

Hurstpierpoint College

Inspection report for boarding school

Unique reference number	SC014582
Inspection date	25 June 2009
Inspector	Mike Stapley
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	Hurstpierpoint College Malthouse Lane Hurstpierpoint HASSOCKS West Sussex BN6 9JS
Telephone number	01273 833636
Email	
Registered person	Hurstpierpoint College Limited
Head / Principal	Timothy J. Manly
Nominated person	
Date of last inspection	4 June 2007

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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

Hurstpierpoint College is an independent school and is part of the Woodard group of Schools. It is founded on the practice and teaching of the Church of England, and as such school life encompasses Christian values. The college aims to develop spiritual, intellectual, physical, cultural and social qualities in the individual and assists them in attaining their full potential.

The college comprises of full time boarding students as well as weekly and flexi boarding students. It also provides for day students. The age range within the college is from eight years to 18 years and students are accommodated according to their age.

The College site comprises of a preparatory school, a pre-preparatory school, as well as the senior school where the majority of students attend, the preparatory and pre-preparatory schools each have a separate head to the senior school however, the headmaster of the senior school, maintains overall responsibility of the college.

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. The Ofsted inspector was accompanied by a boarding school additional inspector. The inspection resulted in just three recommendations. The first is to ensure that risk assessments are completed for those students who knowingly self administer medication. It was noted at the time of the inspection that such risk assessments were routinely completed for those students that self medicate. However prior to the completion of the inspection the senior housemistress had begun the process of sending out risk assessments for completion. The second recommendation is to ensure all medication is appropriately stored at all times as there were no first aid cabinets in the boarding houses. The final recommendation is to ensure that a full audit of medication is undertaken by a qualified pharmacist or prescribing advisor in addition to a review of all policies and procedures appertaining to medication. Most of the recommendations relating to being healthy made at the last inspection had been completed although the inspectors identified several minor shortfalls in relation to medication. Therefore such a recommendation has been made to ensure good practice. The two recommendations notwithstanding, the college has made significant improvements since the last inspection and continues to go from strength to strength.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last social care inspection of the school, in 2007, resulted in 27 detailed 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 college submitted a comprehensive 'Action Plan' to address these recommendations and appropriate action has been taken with regard to most of the shortfalls identified, this significantly improving the overall quality of care afforded to the boarders.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The college has a Personal, Social and Health Education Programme in Place, known as 'Life Skills' it is particularly designed for those students in the senior school. The programme is wide ranging and includes age appropriate material. For example in Shell there are a range of modules on Personal Safety, Health and Wellbeing and Presentation Skills while in Remove there are modules that include drugs and alcohol. In the fifth and sixth forms the modules have a particular theme including setting up work experience and higher education guidance. In the Upper VI the programme is delivered under the general studies programme and outside speakers come in to talk to students on a variety of topics. The college has a clear policy entitled 'substance abuse policy' which is known to all staff, parents and students alike and is freely available in all handbooks including the Pupils' Guide.

Boarders' health is maintained through a purpose built sanatorium staffed by two nursing sisters throughout the day and provides first aid care overnight. The nurses oversee all matters relating to health and medication. Houses are given limited supplies of homely remedies and there is a hand book for Hurst Medical Guidelines containing contact details and protocols for administering agreed homely remedies. The college must develop a protocol for the administration of medication in house to ensure that it is always signed. 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. There is a list of boarders with known conditions which is available to staff in house and on a need to know basis. There is a twice daily bulletin to house staff giving information of any medication given and any concerns raised. The nurses may attend housemaster and housemistress meetings if medical issues are being raised. Storage of medication in the Sanatorium is good but in the houses there are no dedicated first aid cupboards in the offices and although medication was securely locked it was stored inappropriately. All prescription medication is dispensed by the nurses in the sanatorium unless a sixth form boarder has been granted the right to self medicate. The college is in the process of developing protocols for self medication for students.

Boarders have a good choice of meals both at breakfast, lunchtime and supper. The majority of 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 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 good.

There are no anxieties expressed about bullying in the school and boarders confidently reported that if there was any unkindness, the staff would take immediate and significant action. The college acknowledges modern day pressures on young people and is very aware and proactive in the use of technology with its potential for cyber and digital bullying. Younger boarders

