

Holyport College

Holyport College, Ascot Road, Holyport, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 3LE
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Holyport College is an all-ability co-educational day and boarding school for students aged 11 to 19 years of age.

The school opened in September 2014. It is a state-funded 'free school' and Eton College is its sole educational sponsor. Entry is in Years 7 and 9 and sixth form. Holyport College's sixth form opened in September 2017.

Boarding accommodation is located on the upper floors of the two teaching blocks. During this academic year, there are four boarding houses, located in two separate buildings. The boys' accommodation is separate to the girls. There are separate wings for year groups and the second floor of each building is used for the sixth formers. At the time of this inspection, there were 178 boarders at the school and 445 young people on the school roll.

Inspection dates: 29 to 31 January 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 2 June 2015

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is good because:

- The school has a calm and welcoming atmosphere.
- Boarders make progress both academically and personally. Progress for some boarders has been remarkable, with boarders themselves able to explain the difference the boarding provision has made to their outcomes.
- Boarders report that they feel safe. They did not identify any incidents of bullying and feel the school is proactive in identifying and responding to any incidents that do occur.
- Good relationships exist between the senior staff and external professionals, which helps achieve consistency and good information-sharing.
- Leaders are ambitious and have high expectations for their school; at the same time, they are supportive and reflective. The aims and ethos of the school are clearly defined in staff practice and there is a sense of shared ownership.
- The school benefits from stable leadership. Leaders have a clear sense of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and they give the school a strong sense of purpose.
- Safeguarding concerns are well identified, with referrals to partner agencies made appropriately when required.
- Most parents and carers speak positively about the school, in particular the support available to the boarders and the impressive range of enrichment activities.
- The school communicates effectively with parents, keeping them informed about their child's progress and development.

The boarding school's areas for development:

- The quality and quantity of food is inconsistent. Boarders and parents feel it is of a poor standard.
- Some safeguarding documentation does not clearly detail the decision-making processes undertaken.
- Boarders feel that their views are not always considered. The processes for capturing views are not fully embedded in practice.
- Housemasters are responsible for the welfare of the boarders, however boarders do not currently have a designated adult responsible for their welfare other than this house master.
- Staff training in areas of safeguarding could benefit from being enhanced to ensure that it covers key safeguarding areas in more detail.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for boarding schools:

- 8.1 All boarders, including those with special dietary, medical or religious needs, are provided with meals which are adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety.

Recommendations

- Review the safeguarding training provided to staff to ensure it includes all the current safeguarding challenges for young people.
- Review the systems for capturing boarders' views and ensure the processes are fully embedded in boarding practice.
- Ensure that there are clear audit trails for all records of safeguarding concerns, which include the time frames and outcome.
- Consider the need for boarders to have a designated adult responsible for their welfare needs.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

'I have every confidence that my child's welfare is at the heart of the boarding experience and environment'; 'my children have flourished under the care that they have received'; and 'our son is happier than ever and loves it there'. These are just some of the overwhelmingly positive comments received from parents. Parents and boarders are happy with the school and enjoy what boarding life has to offer them.

The school has a sole educational sponsor whose traditional values and pastoral expertise continue to support and shape the values of this school. This partnership provides the boarders with excellent opportunities, both academically and socially. It enables the boarders to have life-enhancing experiences and to strive to achieve their best. This relationship also enables boarders to be prepared for their futures; they are able to attend society meetings, where they benefit in terms of career aspirations. The school also has its own identity and leaders are proud of the difference that they are making to boarders' lives.

The school is still a relatively new boarding school and it is, therefore, still evolving. It remains true to its original ethos in what the boarding experience provides. The school accepts boarders with a significant level of need and vulnerability. As a result of this, the school has recognised the requirement to expand the provision to support

these young people. The school has been proactive in its approach and the addition of focused training for staff, and in the employment of specialist staff, including an art therapist and counsellor. This enhances the school's capacity to meet the emerging needs of some of the boarders. The headmaster commented, 'We take children whose life is broken and help them put it back together again.' The senior leadership team is impressive in how it does not shy away from the challenges this may bring, but instead embraces them. It is apparent that the boarders' emotional well-being is a priority in how the school operates. The therapeutic impact is evident in the progress seen for many of the boarders. This is provided in a sensitive and individualised manner. The promotion of equality and diversity is central to how this school is run.

Although most staff know the boarders well, some staff are new into the role of boarding and relationships are beginning to develop between them and the boarders. The longer-standing staff clearly understand the boarders' needs and they are able to act on concerns, recognise when boarders are upset, and be responsive to situations where boarders may require additional support. Parents report that communication is good and that they feel confident in the abilities of the staff team.

Boarders stated that they can speak freely to some of the staff, in particular the house masters. They have access to the independent visitor and they know how to contact her. Boarders were consistent in their feedback during the inspection, in that they felt that their views are not being understood or listened to. They would like to be more involved and consulted in decision-making. The school has not developed sufficient means of capturing the views of boarders or reporting back to them what has happened as a result of any issue they have raised. The senior leadership team needs to embed the practice of listening and taking boarders' views into account within boarding practice. The current boarding committee is not used as effectively as it could be.

The boarders spoken with all said that they have fun and it was observed that they enjoy being together. They said that they help each other when they are upset and describe it as a boarding community. 'She has experienced so much, it's a happy place to be. She says it's like family, she gets such a buzz from being a part of it.' This was one typical comment from a parent describing the atmosphere created for her child.

Boarders readily identify the impact that boarding has had on their progress academically, emotionally, and socially. The boarders themselves and their parents describe how they are more confident and independent as a result of this experience. Although some boarders openly say that they would prefer not to board, they also see the benefits it brings. A common theme is that boarding teaches and prepares them for independence.

