



Inspection Report on

Westbourne School

**GM House
2 Plymouth Road
Penarth
CF64 3DQ**

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Description of the service

Westbourne School is an independent boarding school located in Penarth. The school is registered by the Welsh Government as an independent boarding school. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is appointed by the Welsh Government to carry out inspections of the boarding provision of the school.

The two storey boarding house is located a short walk from the main school campus. There had been an increase in the number of Home Stay placements which are sourced, vetted and arranged by the school. At the time of inspection, there were 40 students boarding and 8 in Home Stay arrangements.

Students board from Year 9 upwards (age 13 years) but most boarding students are in the older sixth form year groups. The boarding students reflect an international community with students from many countries and no one country dominating; the culture of the boarding house is British.

Dr Gerard Griffiths is the head teacher and the designated child protection officer.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

The school had a new head teacher and new boarding house parents since the last inspection; we found the school and boarding to be well led. The number of students who board had increased since the last inspection.

The relationships between boarders and the boarding house parents was found to be a particular strength of the facility and boarders consistently told us that they valued the support and relationships they had. There is a relaxed atmosphere in the boarding house with a positive and mutually supportive rapport evident between boarders. We found the house parents to be highly motivated to provide good care and support for the boarders, and to promote positive outcomes in their welfare and education.

2. Improvements

- A system of boarders signing in and out of the boarding house had been introduced.
- Improved systems for monitoring home stay arrangements but further improvements are needed.
- Improved maintenance of the boarding house.
- The quality of internet access was improved.

- Improved evidence of safe staff recruitment practice.
- The head teacher signed key records to demonstrate their monitoring.

3. Recommendations for improvements:

Outstanding from the last inspection:

NMS 17.2

Ensure that individual written welfare plans are developed for any boarder with special welfare needs, significant emotional or behavioural difficulties and are available to boarding house staff.

Our recommendations for improvement of boarding is set out in Section 5 of this report. They relate to overcrowding of boarding accommodation, the choice of meals, some recording arrangements, development of the garden, improvement to home stay monitoring arrangements and review of the independent person arrangements.

1. Well being

Summary

We found boarding students to be happy, healthy and safe. Boarding students are provided good support and attention to their physical, social and emotional wellbeing and procedures and systems are in place to safeguard their welfare.

Our findings

Strategies are in place for students to feel safe in their boarding house. Students we spoke with were happy with their living arrangements. Secure access arrangements were in place for students, and visitors needed to ring the bell to seek admittance. Boarders were aware of and understood the need to sign in and out of the boarding house and explain where they were in order to ensure their safety and wellbeing. The house parents made themselves readily accessible in the boarding house and students were comfortable to approach them to talk about any matters. Boarders consistently told us the house parents were kind, attentive, respectful, and helpful – a sense that they were always there to help if/when needed. The quality of internet access was good and both students and house parents told us that discussions took place at school and at boarding about internet safety, risks and the safe use of social media etc. The internet was turned off overnight and unsuitable sites were blocked by the school. Consent was obtained from parents about students going out in the community, visiting relatives or friends and on unsupervised trips. The house parents described keeping a file of emails where such consent was obtained and confirmed that if consent was not in place permission was not given to the student for them to go. The head teacher told us there had not been any child protection matters reported. Child protection training was provided to the school staff team at the beginning of the year. Those staff who were unable to attend (this included the house parents), were provided written material to read. The school had a child protection policy and procedure in place with the head teacher the designated named person for child protection in the school. A survey undertaken with boarders confirmed that students feel safe living in their boarding house.

Boarders maintain good contact with families. As students who board at the school came from many countries around the world, internet access for emails, skype etc. were an important aspect of boarding life for students to maintain contact with families. For some students it was difficult to have a quiet space to make private calls when in the boarding house as bedrooms were mostly shared rooms. Boarders told us they would go out for a walk if they needed quiet time alone or if they wanted privacy to speak on the phone. Internet access also enabled house parents to maintain contact with parents/families for matters such as obtaining consent, without needing to be available at the “right” time due to time differences. Some students remain in the boarding house during half term and for some study weeks during school holidays. The head teacher confirmed that they did not

operate in excess of 295 days a year. Boarders have access to good communication systems to maintain family contact although achieving privacy can be difficult.

