

St George's School

Harpenden Academy Trust

Sun Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 4TD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

St George's is a co-educational boarding school for young people aged 11 to 18. It is located in Harpenden. There are 1,368 young people on roll, 117 of whom board. Boarding accommodation is provided in three boarding houses adjoining the school. The boarding provision was last inspected in 2016.

Inspection dates: 9 to 11 July 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 1 November 2016

What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Recommendations

- Ensure that the shower rooms are maintained to a good standard and that repairs are carried out.
- Consider the use of mealtimes to enhance opportunities to support and engage with boarders.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Boarders thoroughly enjoy the boarding experience. The camaraderie and friendships provide them with peer support and ensure that activities are enjoyable. Boarders often choose to stay at the school for the weekend.

Parents spoken with highlighted the significant difference that boarding makes. It promotes academic achievement and encourages independence and organisational skills in good preparation for university and adult life. The majority of the last academic cohort secured their preferred university choice. Boarders have a focused direction and hold high aspirations. Their potential is identified and they are fully encouraged to reach their goals and succeed.

Boarders recognise the increased support that the introduction of regular one-to-one sessions with the staff has given them. The pastoral team works alongside the boarding staff to support the boarders' well-being. The staff use local agencies and youth groups to provide specific areas of support when required.

Pupil boarding committee meetings provide a format for gaining boarders' views and suggestions. The staff are responsive and make changes following ideas.

In the main, boarders said that the menus are healthier. The catering manager attends the food committee meetings. This enables the boarders to have a direct input into menu suggestions. The dining room experience has improved in terms of decor, size and the acoustics. However, the staff sit aside from boarders. This reduces opportunities for informal discussions over the evening meals.

Induction to boarding is good. Prospective boarders visit and can stay overnight. A buddy system operates to help new boarders with the routine. This supports those staying away from home.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Boarders' safety is assured. The staff monitor boarders' whereabouts, and staff contact those who fail to return after activities or at agreed times. The staff record incidents and categorise their concerns. Repeated incidents are discussed by the boarding team. This enables effective monitoring of the boarders' safety and welfare.

The staff have high expectations in regard to behaviour and boarders' conduct. Staff initiate meetings and provide mediation when tensions arise to provide a forum in which boarders can openly discuss their concerns. This encourages self-reflection and conflict resolution.

Recruitment checks are detailed and provide a work history that confirms the

candidate's experience and suitability to work at the school. The boarders are actively involved in some of the recruitment processes. This gives them an opportunity to help select the staff who will care for them.

The staff safeguard boarders effectively and efficiently. Responses to concerns are geared to boarders' welfare and well-being. The designated safeguarding lead and her deputies understand their roles and are accountable and available. These staff lead investigations and work in a multi-agency way to protect and safeguard boarders.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The boarding provision is led by an experienced and conscientious director of boarding, who works closely with the school senior leadership team. Boarding is interlinked with the school. Established internal meetings ensure that academic staff and boarding staff share information and work closely together. This is beneficial and ensures that those who require additional help or experience barriers to achievement are supported well. There is a strong focus on boarders' well-being.

The senior team has ambition and vision. The team members can identify the strengths and weakness of the provision and have worked hard to bring about improvements. Extensive refurbishment of the boarding accommodation is underway. However, there are several existing shower rooms that require routine maintenance.

The staff receive support and training for their roles. Leaders encourage staff to develop professional interests. Strategic-thinking days are a positive way to reflect on the boarding experience and make improvements. These opportunities enable consideration of how the staff achieve the shared objectives of the boarding provision and maintain the school ethos.

The calibre of the staff appointed since the last inspection is very encouraging in relation to their previous experience and the qualities that they bring to the roles. This has resulted in new staff who have a good skill-set and understand the pressures faced by boarders.

Complaints are taken seriously. The director of boarding pursues concerns with senior staff. Records sampled demonstrate good levels of exploration to ensure that issues are properly resolved. Responses are prompt and professional.

The chair of governors has an active role in overseeing the quality of the boarding provision. Governors are knowledgeable about the arrangements for boarding and arrange different opportunities for direct discussion with the boarders. They work closely with the staff to monitor the arrangements and make positive improvements.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC061220

Headteacher: Miss Helen Barton

Type of school: boarding school

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Inspectors

Deirdra Keating: social care inspector (lead)

Trish Palmer: social care inspector

Rosie Davie: social care inspector



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