comment that relationships with the older year groups are very sound and the guardians and heads of house help them with homesickness, any relationship difficulties or other concerns. There are robust child protection policies and procedures in line with Local Safeguarding Children's Board in place. Staff throughout the school have an excellent understanding of the needs of boarders and how to safeguard them. The college has three designated members of staff fully trained according to the Local Safeguarding procedures and they update their training on an annual basis. Their expertise is cascaded throughout the year to all staff in appropriate briefings dependent on their role in the school and child protection procedures are familiar to prefects. In addition the child protection officers meet with other independent schools where they discuss safeguarding issues and share good practice. No child protection referrals have been made since the last inspection in 2007. Boarders confirm that they think the staff put a high priority on keeping them safe. There is a high emphasis on reward throughout the college, which promotes a culture of recognising achievement, courtesy and consideration. There are clear policies and practice on behaviour, discipline and the use of punishments which, boarders report, are both fair and appropriate. Boarding houses are run on trust and building positive relationships to enable effective living and working together. Praise and recognition are important and the college uses them very well. Boarders confirm they know how to raise a concern and that they will be listened to, taken seriously and the issue will be addressed promptly and appropriately. Communication in the college is very good and concerns can be tracked from first awareness to outcome. There have been no formal complaints since the last inspection in 2007. The estates department apply stringently fire safety precautions and emergency procedures. The College has implemented a high priority contract for alerting the fire services of an incident as well as detailed contracts for servicing and maintenance of their systems with annual reports. Meticulous records of all evacuations are kept and there are no outstanding recommendations from West Sussex Fire and Rescue Services. Many boarders are involved in Combined Cadet Force, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and other high risk activities in line with the philosophy of the college that participation brings its own rewards and nurtures the development of the whole person. There are robust risk assessments in place to ensure all challenges are safe. There were no issues of privacy reported and the upgrading of showers in the houses was just one example of the importance the staff attach to dignity and respect for all the boarders in their care. The College has a robust recruitment policy following the guidelines of the Department of Children Schools and Families. There is a central record and an enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check is in place prior to new staff taking up their post although it was not possible to evidence that gaps on some curriculum vitae had been checked as interview notes were not on file. There are effective systems in place to manage the presence of unchecked visitors on site and all contractors must check in. Staff of external transport firms and maintenance used by the school on a regular basis are subject to checks through the CRB process, letter of confirmation on file. Boarders' welfare is protected by significant security measures on the advice of external consultants who review security matters annually and monitor risk assessments. All doors to boarding areas have digital locks, there are carefully positioned closed circuit television cameras and danger areas in the school for example swimming pool, science laboratories and theatre are likewise protected to prevent access. Windows have restrictors above ground level but there are some in St John's which are insecure. Maintenance requests are prioritised to ensure that boarders are protected from unavoidable hazards. Boarders are further protected from rigorous checking and replacement of gas and water installations and hard wiring tests are in date. There is an abundance of risk assessments, reviewed annually by governors, relating to the site, activities undertaken and any other known risks.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders receive excellent levels of individual support and encouragement from all pastoral and academic staff and have a dedicated personal tutor as their advocate in academic matters. Weekly tutorials and individual meetings are purposeful to note success, record rewards and reflect on aspects of their work or play where there is room for improvement. The flagging system of incomplete work alerts Housemasters and housemistresses and issues can be addressed immediately. Tracking is effective and all staff are committed to put the welfare of the boarders at the heart of their teaching and caring in a most supportive manner. Learning support is available to help boarders participate fully in school life with specific assistance to meet their learning needs. The network of support is impressive and boarders know how to access the counsellors, whose expertise and confidential service is greatly valued by parents, boarders and all staff. Nevertheless, the boarders comment positively on the strong relationships built within their houses and their friends, the guardians and heads of house are their first line of support; this strong sense of family is a strength of the house system and testimony to the commitment and expertise of all staff involved in pastoral care. Boarders' lives are enhanced through the school's commitment to equal opportunities and the reciprocal, caring ethos they experience. All areas of the curriculum and recreational activities are accessible to all regardless of gender. The school supports local community projects, and organises a charity day and other events to raise money for their overseas charity. There are no large minority groups in the school but all staff support the integration of international students and are committed to its further development. They celebrate diversity and ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for boarders for whom English is not their first language. As a Christian school, attendance at chapel is expected but boarders of other faiths are welcome and arrangements are made for them to attend their own churches.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are encouraged to make representations formally and informally about the operation of boarding. There are numerous informal opportunities as they see their tutors every day and are encouraged by housemasters and housemistresses to express their opinions and preferences on many subjects including activities and visits, charities to support among other ideas. The prefects meet with senior staff in the school and in house on a regular basis to plan events and discuss activities and to raise matters for change. The school council is regarded as the most effective formal body for implementing change and it meets twice a term over lunch. The boarders were able to evidence changes that they had proposed such as giving sixth form more freedom to manage their study time during the examination period, introduction of soup and baguettes and other changes to the menus, more team building exercises in sixth form induction and more rewards in behaviour management policies. The school issues a questionnaire once a year to seek boarders' views on any bullying concerns, lighting and security, weekend activities and there is evidence that lighting, for example, has been improved on site as well as changes to the menu. However, the strong relationships between staff and boarders promote a culture of discussion where matters are easily raised informally.

The main means of contact with parents is by e-mail 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. Parents comment on close and prompt contact with school.

