



Inspection Report on

Monmouth School

**Monmouth School
Almshouse Street
Monmouth
NP25 3XP**

Date Inspection Completed

04/06/2019 and 05/06/2019

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Description of the service

Monmouth School for Boys is registered by the Welsh Government as an independent boarding school and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is appointed to carry out inspections of its boarding provision. There are five boarding houses; three on the main school campus and two within walking distance of the school. At the time of our inspection, there were 160 pupils boarding at the school. The head teacher is Dr Andrew Daniel.

The school operates during school term times only and does not provide educational guardians or homestay arrangements.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

There is effective leadership and oversight of the boarding provision and systems for safeguarding boarders are well developed. The arrangements to promote their well-being are comprehensive although 'welfare plans' for boarders with specific or significant emotional or behavioural difficulties would benefit from further development. Staff at all levels present a child centred approach and are well trained and motivated.

The boarding culture is inclusive and supportive and feedback from boarders indicated that their experience of boarding is very positive. We observed supportive relationships between boarders and between staff and boarders. The standard of accommodation and the quality of catering is good.

2. Improvements

A range of improvements have been made since the last inspection which include:

- The role of the head of boarding has been further developed to include oversight of the boarding arrangements at the girls' school.
- Integration between boarders in the boys and girls schools.
- Comprehensive refurbishment of one of the boarding houses and ongoing refurbishment of some areas of the other houses.
- The training and development of boarding staff.
- The introduction of four deputy safeguarding officers and the ongoing development of their roles.

3. **Recommendations for improvements:**

No recommendations were made at the last inspection, which was a focussed inspection.

Our recommendations for improvement are set out in section five of this report. They relate to information in the boarders' handbook, welfare plans, DBS checks and records of complaints and sanctions.

1. Well-being

Summary

Boarders feel safe and have a positive sense of well-being. Their relationships with each other and with boarding staff are constructive, supportive and enabling. Structures and routines are in place and boarders have an appropriate balance between their studies and leisure time. They have access to a wide range of social and leisure opportunities.

Our findings

Boarders experience a sense of attachment and belonging and their cultural identities are respected. Their feedback indicated they felt safe at the school. One told us it was *'like being in a big family'* and one told us *'the best thing about boarding is always being able to be with my mates'*. Another told us *'it feels very natural in the boarding houses'*. We observed that boarders and staff engaged well together and that staff made themselves readily accessible to boarders. The boarding community was international and their feedback indicated that cultural differences were respected and valued. Managers confirmed that international cultural events were celebrated in addition to traditional British ones and that the religious and dietary preferences of boarders were facilitated. Boarders were seen to have developed friendships and peer support networks within the boarding community and to be relaxed and confident as they went about their routines. We saw that boarders enjoyed playing football in the grounds after prep time and that a 'hog roast' was taking place at one of the houses to celebrate the end of the school year. House masters told us that each house had a budget and made their own plans for these events in consultation with the boarders. This is evidence that boarders relate well together within a community that is inclusive and promotes individuality.

Boarders are encouraged and supported to maintain contact with people who are significant to them. We were told by boarders that they had regular contact with their family members and that most initiated contact via their personal mobile phones. Pay phones were also available in the houses and some parents contacted boarders directly. Staff told us they also contacted students' parents to discuss their progress, any concerns and to share information. Boarders have opportunities to maintain relationships with family and friends.

Boarders have access to a wide range of social and leisure activities. Boarders told us they appreciated their opportunities for social and leisure activities and that the balance between their studies and free time was good. They said they were able to take part in lots of trips and activities on weekends and regularly accessed the school's leisure complex and swimming pool. We saw posters on notice boards showing the activities that were planned after school and on weekends. In addition, the school had organised overseas trips to India,

Russia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and numerous European countries. Some students were involved in a combined cadet force (CCF) organised by the school and some social and leisure activities were arranged in conjunction with Monmouth Girls' School. We saw from our review of records that a general consent was obtained from parents on admission to the school for pupils to take part in activities. The head of boarding told us that additional consents were obtained and risk assessments undertaken for any high-risk activities such as canoeing. We did not see these consents and were advised that they were not always maintained after the trips or activities had taken place. The head of boarding acknowledged that the systems for obtaining and managing consents would benefit from review and further development. Boarders have opportunities to follow their interests and engage in a good range of activities to enhance their well-being and support their social development.

