



Inspection Report on

Christ College

**Bridge Street
Brecon
LD3 8AF**

Date Inspection Completed

05/11/2019

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Description of the service

Christ College is an independent co-educational boarding and day school situated near the centre of Brecon in Powys which provides education for children from the age of seven years to nineteen years. At the time of our inspection, there were 201 pupils (160 on a full-time basis) boarding at the school, of whom approximately 20% were international students. Boarding students are cared for by a house mistress or house master (and their spouse) plus a team of tutors.

The Head Teacher of Christ College is Gareth Pearson. The Deputy Head (Pastoral), Simon Hill, oversees the day to day operation of the boarding houses.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

Boarding pupils experience a tightly knit, caring community within which their well-being, personal and social development is promoted. Their views are valued, and they are able to contribute to decision-making about their daily lives.

Good leadership and management of the boarding houses ensures boarding pupils are well supported and cared for. They have positive relationships with staff and peers and are offered effective physical and emotional help and support, when needed. Arrangements are in place within the school to maintain the day to day safety of boarding pupils, though the oversight of educational guardians requires improvement.

Staff are well supported, and provided with clear direction and guidance. They would, however, benefit from a more structured approach to learning and development through supervision and training.

Pupils reside in a comfortable and safe environment, which is suited to their needs.

2. Improvements

- A tailored boarding programme has been created, to enhance pupils' personal development.
- Weekly and weekend activities programmes have been extended.
- Refurbishment of houses (all houses are now on-campus, creating a stronger boarding community, increased study space, modernised sleeping accommodation.
- Indoor swimming pool redevelopment giving boarders access to swimming through the year.
- More opportunities created for boarding pupils to have a voice, pupil consultations, a pupil led environmental-action group, pupil committees and pupil-led clubs.
- Pupil led mid-autumn festival held in September to celebrate and welcome new international boarders.

3. Requirements and recommendations

Section 5 of this report sets out the recommendations to improve the service. These relate to safeguarding, staff training and supervision, record keeping and the boarding pupils' guide.

1. Well-being

Our findings

Boarding pupils have a voice. They are able to express their views and opinions, and they feel that they are listened to. Boarders told us that there were plenty of opportunities to communicate their views and that they felt their views were taken seriously. Informally, pupils were able to talk to boarding staff or house prefects about any issues they wished to raise. We were told by house prefects that, more formally, regular house meetings were held. The format of meetings differed between houses but all were used to discuss house matters and to seek the views of boarders more generally. Minutes evidenced discussions about house purchases and activities, recycling and maintenance requirements and included feedback on matters raised. We saw that efforts were made to accommodate boarders' requests and choices. During our inspection we observed boarders participating in an animated house meeting discussion about the forthcoming inter house choir competition. The catering manager informed us that feedback was regularly sought from pupils to inform menu planning and they had also met with international pupils to seek their views regarding food products they would like to see on the menu. Pupils were also able to comment on the quality of their food, by leaving feedback on the notice board in the dining area. Boarders were also consulted via questionnaires, on their boarding experience, and their views sought on what improvements they felt could be made to the boarding environment. Prefects met with the head teacher and deputy head on a weekly basis and spoke positively about these meetings. They told us that they felt listened to. Requests received a prompt response, and if not agreed, an explanation was provided. Boarding pupils are able to express their views in a variety of ways. Their views are valued, and they are able to contribute to decision-making about their daily lives.

Boarding students experience positive relationships with boarding staff, which helps them to feel valued. In discussions with staff, they demonstrated their knowledge and understanding of their house boarders. They spoke about them with warmth and showed concern for their well-being. We observed staff and pupils treating each other with respect, and observed positive exchanges between boarders and staff, and between pupils, who clearly enjoyed each other's company. Pupils were able to have regular phone contact with family members and staff advised that they also maintained regular contact with family members, to discuss pupils' progress, any concerns and to share information.

