

Cardiff Sixth Form College, Cambridge

89 Regent Street, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB2 1AW

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Cardiff Sixth Form College is an independent boarding school located in the centre of Cambridge. The school can accommodate up to 110 boarding pupils. At the time of the inspection, 94 pupils were boarding at the school.

The school registered with the Department for Education in May 2022. The head of boarding has changed since the last inspection. The current head of boarding is suitably experienced. The inspectors only inspected the boarding provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 June 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	requires improvement to be good
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The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 27 February 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Students benefit from attending this school. They are achieving academically and developing socially. Although there has been significant staff turnover, staff know the students well. The students feel cared for and part of the college community.

Students are given regular opportunities to share their views. They develop their ability to question and challenge. Students clearly express their thoughts and opinions. Some students have struggled to express themselves in this way before, and this demonstrates improved confidence.

There are high academic expectations at the school. Students recognise this and have high aspirations. Staff and parents report that students are doing well academically. Staff are proud of students' academic and personal achievements.

Students say that staff are available and can be contacted when needed. Students have a good rapport with their head of house.

Students and staff have a supportive introduction to boarding. Parents said that their children had been helped to settle in well. Staff were empathetic regarding the significant changes that new students experienced. The induction activities provided help them form as a new group.

Activities take place regularly. These are generally student led and organised. Senior managers, including the head of boarding, recognise that this is an area that requires further development.

Students are generally positive about the boarding staff team. However, staff turnover and changes have contributed to some unease. The changes have contributed to the boarding stability being compromised. Some students are resigned to having to get to know new staff again and again. Students said that there are some inconsistencies in staff approaches. Leaders and managers are aware of this and have taken action to address the issue.

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

Students consistently said that they feel safe. The heads of houses know them well.

There have been no incidents of students going missing from school. There have been no incidents necessitating physical intervention. Students' behaviour is generally positive.

Records indicate that staff intervene when students are struggling with their mental health. This includes linking students with an in-house counsellor and referring them

for external support. The head of boarding creates risks assessments to guide staff when these are needed.

Students said that bullying is not an issue at the school. The atmosphere is generally positive. Staff recognise that this does not mean that bullying does not occur. The governors show curiosity and question relationships to reassure themselves that there is no bullying.

Despite frequent changes, staff are aware of who the designated safeguarding lead is and how to raise safeguarding concerns. Leaders and managers are making changes to improve the interface between frontline staff and senior managers to try to reduce potential obstacles to any concerns being raised.

Students can identify a member of staff to whom they could talk. Students say that staff recognise if they are feeling unhappy or unsettled and will check in on them. However, students are unaware of who the independent person is, or how to contact them. Leaders and managers took steps to begin to address this during the inspection.

Two significant safeguarding concerns have recently occurred. One was dealt with appropriately from the outset. In a second instance, once the local authority designated officer became involved, appropriate action was taken. This included commissioning an investigation that included an independent person and another senior manager within the wider organisation. A second investigation then took place. Leaders and managers have taken actions in response to the learning from these investigations. It is too soon to assess the effectiveness of these actions. Leaders are aware of this and have plans in place to monitor these.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

There are several areas that need addressing before the characteristics of good leadership are consistently in place. Leaders and managers have identified the most significant issues. They have plans in place to address these. The other issues are less serious and there is capacity to take the necessary action. However, unchecked, they have the potential to affect the quality of care provided.

There has been a change to the head of boarding this academic year. There will be a further change, with a new person appointed as Head of Boarding from August 2025.

Management monitoring is not sufficiently effective. In one instance, the initial response to a low-level concern should have triggered additional curiosity from leaders and managers. This was not picked up by quality assurance or management oversight. Senior managers have since instigated changes to procedures. These should reduce the likelihood of this shortfall reoccurring and ensure additional scrutiny and oversight. These actions have not so far included a retrospective review

of responses to other low-level-concerns to understand whether this was a specific shortfall or indicative of wider shortcomings.

Supervision sessions between staff and managers are not recorded. There were no records of these made available during the inspection. Although staff feel generally supported, the absence of supervision records limits the opportunities for managers to monitor the quality of these and reduces opportunities for staff to share concerns. In addition, leaders and managers postponed appraisals for staff this year. While leaders have a rationale for this decision, it means that some staff have missed a further opportunity to formally explore their practice.

The last material change visit highlighted the need for leaders and managers to have greater oversight of fire safety arrangements in order to challenge the pace of some actions on the fire risk assessment. However, although leaders and managers are aware of the delays and are liaising with the site managers, they have not escalated concerns.

Although monitoring has not always been effective, some other areas for improvement have already been recognised by leaders and managers, for example staffing consistency and the provision of activities. Discussion with senior leaders and managers indicated an openness and willingness to recognise that improvements are needed in some areas. This readiness to acknowledge errors or oversights provides some assurance that the capacity to make the improvements is present.

Feedback from parents is positive. Parents said that their children are doing well and that the school has helped them to settle and make academic progress.

The staff team has a good understanding of the progress that students are making. Heads of house have a good understanding of students' backgrounds and experiences.

Appropriate training has been provided to equip staff with the skills and knowledge necessary to support the students. Leaders and managers recognise the need to target specific training and have arranged for staff to have mental health training.

Leaders and managers have reviewed the factors that have contributed to high staff turnover. They have taken action to address these. Recent appointments to senior boarding positions are external. These will help provide additional, fresh takes on the approaches to boarding.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Points for improvement

- School leaders should ensure that they review and monitor records of low-level concerns to identify any necessary learning and action.
- School leaders should ensure that monitoring and quality assurance arrangements are routinely reviewed for effectiveness and amended accordingly.
- School leaders should ensure that the actions taken to address students' lack of awareness of the independent person are reviewed for effectiveness and amended accordingly.
- School leaders should ensure that staff supervision sessions and appraisals take place, and that these are assured for quality and recorded.

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: 2689127

Headteacher: Dr Julian Davies

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

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