Boarders have a voice. Boarders were involved in a range of forums to share their views. Their feedback indicated that their views were listened to and that issues they raised were addressed appropriately. Minutes of boarders' forum meetings, chaired by the head of boarding, showed that boarders had raised issues relating to food, sports activities and the strength of WIFI during peak study periods. We saw that individual staff had been identified to address these issues and the head of boarding told us that these had since been addressed and resolved. In addition to the boarders' forum, a food forum was being developed. The head teacher chaired a school council that included boarding representatives. The head teacher told us that various senior staff visited the boarding houses on a regular basis to make observations and to consult with boarders about their experience of boarding at the school. They said that the findings of their visits informed the weekly meetings they held with the head of boarding and briefing meetings with housemasters. Helpline posters were displayed in the boarding houses and information included in the boarders' handbook was generally comprehensive and rights focussed. There was no information in the boarders' handbook about how children could make complaints or raise concerns with CIW although this information was included in the staff handbook. This information was also posted in boarding houses and available to boarders as a separate leaflet. We conclude that boarders are listened to and that their views are sought and valued.

2. Quality Of Care and Support

Summary

Boarders have access to comprehensive information about the school and attend a three day programme of induction. They have access to a wide range of support to promote their health, well-being and learning.

Our findings

Boarders have access to information and support during their transition and admission to the school. They told us they had been provided with information to inform their decisions about coming to the school and that they had attended a two day programme of induction when they arrived. Some boarders told us they had visited the school on an open day and some told us they had taken part in Skype (video call) conversations with the school to address any queries as a pre admission visit had not been possible. Information was available to boarders on the school's website and in the boarders' handbook. This included information about the various staff employed in the boarding houses, the professionals that visited the school and the services available in the local community. Boarders have access to a comprehensive range of support to promote their well-being.

Boarders have positive relationships with staff and peers and are offered effective emotional, physical, and therapeutic help and support. Each house employed a house master or house parent, a matron and assistant matron plus a resident tutor and a number of non-resident tutors. Peer mentors and gap students were also available and additional staff were employed in the junior boarding house. We observed that boarders were confident and comfortable within their houses and that the boarding staff were consistently professional and demonstrated humour and kindness toward them. The school had a qualified nurse to support the health needs of students in the school's sanatoriums and this included overnight support where necessary. A contract was in place with the St John's Ambulance Brigade to attend sporting events and several of the school's matrons had previously been qualified nurses. A general practitioner (GP) held a surgery at the school on a weekly basis and arrangements were in place for boarders to register with a local medical practice. The school employed a qualified counsellor who was based at the school a minimum of two days a week and a counsellor (psychotherapist) employed by the local authority's counselling service also visited on a weekly basis. The school counsellor and school nurse told us they were very busy and that boarders and other students readily came to see them if they wanted to discuss anything that was troubling them. The counsellor also attended meetings with house matrons to provide advice or to discuss any concerns about the children. The counsellor also assists with the training and supervision of the peer mentors, who are year 12 students. In addition, boarders were able to speak with the school's chaplain who held weekly services at the school chapel. Our consultation with

boarders confirmed they were aware of the various support services available to them and that they were satisfied with the quality of support they were provided. This is evidence that boarders' are well cared for and supported.

Boarders' support needs are identified and promoted. The school held some information about the health needs of boarders which had been provided during the admission process. Where issues arose that had not been identified prior to admission, staff told us that communication with the parents of boarders was good and that every effort was made to obtain further information about any necessary individual support. Support plans had been created for boarders with particular support needs although the plans we saw were focussed more on medical health issues than emotional or mental health support needs. Managers confirmed that, where some boarders had experienced mental health difficulties, support had been accessed from external specialist services. The head of safeguarding maintained some records in relation to boarders' welfare and some were held in their individual houses. Whilst information relating to boarders' support needs were in place, there were no specific 'welfare plans' as prescribed by the National Minimum Standards (NMS) that included evidence of the involvement and agreement of their parents. Boarders are well supported but 'welfare plans' require further development.

