. It is staffed by trained nurses during the day, and one nurse is always on call at night. Medication administration records were accurate and up to date. Medication is usually securely stored, however, on one occasion it was noted that the nurse left the centre unattended for several minutes and did not lock away some homely remedies. A recommendation has been made in this regard.

Boarders have a good choice of meals both at lunchtime and for supper. On alternating days breakfast is either continental or cooked. All boarders spoken with felt that the food was adequate in quantity and of late had greatly improved in quality. This is a result of changes being introduced after a consultation exercise and the input of catering advisors. The boarders have also been able to contribute their views. Catering staff liaise regularly with them, and 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 City and Guilds and NVQ. 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 outstanding.

The school is commended for its pro active approach towards ensuring the safety and welfare of the pupils, as this remains one of their top priorities.

Boarders state there are very low incidents of bullying and this is supported through written records. The staff team tackles reported and suspected incidents without delay. The older boarders and prefects take their responsibilities to look after the younger ones very seriously.

The pupils' welfare is further safeguarded by clear and effective child protection policies and procedures. All staff receive the school's own annual training and senior designated child protection staff attend external training provision. They maintain clear and professional links with the local safeguarding team. In addition, all staff and pupils understand the use and purpose of the whistleblowing procedure. Bursarial staff, however, lack child protection training within their induction process.

Boarding staff maintain written records detailing any sanctions or punishments they implement and these records are monitored by the head of boarding, to ensure they remain appropriate

and within the school's prescribed guidance. These are mainly low level and there has been no incident of physical restraint.

Boarders say they are aware of the pupil complaint procedure, which is advertised on notice boards throughout the boarding provision and within written literature. They state this is infrequently used, as their concerns and issues are satisfactorily responded to using informal routes. The deputy head maintains clear, chronological records pertaining to any complaints. These demonstrate thorough investigation and responses given in accordance with the school's policy. Boarders are given ample opportunities to express their own opinions and report any issues or concerns they may have through school council and house meetings. They state there is little they need to change as any issues are quickly dealt with.

The prefects are selected on their suitability to ensure appropriate responsibilities and leadership. They are on shift once a week and have clear specific duties and powers. They will all have attended induction training specific to their appointment and have clear supervision and monitoring.

The school insists that all boarders from overseas have guardians appointed by their parents. Whilst the school does not manage this provision itself, it advises parents to use a recognised agency if they do not have family members or friends that can be used. The school requires full contact details of all appointed guardians and maintains ongoing appropriate contact with them to ensure they fulfil their role in safeguarding. The school offers a scholarship free of charge to a overseas student and provides a guardian for that student.

The physical environment offers excellent safety and security. Detailed risk assessments are adhered to and these are regularly reviewed. Any high risk activity is robustly and comprehensively risk assessed and all measures taken to minimise any risks. All activities are undertaken by suitably trained and qualified persons or agencies.

Fire drills are routinely practised, during the day and night and all fire fighting equipment is maintained and in good order. The grounds are regularly walked and CCTV provides additional safeguards. The boarders say they feel safe within the school. The school has a comprehensive security access system. This enables all members of the school community to have a key fob which specifies all areas of entry. Boarders have their own accommodation which is secure from public intrusion with either key pads or key fobs. The supervision of boarders is sufficient and does not intrude unnecessarily on their privacy. The boarders are rigorously protected from any potential hazards both within and outside of the school.

A robust recruitment procedure is implemented in practice. All prospective employees undergo rigorous checks, including the telephone verification of written references and seeking detailed explanations of gaps in employment histories. Every adult working or living within the school, is subject to a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure check. The school employs graduate students for specific duties within the areas of sport, who may also be selected to assist in the boarding premises. All necessary checks are completed to enable them to work within the boarding provision. The school uses a taxi service that ensures its staff are checked annually.

The staff who reside on the premises are explicitly required to supervise any visitors they may have. Maintenance staff who are visiting the school are supervised under strict policies and procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have access to wide range of activities. They are all encouraged to participate both to help them integrate and also for self-fulfilment.

Staff work in a very encouraging and supportive manner, and consequently the care and social opportunities are outstanding. All pupils have access to the school counsellor and school chaplain and they may make appointments via email, by direct contact or be referred by a member of staff. Boarders felt that they could talk to most of the boarding staff about problems, concerns or personal issues, and felt that they received a tremendous amount of support from staff at the school.

Boarders expressed that they do not experience discrimination culturally or educationally. Overseas boarders said that although daunting coming to a new country and school, they were made to feel very welcome and found it easy to settle in. The school embraces the diverse identities of pupils and this uniqueness is celebrated in a way that promotes awareness and understanding. It is very good at integrating all students from whatever background. The EAL department supports all overseas boarders who require assistance with English language. A boarders' dictionary initiated by the pupils has been introduced. It is translated into Russian and Chinese, with a list of key words which assists the overseas pupils in all areas of school life.

All boarding houses make a conscious effort to mix nationalities, and when arranging room allocations care is taken to mix up boarders so no one group is put together. The school has a church service on Sundays. This is multi denominational but boarders can attend a church of their own choice if they want to. The school makes provision for those of the Muslim faith if they wish to hold their own service. Pupils have the opportunity to do presentations about their own country and culture through the school's Melting Pot society.