From our discussions with pupils and staff, and from records viewed, it was evident that the well-being of pupils was given a high priority within the school. The importance of caring for others was built into the formal structure of the school, and boarding pupils of all ages were seen to contribute to, and re-inforce this ethos. Younger boarders were assigned as "buddies" to new starters in their year group, to help them to settle in, get used to the boarding routine and to help them establish new friendships. New starters spoke very positively about their "buddies", and especially valued the role they played in helping them to establish friendships with boarders in different houses. Older pupils

were expected to act as positive role models, with house prefects taking on a more formal mentoring role. They were provided with written guidance regarding their roles and responsibilities, they had received safeguarding and leadership training and felt well-supported in their roles. New starters also told us that they had felt welcomed by school staff and pupils, and always felt able to talk to their house parents, who operated an open door policy. Additional support services were readily available to pupils, with sanatorium nursing sisters playing an important pastoral role, as well as providing advice and medical assistance in respect of boarders' physical health. Boarders told us that they were also aware of, and valued the additional support services available to promote their emotional wellbeing. Boarders have positive relationships with staff and peers and are offered effective physical and emotional help and support.

Arrangements are in place within the school to maintain the day to day safety of boarding pupils. Safeguarding referrals are made by the school, in accordance with national guidance. The school's safeguarding policy was viewed; we advised that the policy should include guidance on allegations made against staff and would benefit from updating in line with current developments. This was discussed with the head teacher and deputy head and an amended copy, which included the management of allegation, was sent to CIW following our visits. We found safeguarding records to be securely stored. Safeguarding matters were seen to have been appropriately managed, with referrals made in accordance with national procedures.

Three members of staff had been identified as the school's designated safeguarding leads, including the deputy head (pastoral). All had undertaken recent safeguarding training updates and we saw that termly safeguarding training had been undertaken by boarding staff, to keep up to date with new developments. We saw that inset training had also included outside speakers, providing information on safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding training was also delivered to prefects. Prefects advised that this included attendance at a course during the summer before the start of term, then an extra day at the beginning of the year where they were given different scenarios to work through to identify when situations needed to be escalated due to safeguarding concerns and what support they could offer.

The three designated safeguarding leads were seen to meet on a weekly basis, with minutes evidencing discussions and monitoring of "live" or potential safeguarding matters, learning and development and the provision of training and guidance updates for staff and pupils. Measures were seen to be in place within the boarding houses to maintain pupil's safety on a day to day basis including controls on internet access and rules on mobile phone use.

A policy and procedures were in place to manage incidents of bullying. The policy detailed the preventative measures in place, reporting procedures and outlined the range of actions to be used by the school to respond to incidences of bullying. Accordingly, display boards in houses and the sanatorium encouraged pupils to talk about their worries, The contact details for the school's independent visitor were also on display (pupils had direct access to this individual). Prefects also received leadership training which emphasised the importance of offering support and assistance to younger and to vulnerable pupils.

We noted from records of three incidents of bullying that they had been managed in line with the sanctions referred to in the policy i.e, using a mixture of restorative approaches, internal suspensions and counselling sessions. However, we did not see that pupils' views on the sanction applied to them had been included (or a record made that they did not wish to comment on the sanction imposed). Pupils told us that they felt safe within the school environment. Overall, the safety of boarding pupils is maintained by the safeguarding arrangements in place within the school.

2. Care and Support

Our findings

The health needs of boarding pupils are addressed and their physical well-being is promoted. The sanatorium was staffed on a 24 hour basis, by one of two registered nursing sisters six days a week, with a third nursing sister or first aid trained staff available during the evenings, overnight and on Sundays. Prior to admission, parents were asked to complete a medical questionnaire and to provide written consent for medical treatments. On admission, the nursing sisters met with pupils and their families, to discuss any particular health conditions in more detail, and where needed, care plans for medical conditions were drawn up. Boarding pupils were registered with the local GP surgery, and new patient appointments arranged. Pupils were subsequently supported to attend health appointments as needed.

We saw that the treatment room was locked when not in use. Boarders' medical records were kept in locked cabinets or electronically and medication was stored within a locked cabinet in this room. We advised, however, that some medications stored within the cabinet should, as controlled drugs, be stored within a locked cabinet within a locked cabinet, and their administration recorded in a separate log book in accordance with relevant regulations and national guidance. We were informed, following our visits that changes had been made to the storage of controlled medications, in line with guidance, and that a controlled drugs log book had been purchased. Photographs were provided. We also advised that there should be regular audits of medication kept in the sanatorium to check that stored medication tallied with medication administration records.