Boarders are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle. Boarders took part in a range of recreational and sporting activities and information in the boarders' handbook; and our observations at meal times, provided evidence that the school promoted a healthy lifestyle. A varied range of meals was provided at a central dining area which reflected a range of dietary needs and requirements. Evening meals at the junior boarding house were prepared and served on site within a dedicated dining room. Snacks and drinks were available in each of the houses. The school had policies on smoking and the use of alcohol which promoted the health of boarders. Boarders' health and diet is well promoted.

3. Quality Of Leadership and Management

Summary

Effective leadership and management arrangements are in place including systems for monitoring the quality of the boarding provision. Arrangements to safeguard boarders are established and resources to support their well-being are comprehensive. Staff are safely recruited and well trained and systems are in place to support communication between staff to promote the welfare of boarders. The boarding culture is very positive and the commitment by staff at all levels to the boarders and to continuous improvement is evident.

Our findings

The leadership and management team demonstrate that they consistently act with due diligence and have clear delegation of responsibilities and effective administration systems. The school is well led and managed and systems are in place to inform its ongoing improvement. A new head teacher had been appointed since the last inspection and the head of boarding had become responsible for the oversight of boarding at Monmouth Girls School in addition to the Boys School. A new head of safeguarding and four deputy safeguarding officers had been appointed to support the ongoing development of safeguarding practices and an external consultant had been employed to inform their work. In addition, one of the school's governors had been designated with responsibility for monitoring safeguarding practices. Constructive relationships had been established between the school and local safeguarding professionals and the school's safeguarding policy was seen to be comprehensive and subject to ongoing review and improvement.

In addition, systems had been created for regular meetings between the head teacher, the head of boarding and the various staff with boarding responsibilities to monitor boarders' welfare. Self -assessments had been completed by each boarding house to assist senior leaders in monitoring the overall effectiveness of the boarding provision. As referred to earlier in this report, the head teacher visited the boarding houses and consulted with boarders on a regular basis and reviewed the minutes of the boarders' forums to inform their annual report to the school's governing body. The head teacher told us that they welcomed conversations with boarders and their parents about the quality of the boarding provision and we saw that they engaged readily with boarders on a day-to-day basis. We noted that a meeting was taking place with the parents of a boarder during the period of the inspection. We saw that where complaints had been raised, records of these had been made in a dedicated complaints book. Information was not consistently and comprehensively recorded and did not always indicate the outcome or resolution of the complaint. Records included evidence that the school had liaised with external agencies where necessary in addressing complaints in accordance with their procedure. This indicates that arrangements to review and monitor the quality of care and support provided for boarders are robust, reflective and informed by quality assurance processes.

There are sufficient staff to safeguard and promote the welfare and well-being of boarders. A staff list was in place confirming the staff with responsibility for boarding duties. The staffing arrangements were comprehensive and all staff we spoke with demonstrated positive motivation and commitment to their respective roles. The recruitment records of staff with boarding responsibilities had been subject to review by the school since the last inspection. The head teacher told us they had found that the application forms completed by some staff had not previously included the specific dates of all periods of previous employment and that some Curriculum Vitae (CVs) had been accepted without full employment histories. They said they had undertaken risk assessments in regard to these appointments and that recruitment practices been improved to ensure any gaps in employment histories could be addressed and accounted for. We noted that the school's application forms made clear that full and gap free employment histories were asked for and that more recent appointments showed that the necessary recruitment checks had been undertaken. Whilst evidence showed that the school had undertaken checks with the disclosure and barring service (DBS) on the appointment of new staff, there was no evidence of any DBS checks being undertaken on any ongoing basis. The head teacher told us the school did not generally undertake ongoing DBS checks although there had been instances when they had done so.

Boarders benefit from staff who have been provided with training and guidance to support their welfare. All boarding staff were required to undertake Boarding School Association (BSA) or other training to support their development. Staff we spoke with confirmed they had undertaken training in safeguarding and demonstrated confidence and insight into their responsibility to safeguard and promote the well-being of boarders. The head teacher told us that over thirty staff had undertaken a higher level of safeguarding training. Staff told us that communication between boarding and school staff was good and that they received good support from senior leaders when necessary. Examples were provided where the head teacher and the head of boarding had made themselves available to support boarding staff where for instance staff absence or trips had affected staffing levels. The boarding staff handbook was accessible on line and had been subject to continuous updating and improvement. The guidance in the handbook had been cross-referenced with the National Minimum Standards and included hyperlinks for staff to access additional relevant information. Staff receive relevant training and guidance and have opportunities to develop skills to assist them in their role.

