

# Ellesmere College

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Julian Parker
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<b>Head / Principal</b>	Brendan Joseph Wignall
<b>Nominated person</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	15 January 2007

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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

Ellesmere College is an Independent Co-educational school for pupils aged eight to 18 years. Boarding is available for pupils aged 10 and above. Founded in 1879, the college is part of the Woodard Corporation, a group of Church of England Schools. The aims of the school are to educate young people for responsibility, leadership and service and to provide a broad well-balanced curriculum and enlightened pastoral care. Overseas and students of all faiths attend and are welcomed by the school. The school is set in grounds extending to some 70 acres, on the fringe of the market town of Ellesmere, in North Shropshire. The setting provides the base for the colleges sporting academies. Mixed boarding accommodation is provided in the five separate areas of the original school building, which is built in the traditional 'H' shape design adopted by the Woodard Corporation. Accommodation for older girls is provided in a separate house outside the main school building. Older boys, boarding accommodation is provided in a modern block located within the main school courtyard area. Care and support is provided to boarders by house staff, by staff with teaching duties who also have boarding responsibilities and by nursing staff. Other support staff, who do not have direct pastoral care responsibilities, contribute to the welfare provision for boarders. The Head of Boarding at the school is directly responsible to the Headmaster. Boarders are provided with an extensive range of 'out of school' recreational, creative and cultural activities effectively managed by risk management systems to ensure student safety.

### Summary

This report is of an announced full inspection undertaken as part of the three-year inspection cycle for Boarding Schools. The overall judgement of the service is good. Measures to help boarders be Healthy, Enjoy and Achieve and to make a Positive Contribution are outstanding. Meeting of boarders need for Staying Safe, Achieving Economic Wellbeing and the Organisation of boarding are good. Two recommendations are raised in relation to Staying Safe.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### Improvements since the last inspection

A wide variety of improvements has been made to this service since its last inspection in 2007, reflecting the school's commitment to progressing its overall development. Responding to the last inspection report, significant improvement has been made in the procedures for storage and administration of prescribed and over the counter medication for students, confirming the safe manner in which health-related matters are managed. Boarders and day students are made fully aware of the responsibilities of House Captains and Prefects for maintaining good order at the school, mainly by example rather than sanction, enabling students to feel safe. Students are encouraged to join in paid and unpaid activities when boarding at weekends to promote their sense of enjoyment and achievement. Boarder's contributions to the school's development through the school's council and access to means of communicating with friends in private have been addressed in a timely manner. Plans for the ongoing development of the school are currently taking place, resulting in improved and less disruptive maintenance of boarding houses and all students being provided with lockable storage for valuable and personal items. The concentrated efforts of the Senior Management Team specifically focused upon improving the quality and experience of boarding at Ellesmere College has been rewarded by a dramatic

