

Clifton College (Upper School)

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Debbi Flint
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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

Clifton College was originally founded in 1862 and the original aim of the college was to provide 'a thoroughly good and liberal education'. The college's purpose today is to provide a first-class, broad and balanced education to pupils from a wide range of backgrounds. Clifton College was originally a college for boys. It became co-educational in 1987 at a time when many other independent schools were single-sex schools. Clifton College was therefore ahead of its time in promoting a fully co-educational experience. The college was also ahead of its time in creating a community which, while broadly Christian, was very tolerant of other faiths. The college's original establishment involved a working partnership with members of the Jewish community which has continued for 147 years. The college remains broadly Christian in accordance with its original foundation but has since extended its inclusive approach to pupils of all traditions and backgrounds.

Clifton College today describes itself as three schools within one college as the whole school consists of a Pre-Preparatory School, a Preparatory School and an Upper School.

Summary

At this announced full inspection all key standards were inspected. This was an inspection of the Upper School only and the Pre-Preparatory and Preparatory Schools were not inspected.

This is a co-educational boarding school. There is strong leadership and clear management of the practice of boarding provided by the Deputy Head (Pastoral). Young people are offered a traditional boarding experience within an environment which is supportive, nurturing and inclusive. Each young person's individuality is recognised and boarders state that they like the school because 'everybody gets on with everybody else no matter what their background is.' The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding throughout the standards inspected. Staff ensure that all young people from differing cultures and backgrounds are able to make an equal contribution to the school.

Three recommendations were made at this inspection.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations to be followed up from the previous full inspection of the Upper School in November 2006 as these recommendations had been followed up by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in January 2007. CSCI was satisfied that all previous recommendations had been met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's health needs are supported by the provision of a large health centre which has excellent facilities. The health centre is staffed by four registered nurses one of whom is responsible for the overall management of the facility. It is open for 12 hours each day and there is also cover for out of hours emergencies. Young people are referred to the health centre

by their matrons. If a consultation is necessary young people are able to see a male or female doctor. The health centre has a treatment room, waiting room and consulting room. Young people are able to stay in the health centre if they are sufficiently unwell and there are nine beds for boarders and two beds for day pupils.

Young people's health is promoted by well trained nurses who have good links with the Bristol Children's Hospital and other professionals such as specialist diabetic and asthma nurses. All school nurses have received training in sexual health and contribute to the school's personal, social and health education programme. They also offer a support to stop smoking service. Nurses maintain individual health care records for each young person and there are care plans in place for any young people with special needs such as eating disorders. All care plans are supported by a wide range of policies which include a first aid policy, a drug and substance abuse policy and a medication policy. The administration of medication is overseen by the nurses who monitor stocks of medication in and out of the school and ensure safe storage. Medication is administered in the boarding houses by matrons and medication records are accurate. The school ensures that all staff receive annual training in first aid. Registered nurses employed by the school receive advanced first aid training.

The school has two large dining rooms which provide venues for mealtimes. Both dining rooms are comfortable and clean and mealtimes are relaxed and orderly occasions. Staff promote healthy eating and a nutritionist has advised catering staff on menus. There is a three week menu cycle with a good range of choices for breakfast, lunch and supper. Lunchtimes in particular have vegetarian and meat options as well as pasta, baked potatoes and salad. The school will provide meals to meet any particular health need and diabetic and gluten free diets are available. Kosher and halal foods are also prepared by catering staff. Young people are able to make suggestions for meals and desserts through the Big School Committee which meets twice per term to consider catering arrangements. This committee has representatives from all the houses. Young people are generally positive about the food and recognise that it is healthy and well balanced. Whilst some boarders do complain about the food these complaints are around the fact that they are not allowed less healthy options more frequently. For example young people state that they would like more chips and more fry-ups at breakfast time. The school has a café where sixth formers can buy additional healthy snacks such as Panini. There is also a shop which younger pupils can use to buy drinks. The school was recently visited by environmental health and received a five star food hygiene award.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

There are very good policies and procedures in place to safeguard the young people and the school has a strong and efficient staff team which is vigilant in enforcing these policies and procedures. Key staff involved in safeguarding the young people include the Deputy Head (Pastoral), the Chaplain, the Senior Mistress and all housemasters and housemistresses.

The school's Chaplain is the designated Child Protection Officer and the Senior Mistress is the Deputy Child Protection Officer. There is also a designated member of the College Council who oversees safeguarding. The school's Chaplain has received safeguarding training from the local authority. New staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction and all other staff received safeguarding training earlier this year. The school also ensures that prefects receive safeguarding training and their knowledge is impressive. There are sound safeguarding policies

in place such as the safeguarding and protecting children policy and the anti-bullying policy. There has been one safeguarding referral since the last inspection and no further action was taken by the authorities concerned. This referral involved cyber-bullying and staff took appropriate action and were vigilant in tackling this problem. All young people receive lessons in cyber-bullying as part of personal, social and health education and all staff have also been given clear guidance on this topic. Other incidents of reported bullying in the school are low although a small number of young people do report some low level bullying. However, boarders state that there are a lot of different people that they can approach if they have a problem or complaint and that members of the community support each other. One boarder states, 'Everyone is always very helpful here and we all support each other.' The procedure for young people's complaints is detailed in the Prep Diary. This is a small book which is issued to all pupils and details everything they need to know about the school as well as other useful information.

