

# Ratcliffe College

Inspection report for boarding school

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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

Ratcliffe College is an independent, co-educational, Roman Catholic school located on the A46 between Leicester and Newark. The school was founded in 1847 by the Institute of Charity, known as the Rosminians, and has a strong Roman Catholic ethos; however, the School is inclusive in its attitude and accepts students of all denominations and religious traditions. Boarding provision is provided for Senior School and Junior Department students, between the ages of 10 to 18 years, all housed within the main school building. The Boys' boarding house located in the south wing is arranged on five corridors on the first and second floors of the main school building. The Girls' boarding house is arranged on four corridors situated on the first and second floors of the north wing of the main school building. Both boarding houses are protected by security pad access. The boarding accommodation is of a good standard, with bathing and toilet facilities having been recently refurbished. All Boarders have access to kitchenettes to enable them to prepare light snacks and hot drinks and have access to a variety of common rooms with televisions. Students have access to a comprehensive programme of activities and a wide range of facilities, which include an indoor Swimming Pool and Sports Centre, linked together by new changing rooms, and an all-weather sports pitch. A new sixth form centre has done much to enhance both the study facilities and leisure amenities for the school's older students. Boarding is offered as full boarding or flexible boarding, where a student can go home at weekends after all school commitments have been fulfilled, or occasional boarding, when a day student stays on occasional days or for longer periods by negotiation.

### Summary

This was an announced inspection undertaken by two Ofsted inspectors. The inspection looked at the Boarding School National Minimum Standards under the Every Child Matters outcome groups. This inspection revealed a School that is operating to a very high standard, the School was judged to be good in two of the Every Child Matters outcome groups and outstanding in all of the other four outcome groups, achieving an overall rating of outstanding.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

Since Ratcliffe College was last inspected the School has implemented many changes and improvements. The opening of the new sixth form centre has done much to improve the study and social provision, not only for the sixth form but the whole of the School, as it has freed up other areas of the School to be used more effectively by other age groups. The School through its regular communication with the student group has made many changes to the catering provision with numerous alterations to the menus to accommodate young people's preferences and wishes. The School has undergone a major refurbishment of its boarding facilities, with improvements to the showers and washing facilities clearly evident. The School has incorporated the Every Child Matters agenda into its Child Protection Policy and has amended its reward and sanctions policy to make rewards for older students more effective. Training for prefects has improved and a proper job description has been developed for them which covers general duties as well as more specific areas of their responsibilities. The School has continued to develop its programme of risk assessments to cover all foreseeable eventualities.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Students health and well-being needs are being promoted through effective services. Information regarding the health and medical histories of each student is gained as part of the school's admission process through proactive contact with families. Students have access to information and guidance with regard to health and social issues in age-appropriate formats. These areas are also addressed formally through the school curriculum. Students are supported to communicate their medical needs through a range of methods including the school's Medical Department, which is staffed by two qualified nurses. The school operates an established medication policy, procedures and practice guidance that specifically addresses the use of non-prescribed medication and pupils self-medicating. Policies and procedures are in place for the safe storage and administration of medication. Consent for first aid is sought from parents on a new form, however, some student's forms have not been updated and the old forms do not specifically include first aid. Students enjoy a wide range of good quality meals provided by the school's Catering Department. These meals offer a range of choices, are of a good quality and help to promote a healthy lifestyle. Vegetarian options are available at each main meal, which are taken in the school's central dining room. Students expressed a general satisfaction with the meals provided and acknowledged that through the School and Boarding Councils they are able to influence the school's menu planning. Students religious and health related dietary needs are met by a team of catering staff responsible for the provision and preparation of meals. All students are required to eat their main meals in a central dining room but can also buy food from the school shop and sixth form café and make snacks in the boarding houses.

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

The provision is good.