4. Quality of the Environment

Summary

Boarders live in a safe environment and have good access to facilities to promote and enhance their well-being.

Our findings

Boarders feel uplifted and valued because they are cared for in a comfortable, clean, homely and personalised environment. The five boarding houses were all suitably spacious and equipped to fulfil their purpose and were clean and well maintained. All boarding houses had dedicated areas for studying and access to WIFI was good. Each house had space for boarders to socialise and they were seen to enjoy free time and to play games in the grounds.

The boarding house for second year sixth form students had forty ensuite rooms whilst the other houses varied; with younger students in dormitory rooms and older students having rooms for just one or two students. All of the houses had a sufficient number of toilets, showers and wash basins and these were seen to be clean and well maintained. Showers were provided in individual cubicles with frosted glass so boarders' privacy was respected. Each of the houses had well organised arrangements for managing boarders' laundry which was undertaken centrally on the school campus. In addition, washing machines and drying rooms were available in each house and were mainly used for students needing sports equipment washed quickly. Each student had a designated place to put their clothes for washing and to collect them and there was a container for boarders to reclaim any clothes that went 'missing'. In addition, boarders had access to various school facilities which included a sports complex with swimming pool, a theatre and music studio, two sanatoriums and a chapel. Boarders' feedback about their accommodation was positive and that they had enough storage space and a place to keep personal items securely. Overall, this information indicates that the boarding houses and school facilities provide opportunities to enrich the lives of boarders and provide them with a positive boarding experience.

Boarders are cared for in safe and secure surroundings. The gatehouse to the school campus was staffed during school hours and porters locked up each night at 10.30pm. Secure access arrangements were in place for each of the boarding houses and visitors needed to ring the bell for admittance. Boarders were expected to sign in and out of their houses so staff knew where they were and roll calls took place at varying intervals on a daily basis. Records were seen to confirm that appropriate arrangements were in place for fire safety purposes and that regular fire drills had taken place in each of the boarding houses. The internet was turned off overnight and controls were in place to prevent boarders accessing unsuitable material. This is evidence that the boarding environment promotes the safety and well-being of boarders.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

5.1 Areas of non-compliance from previous inspections

No areas of non-compliance were identified at the last inspection and no recommendations were made for improvement.

5.2 Recommendations for improvement

We recommend that:

- Welfare plans are further developed for boarders with significant emotional or behavioural support needs and are agreed with their parents.
- Records of complaints include details of their resolution and outcome.
- Information is included in the boarders' handbook about their right to make complaints and to raise concerns with CIW.
- Records in relation to sanctions include a record of the effectiveness and consequences of any sanctions that are imposed.
- Consideration is given to undertaking ongoing DBS checks for staff with boarding responsibilities in addition to those made during recruitment.

6. How we undertook this inspection

We undertook an unannounced inspection on 4 June 2019 between 10am and 6.15pm and returned on an announced basis on 5 June 2019 between 10am and 5pm.

This was a routine scheduled inspection undertaken by two inspectors.

Information for this report was gathered from:

- Information held by CIW.
- Consultation with a coordinated group of twelve boarders.
- Impromptu conversations with boarders during observations in the boarding houses.
- Consultation with a coordinated group of house parents.
- Consultation with a coordinated group of matrons.
- Consultation with peer mentors and gap students.
- Separate discussions with the head teacher, the head of boarding and head of safeguarding.
- Viewing a sample of records, policies and procedures.
- Viewing the boarding houses and other school facilities.
- Observations of boarders during meal times and free time activities.
- Feedback of the inspection was provided to the head teacher, the head of boarding and the head of safeguarding.

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	Monmouth School
Head Teacher	Dr Andrew Daniel
Registered maximum number of places	Not Applicable
Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	27/11/2013 and 28/11/2014
Dates of this Inspection visits	04/06/2019 and 05/06/2019
Operating Language of the service	English
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	No
Additional Information:	

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No noncompliance records found in Open status.