

# St Clare's

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspection date</b>	18 November 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Michael Williams / Diana Waters
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Registered person</b>	St Clare's
<b>Head / Principal</b>	Paula Holloway
<b>Nominated person</b>	Paula Holloway
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	13 March 2006

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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

This boarding school is a co-educational, residential, international college for students aged from 15 to over 18 years old. The students are studying the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD), or a pre-baccalaureate course, to make a successful transition to university. The college is situated on the outskirts of a major city in a number of large houses, including 15 boarding houses, that are all in close proximity to each other. At the start of the autumn term 2009, the number of students on roll was 254, comprising 239 boarding and 15 day students, and representing a total of 43 different nationalities. Only 19 of the boarding students were aged 15 years old.

### Summary

This was an announced, full inspection of all the key national minimum standards (NMS) for boarding schools. It was carried out by two social care inspectors and a boarding school additional inspector.

The school was assessed as outstanding overall, with only one area judged as good instead of outstanding.

Analysis of the responses received for this inspection from second year IBD students and their parents, showed predominantly positive comments. One boarder commented 'I am comfortable and feel safe boarding here' and one parent commented on the 'Excellent pastoral care.'

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 full inspection of boarding at the college was carried out by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in March 2005. Out of the 52 NMS that they inspected, they reported five recommended actions and eight advisory recommendations. A CSCI follow-up inspection in March 2006 found that each of these actions and recommendations had been satisfactorily addressed.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' health is very well promoted through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme that they follow at the college. In March 2008, the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) reported that this 'programme is comprehensive and well organised, adapted to the needs of young adults and focused on preparation for their future lives... often with an international dimension.' This inspection found similarly.

Appropriate first aid and minor illness treatment are available to boarders. A college nurse is available to boarders each weekday morning. Outside of these times, other college staff, the local pharmacy and the local general practice can assist or provide minor illness treatment. First aid treatment is available at all times from qualified staff across the college and in each of the boarding houses.

Boarders are supervised and looked after when ill. Ill boarders can remain in their rooms, if appropriate to do so, or can use one of the college's two sick rooms located in a boarding house where they can be monitored by the college's senior resident. A student who was ill during this inspection described their care as second to none. However, a small number of concerns were received from boarders and their parents about the care of ill boarders, that the inspectors shared and fed-back to the college.

Boarders receive very good quality catering provision, both in the college's dining hall and café. Boarders and their parents gave a similar number of positive and negative comments about food at the college. The college was familiar with this mixed picture from their February 2009 survey of student life. This inspection found that the catering provision, for students from so many different countries, who are often comparing it with the home cooking they have left, was better than good. Student comments about the dining hall food are raised with the catering manager by two elected student food representatives.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are effectively protected from bullying. The analysis of the boarders' surveys was remarkable in that 'no' was always the answer to the question 'Are you being bullied?' The college is committed to providing students from a wide range of backgrounds with relations based on mutual respect and high expectations. This response suggests they have successfully achieved this.

Boarders are very well protected from abuse. The college's vice principal is designated to take responsibility for its child protection policy. This policy is modelled on that of the local safeguarding children board (LSCB) with whom the vice principal and two other senior members of staff have received training. All staff, at all levels, have received a safeguarding pupils briefing from either the LSCB or one of the senior members of staff they have trained.

Use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate. The college has clear and well understood disciplinary procedures. Disciplinary incidents are dealt with at the appropriate level, for example by wardens for relatively minor house incidents. The college has relatively few rules, as one of its aims is for students to 'take personal responsibility for work and conduct'. Rules that the college has, such as curfew times, are consistently applied in practice. One parent commented on the college's 'logical balance between freedom and reason' and one boarder commented that they had 'a lot of liberty compared to other boarding schools and students respect rules most of the time.'

Boarders are very well protected from the risk of fire. In September 2009 the college received a community fire safety inspection that commended them on their fire management systems and made a recommendation to carry out preventative measures in one of the boarding houses. The college were in the process of carrying out these measures at the time of this inspection. As part of their induction, all boarders and boarding house staff are trained in fire evacuation. In addition, each boarding house has clear instructions for boarders.