The school has a discipline policy which gives staff clear guidance on rewards and permissible sanctions. There is also a code of conduct which is issued to all members of the Clifton community. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing the discipline policy and day-to-day implementation of the policy is delegated to the Deputy Head (Pastoral). The school employs a Marshal who reports irregularities and offences but does not himself issue sanctions. House prefects and other pupils with responsibility are given clear written guidance as to their disciplinary duties and responsibilities. They are not allowed to issue sanctions without reference to the housemaster or housemistress. Pupils are well behaved around the school and conduct is good. Young people demonstrate a high level of responsibility within a culture of mutual respect.

There are robust policies and procedures in place which are used to ensure that the environment is both safe and secure. Access to all buildings is controlled by a card key and boarders have access to their own house and to any room or part of the school that they may need to enter for educational purposes. Members of the boarding staff also have similar access. All visitors to the school are asked to sign in and are issued with a visitor's badge. There are gates all around the school and there is always a porter on duty at night. The school grounds are generally well lit during hours of darkness although the route across The Close (playing fields) to residential blocks was only partially lit due to inoperative lights. There are comprehensive environmental risk assessments in place for all boarding houses and each boarding house also has its own fire risk assessment. There is at least one fire drill carried out every term and if a fire alarm goes off at night the fire brigade are automatically called. Fire equipment is checked on a weekly basis and all boarding staff have received fire training. Staff also ensure that all electrical appliances are tested on an annual basis. There are risk assessments in place to cover on and off site activities and these are implemented in practice. The Prep Diary gives pupils good information on any areas, on and off campus, which are out of bounds.

The school has good procedures in place for the selection and vetting of staff and records sampled are extremely robust. All staff records have a contract of employment, enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, proof of identity, residency check (where applicable), a minimum of two verified references, copy qualifications, a full employment history and medical checks. There are also CRB checks and references on file for adults who live on the same premises as boarders but are not employed by the school. The school has a single central record which contains 624 names at the time of this inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The Deputy Head (Pastoral) is responsible for the pastoral care of young people and oversees all aspects of pastoral life. The pastoral approach is co-educational. In line with the school's ethos it has been ensured that there are always male and female staff available who can be approached with any welfare concern. There are both male and female counsellors. The male counsellor is employed by the school and is a member of the teaching staff whilst the female counsellor is completely independent. A counsellor states, 'I visit not only Clifton but other schools and settings. I am extremely impressed by the quality of provision at Clifton College.' While counselling is provided, this is only one of many options that are available to young people who may have a personal or welfare concern. The school has a clear policy that pupils may take their concerns to any member of staff and this policy is emphasised in the Prep Diary which is issued to all students. Boarders confirm in discussions that there are lots of people that they can approach with a problem and that they feel well supported. Prefects are clearly respected and are regarded as an additional avenue which boarders can use if they have any particular problems. For example one prefect states that a student came to him in distress and he contacted staff who got the student 'the right help'.

The school embraces young people from all the major religions of the world and there are currently pupils from 33 countries resident as boarders. While Clifton has an informal Anglican foundation the overall ethos of the school is to promote equality, understanding, sensitivity and long lasting cultural friendships. In line with this ethos the school celebrates many religious festivals such as Moon Festival, Chinese New Year, Muslim Ramadan and all Jewish festivals. The school has a centre for Jewish studies and its own Synagogue. There are four morning services a week at the Synagogue and these are student led. There is also a weekday morning assembly in the Chapel which is broadly Christian and student led. The Chapel is spiritually at the centre of Clifton life and all staff and pupils attend at the start of each day with the exception of Jewish pupils. All cultural traditions and faiths are respected within the school and female Muslim students may wear the veil at all times. Clifton is a multi-national community and the school's all embracing ethos is underpinned by policies such as the pupils from other cultures policy and the anti discriminatory policy. The school offers a wide range of scholarships which can be accessed by students from all backgrounds. Two of the houses are also equipped to accommodate any young person who may have a disability.