Student's safety is promoted because staff listen and take appropriate actions to ensure their welfare. Students are cared for in a warm and friendly atmosphere and state that the school respects their privacy and confidentiality, that any concerns they have are listened to and they are encouraged to behave appropriately. Ratcliffe College has a clear anti-bullying policy that is known by both the students and the staff. Students were clear that bullying is not tolerated and considered that bullying was not an issue within the school. Positive behaviour is rewarded and inappropriate behaviour is addressed in a fair and measured way. The school has a strong focus on promoting effective routes of communicating, with young people being actively encouraged to express opinions and influence the running of both the boarding houses and the school. All staff receive regular in-house child protection training and individual staff members have attended externally run courses specific to boarding school's. The Deputy Head ( Pastoral), the school's nominated Child Protection lead, is leaving the school at the end of the summer term to take up a headship elsewhere. It is intended that his replacement will attend external local authority training to maintain the school's knowledge of national and local child protection procedures and ensure that the school's child protection policy reflects local and national practice. Students expressed confidence in the safety and security of the school and boarders confirmed that they felt staff give a high priority to keeping them safe. All boarding accommodation is secure, with coded entry locks on all external and internal doors, codes are changed regularly to maintain their effectiveness. Ratcliffe College boasts a live-in security officer, has an effective network of Closed Circuit Television Cameras and has good external lighting throughout the campus. The school has a clear complaints procedure and information about this is available to students and parents through written material. Students

state that the school responds quickly to any concerns raised by them and students are proactively supported to raise any concerns or issues that they have. Completed parent questionnaires conducted as part of the inspection procedure clearly indicate that parents are generally happy with the school's responses to any complaints or concerns they may raise and that the school encourages a healthy dialogue. Students expressed confidence in the safety and security of the school. Students know how to protect themselves in an emergency because they regularly practise the emergency escape drill and staff receive fire training. Safe procedures are in place to protect students through the regular testing and maintenance of detection equipment, fire extinguishers and fire alarm systems and other electrical equipment at appropriate intervals. Environmental risk assessments are in place to ensure the school is fully informed about potential hazards to enable it to minimise risks. Students confirmed that staff are respectful of their appropriate need for privacy, whilst being vigilant in keeping a watchful eye on their safety. Staff understand their responsibilities to and appreciate the need for appropriate confidentiality in respect of the students welfare information and are careful to ensure that information is only accessible to those with a need to know. The school operates an established robust staff vetting procedure and staff demonstrate awareness of the need to safeguard students.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Individual and group support to students is given high priority by the school. Students are benefiting from living in a school where staff are focusing on their success, needs and achievements. Staff work in a very encouraging and supportive manner and consequently the care, social opportunities and activities are of a high standard. Students freely initiate interaction and seek help from various staff members on duty. The school provides an environment where the value of equality and diversity is understood, promoted and celebrated. The school community represents the individual and diverse identities of students and this uniqueness is celebrated in a way that promotes awareness and understanding. Ratcliffe College prides itself on the quality of its pastoral care, through the chaplain, the rector, the medical centre, the school's independent listener and the pastoral structure promoted by the excellent relationships witnessed between the young people and staff. Students are encouraged to discuss all matters related to their boarding life. Staff response is positive and they take seriously the issues raised. Students enjoy living in a school that has an effective equal opportunities policy and an ethos of inclusiveness. No student raised any issue about inappropriate discrimination either directly to the inspectors nor in the student questionnaires completed by a sample group of students prior to the inspection. Students talked enthusiastically about the school's ethos and the friendly relationships that exist between both students and the school's staff group, which they feel make the school both effective and special. Study provision within the school is very good, with ample space available for all boarders to work on preparatory or private study. The new sixth form centre is an excellent facility that has greatly enhanced the study and leisure amenities for the school's older students.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Students are actively encouraged to contribute to the running of the school because their views and opinions are valued, which results in social cohesion and a strong school identity. Students consider that they benefit from a supportive boarding experience, which is open and inclusive.

The school's systems gain students views about matters affecting their daily lives and the general running of the boarding houses. Regular tutor groups, School Council, Boarding Council and weekly prefect meetings with the Deputy Head and Headmaster provide times for students to raise concerns, discuss worries and express points of views. The staff respond to boarders in a supportive and thoughtful way and boarders are in turn positive about their relationship with the staff. This helps students to feel ownership of the setting and to be part of school life. Student contact with parents and families is promoted by staff who demonstrate a positive approach to relationships.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