Boarders are treated with respect and have their individual identities and cultures recognised and valued. Boarding students reflected an international community with students from many countries and no one country dominating. Whilst the culture of the boarding house is British, people's religion, ethnicity and culture was respected. One person told us that they regularly attended a place of worship in the community and we were told about events such as Chinese New Year being celebrated as well as traditional British events. As students in boarding all lived away from home, it often promoted close friendships and support networks within the boarding house. The boarding house had a relaxed atmosphere where boarders were seen to move around the building freely and to mix with other boarders and house parents; there was a sense of belonging. Boarders are comfortable in their boarding home, they relate well together in a supportive community that respects individuality.

Boarders live in a climate that is focused on their educational achievements and goals as well as encouraging them to spend time to socialise and take part in activities. The structure of the day had planned study and leisure time. The boarding house had limited facilities for social and leisure purposes due to a lack of space and this was an area that would benefit from improvement. However, the school supported boarders with membership to the local gym and the house parent attended with students who were too young to attend unsupervised. Boarders told us about weekend trips that had been organised for those who wished to go as a group to the Brecon Beacons to walk Pen Y Fan, to Stratford and to Oxford. The location of the boarding house provided ease of access to transport routes to Cardiff and other places of interest as well as to the local town and sea front. Boarders told us that access to go to places was good and as there was little opportunity for privacy in the boarding house, they would go for a walk to have some quiet time alone. Where trips out were planned, risk assessments were undertaken and consent was obtained at the beginning of the school year. Additional consent was sought if additional payment was required. House parents described a climate of respecting individual students' needs for additional study at times and their sensitivity to provide support for this and to monitor and promote a balanced life style. Boarders live in an environment that respects and supports their need to study and encourages and supports time to socialise and have some leisure activities.

2. Quality Of Care and Support

Summary

Boarding students are supported by experienced house parents who show insight into the needs of boarders and are committed to providing the care and support they need.

Our findings

Boarding students feel they matter and staff listen to them and relate to them in a respectful manner. Consistently boarders and house parents told us that the care and support from house parents this year was very good. Boarders told us that this was in stark contrast to the previous year when house parents had been less understanding of them and that a more punitive care culture had been in place. They said the previous house parents had a lot of rules and they would punish them. They said for instance that if they were caught studying after lights out time they would give them extra kitchen duties. They also said this made them on edge and they did not have school cabinet meetings then to voice their concerns about feeling that they were being treated unfairly. The routines and structures of boarding school life were generally respected and not challenged by students who were motivated to learn and do well. We found that there were no issues arising from behaviour management with just two sanctions having been used during this academic year. Boarders told us that this year, with the current house parents, rules were generally fair and understood. We saw positive and relaxed communication between boarders and house parents with house parents responding appropriately and positively to students either to deal with any issues they raised or to simply chat. Boarders told us they felt they could talk to the house parents and that they would listen. The school had identified an independent listener to be available for boarders should they wish to talk to someone outside the school. There was some discussion however about their independence and suitability to fulfil this role as they were also involved in other school activities. The head teacher told us that no students had contacted this person about any personal problems or concerns. We found that house parents are responsive to boarders and boarders feel they are listened to and treated with respect but students do not have access to a designated person, who is outside of the teaching and boarding staff that they can contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school.

The boarding house parents held some information about each boarder. This included an induction checklist to ensure core information was shared with each boarder and a form with basic student information including parental contact details. Some medical consent forms were in place but not for all boarders. There was a sense that information was only made available if it was considered necessary for boarding staff by the school; for example special dietary needs, or if something occurred to prompt the sharing of information. There were no welfare plans in place for any boarders although some examples were identified of

students where it would be good practice for them to be in place. The recording and sharing of information is an area that would benefit from improvement to promote consistent care and support to students both in school and in boarding.