There is an impressive range of extra-curricular activities available that promote boarders' emotional and physical development effectively. Parents reflect on these opportunities and are appreciative of what the school has to offer. This ensures that boarders' day-to-day experiences are positive.

Health and medication management, including links with health professionals, is a strong area of practice. The nurses take the lead in medication arrangements and they are very aware of any health concerns that require monitoring. There is now analysis of accidents and injuries that occur. The food provided is of varying quality and quantity. There has been some recognition that the boarders don't have a say in menu planning. Leaders are looking at putting into place a food committee, but this has not yet happened. Although already noted by the school as an area to improve, feedback during the inspection and the inspectors' observations indicated that the pace hasn't been quick enough in rectifying these concerns. This includes the variety, quantity, quality and nutritional value of food at evening meal times and the availability of snacks during the evening time. It was observed that a number of boarders will not eat due to the standard of the food and, for others, they remain hungry due to the insufficient quantity. Both parents and boarders think that this is an area that needs to improve.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Staff are alert to potential risks to boarders' safety and take prompt action in the light of any concerns. There is effective partnership working with other agencies and parents by senior staff which helps to ensure the safety of all boarders. All boarders spoken to said that they felt safe, without hesitation when responding. There have been no instances of boarders going missing. Bullying is not seen as a concern by boarders spoken to in the school; however, they were confident that any concerns raised are effectively resolved in a timely manner. Boarders get on well together.

Safety is paramount. The health, safety and welfare of boarders are considered on a daily basis by the senior leadership team and this ensures that risks are minimised both inside and outside of school. Lessons are learned following any incidents and the senior team then reflects on the policies in place to ensure that they are effective. Boarders are fully involved in reviewing such incidents and this enables them to be aware of the impact of their behaviours. Risks are well understood prior to boarders' arrival at the school, and staff work with professionals and parents to reduce the potential difficulties and identify the level of support that may be required.

Boarders are aware of expectations in respect of behaviour, and all those spoken to said that they were aware of when and why sanctions are used. There is now much more of a focus on rewarding good behaviour rather than sanctioning poor behaviour, with senior staff seeking to move away from the use of a disciplinarian approach. Staff have introduced a raffle ticket system to concentrate on rewarding the boarders' conduct when they meet expectations. This is in operation along with the loss of privileges, which seeks to ensure that any loss matches the negative behaviour. The number of major sanctions within boarding time is low; staff focus on de-escalating any adverse situation which might arise and use the relationships that they have formed with boarders to intervene succinctly.

Staff undertake training in safeguarding practice. There has been an increase in the number of designated safeguarding leads to reflect the fact that the school's capacity

has grown. Staff are aware of the procedures in place and are aware of who to report to if they had any concerns. Staff have a good understanding of child protection and safeguarding, and their role in protecting boarders. However, the safeguarding training does not reflect all of the key safeguarding challenges for young people. As regards future training, the school needs to place a greater emphasis on current safeguarding matters such as e-safety and child sexual exploitation.

It was evident that any safeguarding concerns are reported without delay to the necessary professionals. The senior leadership team will challenge the local authority when decision-making is ineffective. The records of safeguarding concerns are, however, inconsistent and, in some instances, lack clarity on the actions taken. Chronologies of events are not always in place to demonstrate this decision-making. This is an area that the senior leadership team is aware needs to improve and it is implementing a new online system to evidence safeguarding actions, although this is not yet fully embedded in practice.

Staff recruitment is thorough, with safeguards put in place if necessary and safe procedures being followed. The recruitment policy has been updated and shows when the necessary checks are to be undertaken.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders show an active commitment to enriching the boarding experience and enhancing the boarders' overall well-being. Leaders have a clear vision and high expectations of what they want to achieve. Leaders aspire to ensure that all boarders reach their full potential. The senior leadership team is always looking forward and it is beginning to create a culture of continual improvement.

There is effective monitoring of the standard of care in boarding and any shortfalls, once recognised, are acted on. The school, therefore, develops its learning and drives forward improvement for the staff team to also reflect on its own practice.

Leaders understand the needs of the boarders well and have a very clear understanding of the progress that they are making. Leaders are actively engaged in boarding and this enables them to have a holistic view of each boarder. Parents spoken with praised the way that senior staff support the boarders and know them well. A parent reinforced this positive view of the senior staff by saying, 'They made him (her son) feel safe and they have been phenomenal role models in dealing with significant life events. They turned personal challenges into constructive life lessons.' The culture of the boarding provision promotes new experiences for the boarders.

Staff who work in the boarding provision report that they are very well supported and they can approach any members of the senior team for advice and guidance. Boarding staff also have high aspirations and have a clear understanding of the aims and ethos of the school. The supervision and appraisal programme is being further developed. Senior leaders provide the right degree of support and challenge, which enables staff to fulfil their roles effectively.

The governing body is visible and active and provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge on an ongoing basis. Governors are clear about the strategic priorities of the school, and recognise the need to develop their understanding of boarders' experiences and to better reflect this in the work of the governing body.

The quality of the professional relationships with other agencies is strong and leaders will challenge partner agencies if responses are insufficient to meet the needs of the boarders. Leaders act as strong advocates to ensure that needs are appropriately met by services from other agencies.

The boarders mostly benefit from an appropriate level of support. However, this could be enhanced by designated adults being responsible for their welfare. Boarders also reflect on the need for this and for someone to have oversight and undertake this key role. The development of this role would also help facilitate the implementation of clearer pastoral support plans for some of the boarders.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC483028

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Walter Boyle

Type of school: Boarding School

Telephone number: 01628 640150

Email address: info@holypportcollege.org.uk

Inspectors

Emeline Evans: social care inspector

Maria Lonergan: social care inspector

Andy Whippey: HMI social care

Amanda Maxwell: social care inspector



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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

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