A healthy lifestyle was encouraged. Menus were seen to include a broad variety of meals, and a new plant-based self-service area had recently been introduced to encourage healthy choices. We were advised by the school's catering manager that parents completed a food allergy and intolerance notification form at the beginning of the school year, which also covered religious requirements. Catering staff were made aware of pupils' dietary requirements and were able to provide advice on menu choice. The catering team also contributed to the "curriculum for life" programme for 6th formers, to help them learn about nutrition and to extend their cooking skills. Boarders participated in sporting activities during the school day and were also able to choose from a wide range of co-curricular activities, to suit their particular interests. The health and physical well-being of boarding pupils is promoted and measures are taken by staff to ensure that any identified health needs are addressed.

Boarding pupils have access to a wide range of social and leisure activities. Boarders told us they were enjoying their experience of boarding, and thought that there was a good range of activities on offer. Information was displayed on notice boards, to remind pupils of forthcoming events. Younger boarders told us that they enjoyed participating in a "carousel" programme where activities were rotated during the year in order for them to try a number of different sports and activities. They were also taken by 6th formers to the school's swimming pool once a week where they could have fun rather than formal swimming lessons. At the time of our

inspection, the boarding house for younger pupils also had a notice board dedicated to the World Cup rugby tournament about which the children were very excited. Pupils had limited unstructured leisure time during the week but we were advised by house masters and mistresses that weekends provided more leisure time opportunities e.g. for film nights or cooking together, as well as for organised activities and trips. One housemistress described house activities which had been undertaken to enable boarders to learn about and celebrate each other's culture and traditions. Pupils attended the school's combined cadet force (CCF) programme and many boarders were working towards or had achieved Duke of Edinburgh awards. In addition, the school had organised a number of overseas trips. We noted that risk assessments had been completed for school trips and high risk activities. Boarding pupils have opportunities to follow their interests and engage in a wide range of activities which enhance their well-being and support their social development.

The emotional well-being and positive mental health of boarding pupils is promoted within the school. We noted that house parents had recently attended training on mental health matters whilst one house mistress was working towards a recognised counselling qualification. We were advised by a house master, that each boarder would meet with a house tutor each week. Prefects told us that although discussions were sometimes about their academic work, many tutors were very supportive emotionally. Nursing staff were seen by pupils to play a key pastoral role, with prefects advising that staff were very welcoming and always willing to listen to pupils. Pupils also valued the independent counselling service, and we were told by one pupil that they had felt much better after attending sessions. We saw that, where pupils had been concerned about friends, they had shared this with a prefect or member of boarding staff, to ensure that the right level of support could be provided.

We noted that "who can help you?" posters were on display in each of the houses, reminding boarders about the range of people they could speak to, and share any worries or concerns. Whilst the list included prefects, boarding and nursing staff, it also included the school's chaplain, an "independent listener" and contact details for "childline" for pupils who wanted to speak to someone independent of the school structure.

We saw that welfare records were in place for pupils who were experiencing emotional difficulties, with additional information kept separately within the email accounts of house parents. It was evident from our discussions with house parents and with the deputy head, that they had a very good understanding of boarders' situations. We also noted that some pupils were discussed and their progress monitored, within weekly meetings attended by the three designated safeguarding leads and the senior sanatorium sister. A new system of electronic recording had been introduced at the start of the school year to chart matters relating to pupils' well-being. We were advised by the head teacher that these records, when fully up and running, would provide a single point of recording for boarders requiring welfare plans. Boarding pupils benefit from a broad range of support measures which promote their emotional well-being. However, recordings require review to ensure that information is fully captured and available to relevant staff, and where appropriate, agreed with parents.

3. Leadership and Management

Our findings

Boarding pupils and their families are provided with information about the school, including its prospectus, boarding principles and house guides prior to admission. The school's website provided introductory information about the school and boarding provision, and visits to the school were encouraged. Further information was provided to families and boarding pupils prior to admission, including a pupils' guide, which was seen to contain useful information on rules and practical matters e.g. daily routines, healthcare, signing in/out arrangements, and arrangements for contact with family and friends. Additional information was also included, specific to each house e.g. in respect of house parents, and the gender makeup of the house. We were advised by pupils during the inspection that they had received the guide and found it helpful. However, some students told us that they would have liked more information about the range of activities on offer at the school. Boarding students and their families can be clear about what the school sets out to provide.

