

# Clifton College Preparatory School

Inspection report for boarding school

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC026658        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 21 January 2010 |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Debbi Flint     |
| <b>Type of Inspection</b>      | Key             |

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| <b>Head / Principal</b>        | John Milne  |
| <b>Nominated person</b>        | Alison Streatfeild-James  |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 16 October 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

Clifton College was originally founded in 1862 and the 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 preparatory school only and the pre-preparatory and upper 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 headteacher (Pastoral) and the head of boarding. Pupils are offered a traditional boarding experience within an environment which is supportive, nurturing and inclusive. While each boarder's individuality is recognised, the school also has a strong sense of community spirit and boarders state, 'it's like one big family.' They clearly feel at home within the school and also at ease with themselves and with all members of their community. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding throughout the standards inspected. There is a strong sense of mutual respect within the community and staff ensure that all pupils from differing cultures and backgrounds are able to make an equal contribution to the school.

There were no recommendations 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

At the last inspection there were nine recommendations made and these were: that the school should lobby the local authority for traffic calming measures; that the school should seek legal advice as to whether it should state in its prospectus that there was not very good disabled access; that all staff should be issued with photographic identity badges; that all boarding staff should receive medication training; that fire doors should not be left wedged open; that the basement of Guthrie House should be re-decorated; that a toilet should be placed on the top floor of Hartnell House; that all pupils should have lockable facilities in their rooms and that an open staircase in Guthrie House should be subject to an inspection and risk assessed.

All these recommendations have now been met.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' 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. Pupils are usually referred to the health centre by their matrons although they can self refer. They are accompanied by a member of staff when they visit the health centre. If a consultation is necessary pupils are able to see a male or female doctor. The health centre has a treatment room, waiting room and consulting room. Boarders 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. There is also provision for sick boarders to stay in a private room in their individual houses.

Boarders' emotional and physical well-being is promoted by the provision of a comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. This syllabus is delivered by two very enthusiastic teachers with input from the school nurses. Areas covered include developing as a citizen, keeping healthy, smoking, drugs, drinking alcohol, safer sex, bullying and disability. Boarders state that they enjoy PSHE and find the sessions interesting. Staff state that there is always a lot of healthy debate generated during these sessions.

Boarders' 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. Nurses maintain individual health care records for each pupil and there are care plans in place for any pupil with additional needs. All care plans are supported by a wide range of policies which include a medication policy, a homely remedy policy and a policy on the use and storage of epipens. 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 houses by the matrons and boarding staff who have all received appropriate training in the administration of medication. Medication records, including those for controlled drugs, are accurate and well maintained. The school ensures that all staff receive training in first aid, while registered nurses receive advanced training. All staff also receive child bereavement counselling. This comprehensive training, together with excellent facilities and sound policies and procedures, ensures that boarders' health needs are well met and one boarder wrote, 'The matrons are kind and help me when I am unwell. When I go to the san the nurses help me.'

The school uses two large dining rooms as venues for mealtimes. These dining rooms are some distance away and staff have made every effort to ensure that the route is safe. Gap students are placed by the roadside at appropriate times in order to assist pupils across the road. Road safety is also discussed frequently in assembly and staff have lobbied the local authority to provide traffic calming measures. The dining rooms used are comfortable and clean and meals are relaxed and orderly occasions. Staff promote healthy eating and the school runs a healthy eating week where pupils can win prizes for creating healthy recipes such as fish pie. Meals are planned on a termly basis and there are a good range of choices for breakfast, lunch and supper. Lunchtimes in particular have vegetarian and meat options as well as a salad and pasta bar. The school will provide meals to meet any particular need and Kosher and Halal foods are prepared as well as diabetic and gluten free diets. Pupils are very positive about the food and state that it is 'great and tasty'. They also state that they are able to have some influence on the choices available and that Sunday lunch has recently been changed as a result of their

comments. The school was recently visited by environmental health officers 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 boarders and the school has a strong and efficient staff team which is vigilant in enforcing these policies and procedures. Key staff involved in safeguarding pupils include the deputy headteacher (Pastoral) and the head of boarding. However the headteacher is also very proactive and goes to great personal lengths to ensure that policies are being followed through in practice. One staff member states, 'He is very impressive and goes to extraordinary lengths to safeguard the children. He carries out duties, voluntarily, that would not be expected of him.'