Boarders are supported to be healthy. Boarders were registered with a local GP surgery and were supported to attend health appointments when needed. If a boarder was unwell they could remain in their bedroom in the boarding house under the supervision of the house parents. One of the house parents had previously been a nurse and completed first aid training in September 2018. Generally boarders enjoyed good health and none of them were taking prescribed medication, except an inhaler that the student self administered and another carried an EpiPen. When home remedies were provided, appropriate details were recorded. The school sought some health information from parents at the point of admission to the school but this was not routinely shared with the boarding house. As a result, they had developed a health questionnaire for parents to complete although not all of them had done so. Some verbal information was shared between school staff and house parents but house parents described communication as generally reactive. The practice of the house parents seeking medical information after admission may not promote confidence in parents that their children would receive appropriate health support. It is recommended that the school and house parents devise one format that is shared between school and boarding so that consistent information is obtained, shared and used. There was a locked medication cabinet in the house parents' accommodation to store medication. Boarders are supported to maintain good health.

The boarding house catering service provides a four week menu. Special dietary needs were described as met but there was a lack of records to demonstrate the range of needs and to show that a varied diet that provided some choice was provided to the boarders. Six weeks previously, the school had undertaken a survey of boarders relating to evening meals but the responses had not been analysed. The responses showed boarders making some consistent responses about the choice of food and for instance not wanting traditional roast every Sunday etc. Attention needs to be given to analyse the survey and consider any improvements that could be made as a result. It was disappointing that the boarding house Food Hygiene rating was 2 – the same as at the previous inspection in 2015, thus indicating a lack of attention to food hygiene matters in the boarding house. Having said that, we were told that some improvements had been made and that a further food hygiene inspection was to be requested. Bowls of fresh fruit were available in the dining area for boarders to help themselves along with access to soft drinks. Whilst further consideration is needed to menu planning, we found that the attention to exercise, medical care arrangements and care of ill boarders, generally promote a healthy life style for boarders.

3. Quality Of Leadership and Management

Summary

Effective leadership and management arrangements were in place of the boarding facility with regular communication taking place between the head teacher and house parents.

Our findings

There had been significant changes in the management of the school and boarding with a new head teacher in post in the autumn term of 2017 and new house parents in September 2018.

Clear arrangements for regular communication between the head teacher and house parents were in place with them meeting on a weekly basis to discuss any issues arising with boarders, to monitor progress on works scheduled and a range of relevant issues relating to boarding. The head teacher visited the boarding house approximately monthly but told us that boarders would also speak to them in school about boarding matters if they wished and this was confirmed by comments from boarders.

The staffing arrangements for the boarding house provide consistency and continuity of care and support for boarders. The main house parents lived on site and were on duty every day with cover being provided for them to have time off on alternate weekends. The staffing of the boarding house was reduced to one person on these weekends and this had the potential to limit the support available to boarders. A book was in place for house parents to communicate and provide information sharing for these occasions and on call arrangements were in place with a rota to show who was on call. The boarding house remained open for a reduced number of boarders during half term holidays and for some study weeks during other school holidays – some boarders may only go home twice or three times a year. This therefore put a high expectation on house parents to be present not just in term time but also during some of the school holiday periods; they described this having a significant impact on them. It was notable that the school had employed new house parents every September term as house parents resigned their post. It is recommended that consideration be given to undertake exit interviews and to reflect on the reasons why the school was consistently unable to retain house parents longer term and therefore having a longer term vision of developing the boarding experience for students.

The staff recruitment records for house parents indicated that broadly suitable processes were in place. Applications were made with a Curriculum Vitae (CV) and letter. The school undertook appropriate checks including disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks. However, evidence of qualifications, references and verification of references were not kept once an appointment was made. Whilst safe processes were reported, there was a lack of evidence to confirm this.