reduction in recommendations emerging from this inspection coupled with a reported high level of satisfaction from parents and boarders.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Ellesmere College boarding students have their medical and health needs promoted through the provision of professional and comprehensive services. Students have access to excellent quality medical treatment and first aid at all times of day. Qualified medical staff are always available in the School's sick bay for the treatment of minor ailments and illnesses. A school appointed General Practitioner's surgery is held weekly and boarding students can, with staff assistance, be helped to access local community services at all other times. The school operates a comprehensive medication policy incorporating practice guidance that specifically addresses the use of non-prescribed medication and pupils who need to self-medicate. Medical and support staff are trained in the administration of medication and are proactive in promoting health education policies by integrating them into their daily contact with students. Formal consent for medication and first aid is sought from parents and guardians prior to a student's admission to Ellesmere College. School generated and supplementary General Practitioner electronic records are compiled for all students requiring any treatment, thereby confirming that the medical welfare of students is exceptionally well provisioned. Any changes relating to the health of students is obtained through the school medical team making direct contact with families. Effective communication ensures individual student's needs are up to date and can receive an appropriate informed response when students are taken ill. The school's dedicated accommodation for sick pupils is of a good standard for providing short periods of isolation, privacy and convalescence for those students who cannot go home when ill. Health related services have been shaped in recognition of the school's sporting academy status. Students are provided with access to ongoing, age-appropriate guidance and information about health and social issues. These are comprehensively addressed through the education curriculum. Boarders are well informed and readily identify who they may approach to discuss personal, health and social matters. The college has made substantial investment in improving the catering facilities and décor of the dining environment for the production and delivery of meals. The nutritional, religious and health-related dietary needs of students are well met by a team of catering staff responsible for the selection, preparation and provision of a broad variety of meals that address a diverse range of preferences. Catering managers demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes a good balanced and varied diet. Catering staff receive training about food hygiene and nutrition that effectively enables them to put this understanding into practice. Students eat their main meals in a central refectory. Students can also buy food from the tuck shop and have access to drinking water fountains around the college site. Boarders are provided with additional weekly provisions from the college kitchen to make evening and weekend snacks in the boarding houses. School menu planning effectively includes culturally appropriate meals, particularly recognising the integration of overseas students and encourages all students to try a cosmopolitan range of dishes. Flexible arrangements are made to take account of sporting students dietary needs and more generally promote healthy options and choice. Catering managers are receptive to students comments about the quality of the catering provision through the Student Committee food group. Boarders have access to excellent laundry facilities that return personal belonging promptly, repaired where necessary and in good condition.

## Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Ellesmere College protects its students and boarders from bullying by promoting a tolerant and accepting school culture. There is rigid enforcement of the school's anti-bullying policy and procedures, enhancing a school ethos that rejects oppressive behaviour of any type. Boarders are clear about what constitutes bullying behaviour and confirm that it is not acceptable. Staff and prefects are vigilant and act quickly and decisively to prevent such behaviour developing and in doing so, protect students from any potential harm. The school has further established its procedures for responding to child protection concerns. Students are aware of who they can approach to share any matters that trouble them. All school teaching staff, ancillary, support staff and prefects are briefed annually about the school's responsibility for safeguarding children, including how to practically identify child protection concerns. The school has established positive links with the area social services department and Local Safeguarding Children Board. The designated child protection officer and key staff attend external local authority training to improve their knowledge of national and local child protection procedures and ensure that the college child protection policy reflects local practice. The provision of enhanced training in child protection for dedicated house mothers would practically enhance the safeguarding of boarding students. The policies developed by the college relating to the management of behaviour are made explicit to students, boarders and their parents by a published code of conduct. The management of behaviour is extremely effective with the majority of students imposing high levels of expectation and self-control. Students respond positively. Prefects act as effective role models who do not give out sanctions without consultation with tutors. Prefects are fully aware of their responsibility in assisting with the maintenance of order and the high standards to be complied with by students and boarders. Standards of behaviour are very good negating the need for the use of any physical restraint. The school has a clear and effective complaints procedure with information being widely available to students, boarders and parents through well-written and widely publicised material. Students confirmed that they know how to complain and to whom they would make any concerns known. House masters and staff are proactive in addressing boarders concerns well before they become serious enough to become a recordable formal complaint. The regulator has received no complaints about Ellesmere College. The school has effective fire prevention and detection equipment and procedures. Students and boarders are protected through the regular testing and maintenance of detection equipment, extinguishers, fire alarms and other electrical equipment. Boarders have routinely scheduled opportunities to practise the evacuation of their houses. They expressed confidence in the safety and security of the college. Ellesmere College adopts a rigorous risk assessment approach for all aspects of safety of the premises, grounds, behaviour and activities to ensure that any areas used by students and boarding houses are free from avoidable or potential safety hazards. The school has effective strategies and discrete security in place to address any external risk to students. Identifiably high risk activities, both on and off campus, are well supervised and supported by proven, appropriate safety measures that remain under constant review. The school employs a systematic recording procedure underwriting its wide ranging risk assessment approach to assure its commitment of keeping all students as safe as is reasonably possible. Students confirmed that all school staff are respectful towards their needs for privacy while being responsible for their supervision, welfare and safety. Students do not feel intruded upon by staff and confirmed that the school afforded places within the houses and grounds where they could enjoy quiet time. Staff recruitment procedures and checks on other adults who have access to students generally comply with National Minimum Standards and requirements.