New boarders coming in are given a buddy whom the school tries to match with regard to interests and background. Boarders felt that they were not subjected to inappropriate or unusual demands, and that they are encouraged and enabled to develop interests in a wide range of group and individual sports. The school has well maintained grounds which provide safe recreational and sport facilities. There is a positive culture regarding study that encourages pupils to achieve to their fullest potential, and boarders have adequate provision for study.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders felt that they could contribute to boarding life. They have a boarding council, and feel that if they raise issues they are dealt with. It was evident that boarders' views and opinions are valued. Comments received from boarders through the Ofsted questionnaires included: '[There is a] friendly and welcoming atmosphere, it is like a family, a second home'; 'I feel that they school takes security seriously'; 'It is a good place to study and live'; and 'The staff are always there for you'.

Private contact with parents and family is encouraged. Boarders are allowed to have mobile phones outside of school hours, and they can also communicate via email. Both the boarding houses have payphones. Boarders can also use the phones in the matrons rooms. A number of boarders commented that they would like to have access to internet facilities such as Facebook.

There are valid reasons why the school cannot accede to these requests, and these are made clear in the information given to prospective boarders and their parents.

There is a clear induction programme for new pupils, including an induction evening where new pupils visit the school with their parents, towards the end of the summer term before they are due to start, and they are given a buddy who will help them settle into the school when they return after the summer break. The school produces very good booklets including: a junior boarding handbook; a senior boarding handbook; a co-curricular handbook; and a handbook for the academic year. Boarders are encouraged to use public transport and to utilise local facilities.

There are sound relationships between staff and boarders, and the latter repeatedly commented upon the support and care they received from staff. Staff interaction displays a trusting and genuine respect which is reciprocated by the boarders.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Lockable drawers are provided for each boarder in their bedroom, and a safe is available for the safekeeping of items such as passports and air tickets. Boarding staff maintain a good recording system of monies and valuables deposited for safekeeping. Staff also distribute pocket money to the younger boarders. Boarders stated that the boarding staff often remind them to lock things away, but most felt that it was only on rare occasions that things went missing or were stolen.

Boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation. Only the younger boarders share dormitories, the largest of which are six-bedded. These younger boarders commented that they preferred to share. The rooms are personalised, cheerful, comfortable and generally well maintained. A number of rooms are single, and have ensuite toilet and shower facilities. These rooms are allocated to the sixth form.

The number of toilets and showers is adequate, although queues may occur during peak times. Some of the boarders commented that they would like to be able to control the temperature of the water themselves, rather than have it regulated. The boarding premises were generally found to be very clean and well maintained. Several areas of repair were noted on a walk around by the inspectors, however, these have already been identified in the boarding development plan and assurances were given that they will be attended to. The boarding development plan includes the refurbishment of parts of the boys' and girls' houses, new laundry equipment, and the replacement of some of the furniture, including beds, mattresses and kitchen chairs. Access to the boarding houses is secure and a signing in/out system is adhered to rigorously. There is a member of staff available at all times in each house, and notice boards inform who is on duty.

Washing machines and driers are available for personal laundry. Some of the boarders felt that the provision was not adequate, however, the school is already in the process of providing an additional washing machine. There is negligible difference between the girls' and boys' houses save for the former have Sky TV. This was raised with the Headmaster who agreed to rectify this. The boys also requested more mirrors in their rooms.

Sixth form boarders may enter the boarding houses during the day and changing rooms are available for the younger boarders. Boarders may purchase personal requisites from the school shop, or with permission, walk into the nearby town.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The boarding handbook produced for parents and guardians contains the school's boarding philosophy and aims. The organisation of boarding is very good with regular monitoring of records carried out by the head of boarding. The school's self appraisal and general quality assurance systems are also very good, and include regularly seeking the views of boarders via questionnaires, the results of which are then analysed. Staff also periodically seek the views of boarders who spend time with guardians. Although the school does not arrange these placements, it nevertheless maintains a close overview of them, so as to ensure as far as it is possible that the pupils are well cared for.

A comprehensive list of contact information is maintained for each and every boarder. Boarding staff keep a very helpful daily log, which ensures that all important information is passed on from shift to shift. Boarders are adequately supervised, and they stated that they can always find a member of staff if they need one.

Staff commented that they had very good access to training, including training specific to boarding, and that this was inclusive with all staff seen as valuable and having something to contribute. Helpful handbooks are produced for the matrons and boarding staff. An additional handbook is produced for bursarial staff. All handbooks are reviewed and updated annually.

Regular senior staff meetings take place, and boarding staff receive supervision on a regular basis. They are provided with detailed policies and procedures, including guidance on meeting the individual needs of all pupils.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Reference has been made earlier in this report to the inclusive ethos that runs through all aspects of school life. Boarders were unanimous in their views that the school made every effort to recognise their individual needs, and value their differences.

A number of Ofsted questionnaires were returned by parents. They were in the main positive about the school. Their comments included: '[There is a] good ethos in the school, the boarding house is a happy place'; 'The boarding team seem to really look after the boarders and their needs seem to be met'; 'Excellent communication'; 'There is a balance between discipline and freedom, routine and free time'; and 'There is cross age group socialising and caring, the older students are encouraged to look out for and befriend the younger ones'. There were a few areas where parents sought improvement. Food was one, although most acknowledged that there had been an improvement lately. Some also commented that while the boarding staff were excellent, there was a lack of awareness of the boarders amongst the academic staff. This was also touched on by the Chair of Governors. The school has recognised this and is discussing ways to address it. Some parents also wanted a better understanding that children of serving military personnel may need additional emotional support.

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 all medication is securely stored at all times (NMS 15)
- provide safeguarding training for all staff in their induction (NMS 3)