Boarders' personal privacy is well respected by staff with appropriate supervision and availability in boarding houses.

There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff. Inspection of the recruitment records of a range of staff, recently recruited to work with boarders, showed that they included all of the checks required before their appointment. The college also maintains the required single central record of recruitment and vetting checks.

Boarders have their own accommodation that is secure from public intrusion, and they are protected from unsupervised contact with adults who have not been subject to the college's recruitment checks. There is a high level of security across the college and the boarding houses, as a result of excellent staff awareness, given the college's urban location, and the excellent security measures in place.

Boarders are very well protected from safety hazards. The college has a very effective system of risk assessment supported by written records.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have access to an extensive range and choice of activities that are free of charge. The college has an activities department, employing three full-time activities staff. Activities form part of the creativity, action and service (CAS) requirement of the IBD. Each term students create their own CAS programme. In addition, boarding students participate in a range of leisure and social activities organised by their student council, personal tutor and house warden.

Boarders receive personal support from staff. Boarders' surveyed stated they had a good range of staff they could seek help from. This is frequently the student's personal tutor at the college. Outside support is also available to boarders, through the help-lines and the independent professional counsellor publicised by the college.

Boarders do not experience discrimination. The college's mission statement is 'to advance international education and understanding'. Students and staff of all nationalities live and study together; college life is enriched by a diversity of views. Forty three nationalities were represented by the college's student body. The college is sensitive to and meets students' different needs, for example students for whom English is an additional language, those who have learning difficulties or disabilities or special dietary needs.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the college, meeting another of the college's aims that is to develop students' independence of mind. Students participate in weekly house meetings and their house representatives attend weekly student council meetings. The college also carries out an anonymous annual survey with all students to ascertain their views about various aspects of college life. Both opportunities have brought about tangible changes in the college's boarding provision.

Boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families. They mostly do this by telephone, either via their mobile phone or the internet. Staff contact parents about any significant welfare concerns regarding their child at college. Parents can contact their child's house warden or personal tutor for information and can access their fortnightly college reports.

There is an excellent process of induction and guidance for new boarders. The college share the policies that they follow with prospective students and their parents. On arrival, new students enter a very well organised and comprehensive four day induction programme, involving an orientation team of senior students, who the college seek feedback from to evaluate afterwards.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Boarders' possessions and money are protected. They are protected by each boarder having their own security box in their room, but moreover by the college being an environment where 'honesty, compassion and intercultural understanding' is valued in practice.

Boarders are provided with good accommodation, including sleeping accommodation and toilet and washing provision. The 2008 ISI inspection of the college did not report any major recommendations, but as a next step advised the college to 'continue to bring all accommodation up to the standard of the best'. This inspection found that the college is doing this with their boarding accommodation, by following a programme of building projects and by maintaining a good standard across all 15 of their boarding houses.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

A suitable statement of the college's boarding principles and practice is available to parents, boarders and staff. The college's mission statement and statement of values and beliefs is available on the college's website and in their prospectus.

The college's organisation of boarding makes an excellent contribution to boarders' welfare. The college's model is to maintain small groups of boarders in homely boarding houses close to the college, where they can receive a lot of attention from their house warden. Parents commented that this is one of the things that the college does well.

College record keeping contributes to boarders' welfare. Records of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents are monitored by designated senior members of staff and any necessary action is taken.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Boarders do not experience discrimination; they benefit from an international education and multicultural understanding from life in the college. The day after this inspection, all of the students were participating in their annual model United Nations day at the local town hall.

Boarders benefit from good supervision. The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time are residential wardens, relief wardens and the duty manager. A number of boarders and their parents commented very positively on the wardens. One boarder said they are 'constantly able to be reached if we ever need them. They genuinely care about our wellbeing'. Some parents picked individual wardens out for praise.

Staff with boarding duties are supported by clear boarding policies and practice to follow, and benefit from good induction and continued training. The college has a comprehensive handbook

for wardens. Wardens receive relevant in service training and regularly meet as a group with the senior resident, who carries out their individual annual reviews.

## 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):

- review the current arrangements for the care of ill boarders. (NMS 16)