Recording processes are subject to ongoing improvement to evidence this. The school operate an established staff vetting procedure and articulates its awareness of safeguarding students by diligent recruitment practice. The thoroughness of this administrative process could be further improved.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Ellesmere College provides a considered and comprehensive range of academic support services and recreational opportunities that allow students to achieve both educationally and socially. The school embraces a diverse range of cultures and religious belief and actively promotes the equality of all students. Within a Christian framework the schools chaplain provides inclusive pastoral support and spiritual guidance in a format that welcomes the attendance of students of all faiths or denominations. The positive social contribution of overseas students to the school community is evidently embraced and well integrated into the fabric of the college daily life. The school offers and promotes an impressive range of recreational activities as a fundamental part of its curriculum and sporting academy credentials. These sporting activities are combined with community, cultural and environmental projects outside of class time that assist students to broaden their academic knowledge, personal interests, community awareness and sporting prowess. There are no evident onerous demands made upon boarders other than those which are self-imposed to improve personal standards by taking full advantage of the broad range of facilities provided. Boarders requiring individual personal support are clear about those staff from whom they can receive advice and guidance. Some established boarders take on active responsibility for providing support to their peers. Helping others is a part of the school culture. Boarders are provided with access to an independent listener who regularly visits the school to offer confidential guidance. The school is proactive in assessing and addressing the needs of students with minor disabilities and learning difficulties, particularly dyslexia, by including additional levels of learning support as required. The quality of the facilities for boarders private study, including furnishings, lighting, space and access to IT systems and computers is of a generally very good to excellent standard across the various college boarding houses. Ellesmere College provides a wide range of indoor and outdoor recreational areas for the use of boarders at appropriate times of the day. Boarders can undertake a range of activities individually, in small groups or as individual competitive houses with support from house staff whenever necessary. Weekend activities both on-and off-site are regularly timetabled for boarders. The nature and excitement of these is seasonally variable. The boarding houses provide space and choice for boarders to be alone or join in communal groups.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to securing the views of boarders. Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of their individual boarding houses by having daily contact and discussion with their house masters, house mothers and house tutors. Boarders say they can influence their individual house decoration, facilities and activities. Representatives from each boarding house are elected to contribute to the running of the school by making representations through the school council. The council is given importance by the Headmaster's support and attendance. Students have influenced a variety of issues such as catering arrangements and internet access speed in some boarding houses. Minutes of council meetings are circulated to the whole school, being prominently posted on house and communal notice