Boarding pupils have access to information and support during their transition and admission to the school. Prior to admission, boarding students were encouraged to visit the school. We were informed by pupils that, where this had not been possible, Skype (video conferencing) interviews had provided pupils with an opportunity to ask questions about the school. 6th formers told us that they had attended an activity day prior to starting which was very useful to meet other 6th formers who had already been attending the school. Younger pupils told us that all new pupils arrived at the school for an induction day, before the rest of the pupils, in order to get used to their surroundings and to meet each other. They received a house welcome pack and were provided with information on safeguarding and essential contact details. We were informed that prefects were also in attendance during this day and were very welcoming and provided a tour around the school. Arrangements are in place to support the transition of new pupils to the school, which enhance their well-being and help them to settle at the school.

Safe recruitment processes are followed to determine staff suitability. However, staff do not receive regular one to one supervision and arrangements for the training of staff lack consistency. Staff recruitment files evidenced that applicants had provided details of their previous employment history. References had been obtained and their authenticity verified prior to employment. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks had been completed in respect of all staff (including adult members of staff households) and educational guardians (host families). However, as some DBS checks had been completed a number of years previously, we advised that consideration be given to re-checking at regular intervals. We were informed by the deputy head that staff appraisals were undertaken every two years, with feedback requested from pupils, parents and colleagues. Appraisal documentation was seen within some staff files. However, staff did not receive individual supervision. We could not see, therefore, that staff had been provided with regular opportunities to reflect and

learn from their practice, to receive personal support and to discuss their learning needs on a regular basis.

The training records of house parents showed that their induction had included advanced safeguarding training, and that termly updates had been subsequently completed. Staff had also attended fire awareness training and health and safety training. A range of other courses had been completed by the majority of house parents e.g. to enhance their knowledge of mental health issues and restorative approaches in education. However, whilst some staff had attended boarding specific training, others had not. We advised, therefore, that a common, core training programme for boarding staff would be beneficial. We could not see that training had been offered to education guardians. Arrangements are in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff. However, staff would benefit from a more structured, consistent approach to learning and development through supervision and training.

The school is generally well led and managed and systems are in place to support ongoing improvement. However, arrangements in place to monitor the welfare and safety of pupils being cared for by educational guardians are not sufficiently robust. There had been changes at senior management level within the school with a new head teacher and a new deputy head (pastoral) appointed since CIW's last inspection. Regular management oversight of the boarding arrangements was seen at inspection; regular visits were made to the boarding houses by the head teacher and deputy head staff, house parents met with the deputy head on a weekly basis to share information, records were regularly reviewed by the deputy head and safeguarding matters considered on a weekly basis by the designated safeguarding leads. Monthly meetings were held between the deputy head and the school governor with lead responsibility for safeguarding, and the boarding arrangements were reported upon within the annual report to the school's governing body.

We noted that the school made provision for boarding pupils to stay with education guardians (host families) if unable to return home during Exeat and school holidays. The arrangements in place to monitor the welfare of boarders within this provision was not seen to meet national minimum standards. Home visits to the premises had not been undertaken on an annual basis and feedback from boarding pupils had not been sought each term, and recorded. Visits to educational guardians were made following our inspection and associated documentation provided to CIW. Records evidenced that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks had been completed at the time of recruitment. However, for some host families these checks had been undertaken over eight years previously. Whilst there was no regulatory requirement to undertake DBS checks on a regular basis, we advised that consideration should be given to doing so.

We noted that the school's complaints policy made no reference to the management of complaints from pupils. This was addressed by the Head Teacher and a copy of the new complaints policy for pupils was sent to CIW following our inspection visits. Although no policy had previously been in place, complaints from pupils and the response / action taken had nevertheless been recorded. We noted that complaints from pupils, or from other sources, had been progressed to resolution. Overall,

good leadership and management of the boarding houses ensures boarding pupils are well supported and cared for. However, regular, robust monitoring of the school's educational guardian arrangements is required, to ensure that boarding pupils' well-being and safety is fully assured.