The school's designated child protection officer is the deputy headteacher (Pastoral). The head of boarding is the school's deputy child protection officer. There is also a designated member of the College Council who oversees safeguarding. Both the child protection officer and the deputy child protection officer have received extensive safeguarding training from a variety of sources such as the local authority, the school's solicitors and the Boarding Schools' Association. New staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction and annually thereafter. The school has a comprehensive child protection policy which gives good guidance to staff on how to deal with any child protection disclosure. There is also a policy on bullying and a separate policy on cyber bullying. Pupils do not generally report any bullying although prefects state there have occasionally been incidents where pupils have been left out and these have been dealt with immediately. Pupils state that issues such as bullying and how to complain are discussed in assemblies. They are aware of the school's complaints procedure but do not currently report any complaints. There have been three safeguarding referrals by the school since the last inspection. Correct procedures were followed and all referrals were meticulously recorded. None of the school's staff were implicated in any of these referrals and safeguarding practice, to date, has been exemplary.

The school has a discipline policy which gives staff clear guidance on rewards and permissible sanctions. All rewards and sanctions are recorded in the boarding houses. There is also a central punishment log in which any major incidents are recorded. The behaviour of pupils around the school is generally outstanding. They are polite, courteous and friendly. Pupils are clearly at ease with both themselves and others. They are confident, articulate and very happy to socialise and chat. They state that they know the school rules and that the rules are fair. Older pupils, such as prefects, are very aware of their responsibilities and believe that they have a duty to set a good example. However they do not demonstrate, in any way, a sense of elitism. One prefect states, 'We have special responsibilities because of our good behaviour and because we are a good example to others, not because we are clever.'

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 and are not able to enter any boarding house other than those in which they work. All members of staff are issued with personal identity badges. All visitors to the school are asked to sign in and are issued with a visitor's badge. The school grounds are generally well lit during the hours of

darkness and there is always a porter on duty at night. There are comprehensive risk assessments in place for both the environment and activities organised by the school. These include a risk assessment for a staircase which was a recommendation of the last inspection. Pupils confirm that there are regular fire drills and state that at least two fire drills have taken place in the last two weeks. Records show that there are weekly fire alarm tests and that all fire appliances are serviced annually. No fire doors are left wedged open.

The school has good procedures in place for the selection and vetting of staff. Records are held centrally for the pre-preparatory school, the preparatory school and the upper school. These records were examined during the inspection of the upper school in November 2009 and found to be extremely robust. Vetting procedures for gap students and a housemistress's spouse were examined at this inspection and they were found to contain all the appropriate documentation and required information. The school has a single central record which contained 702 names at the time of this inspection.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The deputy headteacher (Pastoral) is responsible for the pastoral care of all pupils and oversees all aspects of pastoral life. The school has a clear policy that pupils may take their concerns to any member of staff such as the housemaster or housemistress, the deputy headteachers, tutors, matrons, doctors, nurses, the chaplain and the school counsellor. There is also an independent listener who is a psychologist. The school prefects also provide listening ears and many pupils state that they would go to them with smaller concerns and approach staff members with more serious concerns. All boarders confirm in discussions that there are lots of people they can approach with a problem and that they feel well supported.

The school embraces pupils from all the major religions of the world and there are currently 24 nationalities from six countries resident as boarders. The school has an informal Anglican foundation which involved a working partnership with members of the Jewish community. There is therefore a centre for Jewish Studies as well as a Church of England Chapel. However the Clifton community also celebrates all other major religious festivals such as Chinese New Year, Moon Festival and Ramadan. The school also has partnerships with a local state primary school and another primary school in South Africa. Morning assemblies are used to promote inclusion and many pupils state that they enjoy attending them. The school is non selective and has a special educational unit for pupils with additional needs which is renowned. One staff member states, 'Academia is not everything. We are a school for every child.' The school produced an accessibility plan as a response to a recommendation of the last inspection. This shows how it proposes to improve its environment for the purpose of accommodating pupils with physical disabilities. There are also disability and equal opportunities policies.

Staff seek to enhance pupils' personal development by offering them a wide variety of cultural, sporting and academic activities. Evening activities include art, sewing club, music, Chinese corner, cookery, dressmaking, ballet, horse riding, cricket, squash, swimming, judo, netball and karate. There is a wide range of cultural trips and sports tours offered at weekends. Recent house outings have included bowling, cinema, climbing, shopping, Bristol RFC, theatre, ice skating, restaurants and sports venues.

## Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff ensure that new boarders are well prepared for their boarding experience before they arrive at the school. A guide is sent to all potential boarders and this contains very good information on boarding life which is linked to the Every Child Matters outcome areas. There is a section for parents and a user-friendly section for children. New boarders are allocated a house before they arrive and are able to visit the house in the term before they come. On arrival staff make every effort to ensure they feel welcome and they are allocated a personal guide who is an older pupil of the same sex from the same house. One new boarder said everyone was 'very nice and friendly'. Regular contact with parents is welcomed and pupils are able to contact them by letter, phone or email. There are several phone booths in each house and the phone numbers of emergency services, such as ChildLine, are displayed. Boarders are also allowed to use their mobile phones in the evenings.

Boarders have opportunities to contribute their views to the operation of the school. They state that they have a big influence on the way the boarding houses are run and are consulted about the décor. They are also regularly asked if they are happy and enjoying their boarding experience. One boarder writes, 'During this term two quizzes came out asking if we enjoyed boarding. The other about did we enjoy what happened at school.' The school has a School Council and a Boarders' Council. The Boarders' Council comprises one person from each year from each house. There is also a Green Committee which meets twice per term to consider environmental issues. The Twelve's, who are school prefects, meet regularly with the deputy headteacher (Pastoral) and the headteacher's wife.

There are sound relationships between boarders and staff and all pupils speak very highly of the staff. They particularly mention the matrons who they state are mother figures who are always there for them and can always sort out disagreements between them fairly. They state that they can always speak to the matrons if they miss home or are feeling sad. Boarders state that they like living in the houses and when asked if they want to change anything one boarder states, 'I think everything is just good here the way it is.' Another boarder states, 'The school's like a big family.' One boarder has made a cup for his housemaster as a reward for being, 'the best housemaster.' Boarders clearly feel at home within the school and are at ease with themselves and all members of the community. Another boarder writes, 'Boarding is great fun in our house. The people that look after us are very nice and all the boarders get on really well.' Staff at the school were also praised by parents for the sensitive way that they responded to an external tragedy which had affected members of the community.

## Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The school has three boarding houses and these are Hartnell's House, Guthrie House and Poole's House. Two of the houses accommodate boys and Poole's House, which is the largest, accommodates girls. All houses have recently been completely redecorated and refurbished and offer accommodation of an exceptionally high quality. They are decorated in different styles and pupils say they were consulted about the décor. Carpets in all of the houses are new and every house is homely, warm and well lit. All boarders' individual spaces in dormitories are personalised and all boarders have adequate space for hanging and storing clothes and a lockable space for storing valuables. There are study rooms in all of the houses and there are

also rooms where pupils can relax, such as games rooms and TV rooms. All of the houses have very large and well presented kitchens where fruit is available and where boarders can prepare other healthy snacks such as toast with spreads. There are very good bathing facilities in all of the houses. All showers, wash basins and toilets are in very good order and well maintained. Shower facilities are also private and all cubicles have doors and curtains. There is also now a toilet on the top floor of Hartnell's House which meets the recommendation of the last inspection.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a relatively new senior management team and all senior managers took up their posts around a year ago. The headteacher, deputy headteacher (Pastoral) and head of boarding have clearly gelled together as a team and demonstrate great enthusiasm for the school and a high level of concern for the pupils in their care. There is a recently produced statement of boarding principles and practice which accurately reflects what the school seeks to do for the pupils it accommodates. The headteacher and deputy headteacher (Pastoral) also ensure that all complaints, risk assessments and accidents are monitored.

There are sufficient staff employed in all the houses and all boarding staff teams consist of a housemaster or housemistress, live-in tutors, non-resident tutors and matrons. There are also gap students who assist the staff team. All staff with boarding duties are issued with a staff handbook that gives them clear guidance on safe working practices and includes key policies. They are also issued with job descriptions and employment manuals. They unanimously state that they are well supported by their line managers. All staff have received essential training such as safeguarding, fire, first aid, food hygiene and medication. They have also received additional training such as bereavement counselling. Staff state that they meet together weekly on a Monday morning to discuss all current issues. The senior management team meets on Monday afternoons. Staff demonstrate great enthusiasm for their jobs and state they love working in the school. One staff member states, 'We pride ourselves on very high pastoral care.'

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence suggests a consistent commitment towards improving equality and diversity in practice. Boarders' individual needs are well met and staff are continuously seeking to build on the school's very well established tradition of inclusion.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

| Standard | Action | Due date |
|----------|--------|----------|
|----------|--------|----------|

### Recommendations

There are no recommendations.