boards. Boarders have access to facilities that enable them to maintain private contact with their parents and families by personal email accounts, although the wireless Internet systems have not been of a consistently high quality across all boarding houses, resulting in some localised student dissatisfaction. The school has made significant commitment to remedy these issues and improve its on-line electronic overseas communications in recognition of the needs of its international students. Boarders have access to school phones and their own mobile phones outside of school hours. There are effective, individually sensitive and well-established procedures for introducing students to the school. Students new to Ellesmere College report that the introduction process had been informative and had helped them settle in quickly and become aware of school rules and routines. Younger boarders are supported by a 'buddy system' that offers practical guidance and friendship for the all important first few weeks. The school demonstrates and nurtures excellent relationships between its boarders and their house staff. Students are respectful towards their house staff and staff express considerable commitment to their boarders.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Ellesmere College provides a range of boarding accommodation varying in condition from satisfactory to excellent, some of which is located in buildings of historic and architectural interest. The accommodation provided at the school is comfortable, functional and individualised wherever possible to reflect boarders own interests. The more recently developed buildings on campus reflect the trend towards individual or double occupancy boarders rooms with bespoke furnishings and en-suite WC and bathing facilities. Traditional dorms in the 'old school' are predominantly multi-occupancy but offer ample individual space and lockable separate storage space for boarders and day students. Communal areas are well maintained and provide sufficient space for all boarders to convene and relax in comfortable surroundings. Boarding houses provide discrete areas for preparatory work where students do not wish to use their rooms. These areas are well equipped with IT connectivity and computer terminals. There are generally very good standards of maintenance and cleanliness throughout the boarding accommodation and accommodated students are encouraged to look after their boarding houses. All boarding houses are equipped with galley style kitchens for the preparation of snacks or supper by resident students. The communal WC and washing provision in older boarding houses is adequate in number and condition, providing boarders with appropriate levels of privacy. The college has introduced a phased process of renovation in progress geared to initially refurbish the most tired facilities. In the newer parts of the premises the requirements for privacy and disability access have been prioritised thereby accentuating the high quality of the accommodation. The school provides a tuck shop where boarders may purchase items of stationary, uniform and provisions. Trips to the nearby town are arranged for younger boarders outside of school hours by staff.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Ellesmere College has produced a concise Statement of Boarding Practice and Principles that clearly states its values and aims. The Student Handbook provides all required information for young people and their families about the broad range of the services available. This includes details specific to boarders, the philosophy of care and the expectations of the college. The management of boarding provision assumes an important position within the school's senior

management team. There is a very strong commitment to the development of boarding as an integral part of the continuing provision made by Ellesmere College. Boarding House staff are clear about established lines of communication and accountability. House masters, house mothers and house tutors are responsible for monitoring the welfare of their respective boarding houses and are able to regularly share concerns and achievements with the Deputy Headmaster (Pastoral), thereby demonstrating the schools deep commitment to caring for students living away from home. Staffing arrangements within the houses are subject to ongoing review to ensure that the needs of boarders are consistently met at all times either by duty staff or the direct availability of the House Master supported by responsible senior boarders. Boarding houses can draw from a complement of both resident and non-resident staff, tutors and house mothers to provide adequate levels of supervision for organised recreation or periods of quiet. Boarders know how to contact duty staff should they need to do so both during the day and at night. The supervision of boarders is none oppressive, effective and promotes individual self-responsibility. Boarders confirm this by saying that their relationships with house staff are very positive. The school provides induction training for all staff new in post including those undertaking boarding duties. Expectations of full-time staff are outlined by comprehensive job descriptions and reinforced by access to the school's developing policies related to boarding practice. Job descriptions accurately reflect the high expectations the college has from its boarding staff. Recruitment to the position of house master is by a proven competence and qualification route. Boarding staff receive ongoing access to developmental courses as a component of their in-service training. Collective boarding house practice is regularly monitored by the master with boarding responsibility and individual house master practice is effectively appraised. Record keeping relating to the everyday needs of boarders is of a high calibre. In these ways Ellesmere College ensures that boarders are effectively cared for by competent and trained staff. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. This is evidenced by inclusive written policies confirming actual practice that embraces the diversity of the broad range of English and overseas students attending Ellesmere College. The school has excellent contingency plans in place to address any foreseeable crises that may adversely affect any students, or boarders. Staff are aware of the arrangements for action to be taken in such circumstances. The school has a well-developed system of risk assessment that positively impacts on all areas of practice including any particular risks to students who board or go on residential trips away from the school.

## 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
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### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the schools system for recruiting staff who will work with boarders includes all information set out by the standard for verification (National Minimum Standard 38.2)

- ensure all staff with boarding duties, including house mothers are provided with opportunities continuing training in boarding, including safeguarding children (National Minimum Standard 34.1).