Training and development opportunities for house parents were weak with a lack of induction for the main house parents and induction provided to the cover house parent by the main house parents. House parents were described as being able to access training provided by the Boarding Schools Association during school holiday times. The only training either of the main house parents had actually attended was first aid and they said their opportunities to attend training were very limited. They told us they had responsibility for the line management of the support staff in the boarding house, which included cooks, cleaners and laundry workers. They also had responsibility to monitor home stay placements and they both fulfilled other roles at the school. Whilst the house parents had experience in the house-parenting role at other schools, little attention had been given to their training and development needs.

The head teacher had overall responsibility for the boarding arrangements and had monitoring processes in place to ensure the effective and safe operation of the boarding facility. The weekly meetings with both house parents provided a positive opportunity to discuss boarding matters. There had not been any complaints made and boarders told us they were confident to express their views to house parents, via the cabinet (group of house representatives for boarding) or to the head. They told us their views were listened to and acted upon and provided examples of work being undertaken in the boarding house when reported. There had been two surveys undertaken in boarding in this academic year, one in relation to general boarding arrangements and the other specifically relating to food. The first indicated that boarders were generally happy and they were consistently positive about relationships with the house parents. A sample of records viewed, including sanctions and incidents records, showed that the head teacher had signed and dated the records to indicate that they had been viewed. The head teacher produced an annual quality of care report, with the most recent being produced in January 2019.

Students wishing to board at the school can either choose to board in the boarding house or in a home stay placement. Home stay placements enabled students to live in a local family that has been sourced and approved by the school. A home stay handbook was in place to provide new boarders with information about home stay arrangements and clarify expectations. There was a home stay agreement between the host family and school. It was recommended that the agreement include reference to the annual visit to check the continued suitability of the accommodation. Records showed that six of the eight home stay arrangements had been subject to visits/checks so far in this academic year. However, there was no record to show that an individual discussion had taken place with every student in a home stay placement each term; which is necessary.

4. Quality Of The Environment

Summary

Boarders live in an environment that is safe and secure although space is somewhat cramped.

Our findings

The boarding house is separate to the school but is close by – just a few minutes walk away. Its location is close to the train station and public transport enables boarders to have good access to Cardiff and various other places of interest. It is located in a small seaside town providing good access for students for shopping, social and leisure purposes.

The boarding house was arranged over two floors; the ground floor had the girls' bedrooms, house parents' accommodation, and communal area/laundry. The first floor had the boys' bedrooms, kitchen, dining room and communal area. There were bathroom and toilet facilities on each floor. Secure access arrangements to the boarding house was in place. Boarders accessed using a digit pad entry or visitors needed to ring a bell to gain entry. There was a signing in and out system for boarders to indicate where they were when not in school and a book for visitors to sign in.

Generally the environment was clean and well maintained. Boarders told us that when they identified areas that were in need of attention/repair they were responded to in a timely manner.

Bedrooms/dormitories provide accommodation for one to six students; most were multi occupancy rooms. The multiple occupancy bedrooms were cramped with little personal space for boarders. Cabin style beds provided a study desk on the floor level with bed above, and an integral cupboard/wardrobe space.

The communal areas comprised a dining area and seating area on the first and ground floor. The dining area was not large enough for all boarders to eat at the same time and was seen to be crowded at a meal time. The seating areas on both floors provided seating only for small groups of boarders. The communal seating area on the ground floor was also the laundry area so was not a comfortable or inviting area to sit despite the fact that the laundry equipment was only used during the school day. During out of school times and when not out in the community students spent most of their time in bedrooms.