4. Environment

Our findings

Boarding pupils are accommodated in a welcoming, comfortable environment which is suited to their needs. Boarders were accommodated in five separate houses, with younger boarders housed together, whilst older boarders resided in one of the two girls' or boys' houses. Houses were comfortably furnished and generally quite homely in style. Sixth form pupils had their own single rooms, whilst younger pupils generally shared 2, 3 or 4 bedded rooms. Although both girls and boys shared the house for younger boarders, dormitories were in separate locations within the home. Bedrooms were suitably furnished, with pictures and personal items added by pupils to individualise their own space, and some of the common room areas had been colourfully decorated in readiness for Hallowe'en. The design and layout provided boarders with areas to socialise, to study, pursue interests or to spend "quiet time" alone. An appropriate number of showers, toilets and wash basins were available as well as kitchen and laundry facilities, though the management of boarders' laundry was undertaken centrally and seen to be well-organised. Boarders had individual lockable lockers, within which to keep items of value. Outdoor play areas were available and pupils were also able to access the wider school resources, including sports, music and drama facilities. All pupils had 24 hour access to the sanatorium which was located on campus. The properties were seen to be clean and well-maintained, and we noted that the expenditure programme for the school included a rolling programme of refurbishment (one house per year) in addition to expenditure on necessary works. The boarding environment contributes to boarders' physical well-being and serves to promote a sense of belonging through the personalisation of bedrooms and general decoration of the houses.

Boarding pupils are cared for within a safe and secure environment. The school's health and safety policies were seen to outline the role and responsibilities of key individuals, and to provide guidance to staff on health and safety matters. Boarding house risk assessments had been completed, which considered the hazards likely to be encountered and the measures in place to minimise risk. The majority of recommendations from the school's latest fire risk assessment (April 2018) had been actioned, with the progress of remaining works reviewed as part of the school's annual health and safety audit. The school's fire evacuation plan had been recently reviewed and regular fire drills had been held in all boarding houses.

Visitors to the school were asked to produce evidence of identity on arrival and to sign the visitors' book. Visitors' passes were expected to be worn. Access to the individual boarding houses was controlled, with digital entry systems and pass codes required for main doors. Registration calls took place at intervals throughout the day on a daily basis and arrangements were in place for boarding pupils to sign in and out when leaving the school premises. The safety and well-being of boarding pupils is appropriately maintained by the health and safety arrangements in place within the school.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

- The school's safeguarding policy to be regularly reviewed to ensure that it updated in line with new developments and changing legislation.
- Regular, robust monitoring of the school's educational guardian arrangements to be undertaken, so that boarding pupils' well-being and safety is fully assured.
- Arrangements for staff supervision to be established.
- A common, core training programme for boarding staff to be established.
- A core training programme to be developed for educational guardians
- The recording of welfare plans to be reviewed, to ensure that information is fully captured and available to relevant staff, and where appropriate, agreed with parents.
- Consideration to be given to undertaking regular DBS checks for staff with boarding responsibilities and educational guardians in addition to those made during recruitment.
- Records in relation to pupil sanctions to include pupils' views on the sanction applied to them (or a record made that they did not wish to comment on the sanction imposed).
- Boarding pupils to contribute to a review of the pupils' guide, to maximise its usefulness to new starters.

4. How we undertook this inspection

This was a full scheduled inspection undertaken as part of our inspection programme. An unannounced visit was made to the school by three inspectors on 15 October 2019 between 9.40am and 7.30pm. A subsequent announced visit was made by two inspectors on 5 November 2019 between 9.20am and 6.00pm.

The methodology used to conduct the inspection included:

- Discussions with the head teacher.
- Discussion with the deputy head (pastoral) / designated safeguarding lead.
- Discussion with the members of boarding staff.
- Discussion with the senior sanatorium sister
- Discussions (arranged) with groups of prefects and new starters
- Impromptu discussions with pupils during lunch and during visits to the boarding houses
- Observation of interactions between boarding staff and pupils.
- Visual inspection of premises.

We looked at a range of records, including

- Statement of boarding principles and practice.
- Guide for boarding pupils.
- Staff handbook
- Boarding pupil and staff records
- Minutes of meetings
- Activity programmes
- Risk assessments
- Health and safety records.
- Policies and procedures.

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	Christ College
Head Teacher	Gareth Pearson
Registered maximum number of places	Not applicable
Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	08/10/2013 and 09/10/2013
Dates of this Inspection visits	15/10/2019 and 05/11/2019
Operating Language of the service	English
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	No
Additional Information:	

Date Published 08/01/2020

No noncompliance records found in Open status.