Clifton seeks to enhance young people's personal development by offering them a wide range of activities which includes dance, basketball, real tennis, fencing, volleyball, swimming and horse riding. Students of both sexes can also join the Combined Cadet Force. There are also a number of societies that can be accessed such as the Philosophy Society. There are organised activities on Saturday and Sunday such as theatre, cinema, cycle rides, ice skating, horse riding and dry slope skiing. Whilst students are able to access the internet for personal use there are agreements which must be signed to promote acceptable use. The school arranges sports tours in the holidays such as skiing in the Alps and scuba diving in the Red Sea.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff ensure that new boarders are welcomed to the school and integrated smoothly into the Clifton community. There is a policy on the induction of new pupils which is implemented in

practice. All houses invite new boarders to a 'getting to know you' day at the end of the term proceeding entry. Boarders who are completely new to the school and have not come up from the Preparatory School are also given a sixth form buddy. All boarders are issued with a Prep Diary which contains everything that they need to know about the school including the code of conduct and details of how to make a complaint. The school actively welcomes contact with parents and visits by parents are facilitated at appropriate times. Young people are able to contact their parents both by phone and by email. There is a phone booth in each house and boarders are also able to keep their own mobile phones. However there is a mobile phone policy to ensure appropriate usage and boarders are not allowed to use the phones in lessons or to use them to access the internet. ChildLine numbers are displayed in the houses and other useful numbers are detailed in the Prep Diary.

Young people have opportunities to contribute their views to the operation of the school. Boarders state that they have a big influence on the way boarding houses are run and are always listened to. One boarder states, 'I always feel I have a say within the school and am listened to when I feel important issues come up.' The school has a Student Council which is comprised of prefects and elected members from all years. There is also a Big School Committee which meets twice per term to discuss catering arrangements. Minutes from meetings of this committee demonstrate that young people are able to effect considerable change to menus when they make suggestions that are in line with the school's healthy eating policy. The role of the prefect (known as a Praepostor) is significant and prefects are high profile figures within the school. Both prefects and heads of houses meet with the Headteacher and Deputy Head (Pastoral) regularly during the term.

The school is firmly embedded in to the wider community and it is very clear that while the school is an international school; it is also a local school. There is a community service programme which enables young people to forge strong links with the community and local charities. Boarders have permission to visit the Clifton area in groups in the early evenings on all week days with the exception of Monday. Younger boarders also have access on a Saturday afternoon and older boarders can extend this to later in the evening. One boarder said she was planning a visit to a local restaurant for herself and her friends.

There are sound relationships between boarders and staff and all boarders state that they feel extremely well supported by staff. Boarders list a number of staff that they can approach if they have problems and they also state that they are happy at the school. One boarder said, 'I like being here out of the three schools I have been to. The first was too posh, the second was too pressurised on academic matters...but here I can be myself and everyone gets on with everyone else no matter what their background is.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school has seven boarding houses and these are Worcester House, School House, Watson's House, Oakeley's House, Moberly's House, Wiseman's House and Hallward's House. Four of the houses are for boys and three of the houses are for girls. Each house is led by a housemaster or housemistress and an assistant housemaster or assistant housemistress. There are matrons working in all the houses and the houses may also be visited by five or more tutors with academic responsibilities. There has been a significant amount of refurbishment and redecoration to improve the living facilities and bathing areas since the last inspection and the standard of

accommodation is generally high. All houses have a meeting room, several indoor and outdoor recreation areas including libraries and kitchens, laundries, showers, toilets and baths. There is a combination of small dormitories and double and single rooms. The single rooms are occupied by older students. All boarders have a desk, a large wardrobe and a chest of drawers with a lockable drawer. Furniture is modern and sturdy and in generally good condition with the exception of several rooms in School House where some bedroom furniture has door hinges hanging off. A shower room has also been dismantled and materials have been left in situ. However these temporary maintenance problems are not regarded as significant by the boys living in this house. One boy wrote, 'In School House there is an amazing ripple of spirit which makes everyone feel very special.'

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The Deputy Head (Pastoral) is responsible for the overall management of boarding and staff state that his leadership is excellent. The school has a statement of boarding principles and practice which emphasises the school's aim 'to provide an environment in which every pupil is valued' and 'to produce self-confident young people equipped for the world ahead of them with high aspirations, self belief and tolerance and understanding of others...'

There are sufficient staff employed in all the houses and all boarding staff receive an induction from the Senior Mistress. Staff also confirm that they have received safeguarding, first aid and food hygiene training. Some staff have also received specialist training from the Boarding Schools Association. However there is not a written training matrix in place which can accurately capture each member of staff's training at any given time. This means that training information is currently only available through perusing a variety of documents and sources. Staff are given good guidance as to their duties and responsibilities. All housemasters and housemistresses are issued with a manual which details what is expected of them and what they can also expect from the college. They are required to maintain a house development plan and a house accounting system. They also keep records of accidents and sanctions which are monitored by the Deputy Head (Pastoral). All boarding staff receive appraisals on a two year basis and they state that they feel well supported by their line managers.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence supports a consistent commitment towards improving equality and diversity in practice. Young people's needs are well met and the school's liberal tradition of mutual respect and tolerance is a major strength.

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 that routes regularly used by boarders between buildings or parts of the school site are appropriately lit during hours of darkness (NMS 47.5)
- ensure that boarder's accommodation and its furniture, fittings and equipment are generally free from breakages (NMS 40.6)
- continue to work towards minimising incidents of low level bullying. (NMS 2.5)