The induction process is well established and buddies, existing boarders, contact new boarders prior to their arrival and help them to find their way around and settle into the school routines. There is a formal induction at the start of the year including team building for the sixth form and activities lower down the school and boarders spoken to confirm that they settled in to the busy routine of the school quickly. New parents are given the name of an ex parent who can answer their queries and this promotes confidence and is welcomed by parents. Parents are welcome to visit the school and encouraged to attend matches and match teas, concerts and plays. Staff contact parents about their son's or daughter's progress and parents are encouraged to raise concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The school provides secure facilities for students to store their personal possessions and valuables, such as lockable cupboard in bedrooms or a lockable room. The school emphasises the importance of students keeping their money and possessions safe and boarders spoken to were happy with the arrangements for the security of possessions and money. Students are encouraged to hand money to housemaster/mistresses who will pay it into the house account and then issue it as required.

During the course of the inspection the inspectors were accompanied by staff when touring the boarding accommodation. All of the boarding houses were found to be acceptably clean, facilities are generally of a reasonable standard and furnishings are of good quality. The college has made significant improvements to the boarding accommodation since the last inspection. The housemaster/mistress of each house gets an annual 'house improvement' grant to enable them to replace worn out furniture and provide facilities for the boarders. In addition a substantial sum of money has been allocated as an annual total for general updating and improvement of the boarding accommodation. Every year each housemaster/mistress suggests possible projects and these are subsequently prioritised by two senior staff. The college has improved the shower facilities / changing areas and the units have currently been replaced in four boarding houses. Some of the boarding accommodation still remains in need of upgrading and this was commented on by parents and students in questionnaires completed as part of the inspection. However the college has a robust programme of refurbishment and development which was evidenced during the inspection. Like in any boarding school the furnishings in the boarding houses suffer from wear and tear, however overall the facilities for the students could be described as 'better than average'. Each of the houses was found to be well heated and lit at the time of the inspection although some of the students commented that some of the showers are either very hot or cold.

All of the upper sixth form students are accommodated in St John's House which is a separate purpose built building. This house is where students complete their education at Hurstpierpoint College. The house is so designed that students begin to accept far greater responsibility than in the other houses. It is an excellent facility and one that justifiably the college is very proud of. All of the students have their own study bedroom while communal accommodation is very spacious and welcoming.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Hurstpierpoint College is part of the Woodard group of schools and has a strong Christian ethos but does welcome students with alternative religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The College has a suitable statement of boarding principles and practice that is available to parents, boarders and staff. This is contained in the school prospectus and the parents' handbook. The parents' and staff handbooks are updated on an annual basis. Both of these documents cover the aims, admission criteria, and facilities on offer at the college and welfare support services to support students. The principles and practice of Hurstpierpoint College are also contained in other documents such as pupils guide.

These documents relate well to policies and procedures and accurately reflect practice within the college. They are professionally produced and through observation, discussion and interview the inspectors were satisfied that this standard is exceeded. The college achieves its intentions as set out in these documents and has a solid foundation on which practice takes place.

The senior management team within the college has been restructured to give greater emphasis to the pastoral aspects of the college. A new deputy head (Pastoral) position has been created with responsibility for houses, discipline and extra curricular. The deputy head (Pastoral) chairs the Housemasters' meetings, manages the housemasters and gives them very clear and effective leadership. The school has also developed the role of senior mistress to include responsibility for the girls' houses as well as the medical centre. This position reports in to the deputy head (Pastoral). Both these members of staff were interviewed during the inspection process and have a wealth of experience and have previously managed boarding houses. In addition one member of the senior management team has been appointed as the school's compliance officer to ensure that all regulatory requirements are successfully met. While some of these changes are relatively new and yet to be fully embedded throughout the college it is evident from observation and discussion that these new arrangements are working extremely well.

The organisation of boarding is very good with regular monitoring of records carried out by the head of boarding and other senior staff. The college has a good system of quality assurance that includes regularly seeking the views of boarders via questionnaires, the results of which are then analysed.

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. Boarding staff will have the opportunity to attend a counselling course in the near future. There is an excellent staff handbook and employee manual both of which are clear, well written and updated on an annual basis.

Regular senior staff meetings take place, and boarding staff receive appraisal on a regular basis. They are provided with detailed policies and procedures, including guidance on meeting the individual needs of all pupils. In addition pastoral training also takes place during weekly meetings which involve various case studies.

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 college. Their comments included 'The college makes them (the students) feel part of a community. The housemaster went to great lengths to make the new boys feel welcome, settled and bonded as a group, for some of them, a different way of living. I am happy with the way my son has settled into the college. Long may it continue'. Another commented that 'My child really enjoys boarding' In addition other parents praised the college for their excellent pastoral care and for helping them through difficult circumstances. Like in any large community there were some negative comments but these mainly related to the boarding accommodation that has yet to be updated. Overall the positive feedback from parents and students alike far outweighed the number of negative comments.

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
----------	--------	----------

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that risk assessments are completed for those students who knowingly self administer medication (NMS 15)
- ensure that a full audit of medication is undertaken by a qualified pharmacist or prescribing advisor in addition to a review of all policies and procedures appertaining to medication. (NMS 15)
- ensure all medication is appropriately stored at all times (NMS 15)