The boarding house accommodated 40 students at the time of inspection with capacity described at 49. Facilities were cramped and boarders told us they were very concerned that there plans to increase the number of boarding students at the school. The head teacher said there were plans to increase the number of students boarding at the school but

no decisions had been made whether they would be placed within home stay arrangements or in the boarding house. We found that some rooms did not meet the space requirements of the School Premises regulations 1999 and in particular, that beds in some rooms were not at least 900cms as required by these regulations. The prospectus regarding boarding was available on line but did not accurately reflect the environment provided. The prospectus described the boarding house as “Modern and spacious with large open plan relaxation areas, bright well equipped bedrooms and super- fast internet.” It showed a picture of a two bedded room looking light and bright. Boarders told us they felt the boarding facilities were not what they had been led to expect before coming to the school and felt the prospectus was not a true reflection of the boarding accommodation. A number of boarders remained at the school during half term holidays and some of the full term holidays; some boarders only went home two or three times a year and therefore had a lot of clothes and personal possessions with little space to accommodate them.

As an international boarding community, family contact is largely maintained by internet using mobile phones, iPads and computers. The school had invested in ensuring the internet access was good to support family contact and study. However, boarders told us that the multi occupancy rooms and cramped arrangements made it difficult to have private conversations with family unless they shared with other students who did not speak their home language. Students told us that if they wanted a private call or time alone they would need to go out for a walk as there were no such facilities in the boarding house.

The boarding house had an enclosed garden area but it was overlooked and did not provide privacy. It was also a locked area that would require seeking staff assistance to gain access. The garden was a grassed area with two picnic tables/benches. This area would benefit from being developed to make it a positive resource for boarders to use.

We found that whilst there is generally a positive atmosphere in the boarding house, it does not provide sufficient space to promote an environment that is conducive to good study, relaxation and privacy for boarders.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

5.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections

NMS 17.2

Ensure that individual written welfare plans are developed for any boarder with special welfare needs, significant emotional or behavioural difficulties are available to boarding house staff.

5.2 Recommendations for improvement

NMS 24.1 and Appendix 2

The variety and choice of meals in the boarding house would benefit from improvement with improved recording to demonstrate the alternatives provided to meet individual dietary needs and preferences.

NMS 42.7

Review the bedroom arrangements to ensure that multiple occupancy bedrooms are not over crowded and that boarders' views are considered in this regard.

NMS 38.2

Recruitment of boarding staff must include attention to all of the indicators of this standard and records need to be in place to verify these processes.

NMS 46.3

The garden would benefit from being developed to increase privacy and to include facilities for boarders to enjoy.

NMS 15.5

One format for health information required by the school and boarding be produced and shared by both school and boarding to ensure consistent information is provided and include parental agreement for those boarders who self-medicate.

NMS 51.8

At least once a term a discussion needs to take place with each student in home stay placements. A record should be maintained of this and any actions arising from the discussion.

NMS 4.4

That review is undertaken of the suitability and independence of the person the school has identified whom boarders may contact about personal problems or concerns at school.

6. How we undertook this inspection

We undertook an unannounced inspection on 25 March 2019 between 1 pm and 8 pm and returned on 26 March 2019 between 10 am and 4.30 pm. This was a routine scheduled inspection undertaken by two inspectors.

Information for this report was gathered from:

- Information held by CIW
- Discussion with the head teacher and finance director.
- Discussion with the main house parents.
- Discussion with the “Cabinet” (group of 12 representatives of boarding students)
- Informal discussions with boarders e.g. at evening mealtime.
- Inspection of the boarding premises.
- Participation in the evening meal in the boarding house.
- Observation of a sample of records, policies and procedures.
- Feedback provided to the head teacher and house parents.

Further information about what we do can be found on our website:

www.careinspectorate.wales

About the service

Type of care provided	Boarding School
Registered Person	MONTAGUE PLACE (W1) Ltd
Head teacher	Gerrard Griffiths
Registered maximum number of places	
Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	29/04/15 & 15/05/15 Feedback 04/06/15
Dates of this Inspection visits	25/03/2019 & 26/03/2019
Operating Language of the service	English
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	No
Additional Information:	