The standard of accommodation is good providing a comfortable and safe environment for students. All boarders either have single lockable accommodation or if they share a room with others they have a lockable drawer or cabinet. Students expressed their satisfaction with their living accommodation and were happy with the level of internal security within the school, stating that very little was ever lost or stolen. Pocket money is kept secure in the school main office and is distributed either by office staff during the day or by boarding staff in the evenings and at weekends. Boarding areas of the school are clean, well decorated and well maintained, fit for purpose and are age-appropriate. Shower and toilet facilities have been extensively upgraded over the last few years. No boarders at Ratcliffe College are placed outside the school in lodgings. Students can choose to decorate their bedrooms with suitable pictures or posters, which helps to maintain a homely environment. All accommodation, surrounding buildings and the grounds are maintained to a high standard by a team of support staff. The College grounds are beautifully maintained and offer the students a safe environment in which to relax or pursue sporting activities. The school is located in a rural setting just outside the city of Leicester and the small market towns of Loughborough and Melton Mowbray. Regular weekend shopping trips are organised to enable boarders to replenish stocks of personal requisites and the school shop also stocks such items. The school has its own transport so as to enable the students to access the wider community. Sixth form students who hold an appropriate driving licence may, with the school's permission, bring their own vehicles on to the campus; however, strict rules are in place which limit the driving of other students in these vehicles.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

Students enriched care and educational experience are underpinned by the school's coherent philosophy, values and sound leadership. Ratcliffe College has a comprehensive range of documents that clearly reflect the school's commitment to boarding Practices and Principles. The students and parents handbooks give all required information to young people and their families on the services available. This includes the philosophy of care and the expectations of the school. The Headmaster and senior management team provide strong leadership to students and staff. They are actively involved in the day to day operation of the school and boarding houses. Students make good progress because staffing in the school is well organised and effectively managed. Their welfare is comprehensively monitored with regular discussions within staff meetings and effective communication systems that exist across the school site. The senior management team effectively monitor all relevant records, such as the complaints, child protection and discipline logs. This ensures proper scrutiny of all aspects of the students care. Any shortfalls in these areas are identified and addressed. This quality monitoring and other

similar initiatives contribute to periodic reports to the governing body and the school’s overall Development Plan. The school has a well-established crisis management plan that anticipates a wide range of foreseeable incidents or crises. The crisis management plan names individuals undertaking specific roles and appropriately allocates responsibilities with specific timescales. Boarding houses are organised and operated satisfactorily and offer appropriate protection and separation of boarders by both age and gender. The school is co-educational in the fullest sense of the term, with activities and leisure activities being offered across both boarding houses. The current boarding arrangement contributes effectively to boarders welfare, with both houses working closely together to ensure that experiences for both male and female students are similar. The physical condition, standard of decoration and equipment fit of both boarding houses are equitable. Boarding houses are appropriately staffed at all times and young people are adequately supervised most of the time; however, it was noted that on very rare occasions Gap students have transported students off the premises, to attend doctor or hospital appointments or have collected students from the railway station. The school is reminded that National Minimum Standard 32.5 states that, Gap students should not be left alone in charge of boarders without a member of staff being contactable on site or accompanying them when away from the school. Boarding houses are well supervised by staff; there are four adults and two gap students on duty each evening and at weekends; cover arrangements for staff who report in sick work effectively. Staff are aware of the whereabouts of boarders at all times, including when they are off the school premises on trips or visits. Two staff members sleep-in each night and boarders know how to contact these staff should they require assistance in the night. Good registers of boarders are maintained so that staff are aware of how many young people are resident within the boarding provision at all times.

**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 written parental permission has been obtained in advance from all parents for the administration of first aid to boarders. (National Minimum Standards 15.14).
- ensure gap students are not left alone in charge of boarders when accompanying them when away from School. (NMS. 32.5).

## Annex

## Annex A

### National Minimum Standards for boarding school

#### Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders' health is promoted (NMS 6)
- safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records (NMS 7)
- boarders' receive first aid and health care as necessary (NMS 15)
- boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill (NMS 16)
- boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems (NMS 17)
- boarders receive good quality catering provision (NMS 24)
- boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals (NMS 25)
- boarders are suitably accommodated when ill (NMS 48)
- boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered (NMS 49).

**Ofsted considers 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders are protected from bullying (NMS 2)
- boarders are protected from abuse (NMS 3)
- use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate (NMS 4)
- boarders' complaints are responded to appropriately (NMS 5)
- the operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare (NMS 13)
- boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school (NMS 22)
- boarders are protected from the risk of fire (NMS 26)
- the welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school (NMS 28)
- boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities (NMS 29)
- boarders' personal privacy is respected (NMS 37)
- there is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders (NMS 38)
- boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures; all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises are supervised (NMS 39)
- boarders have their own accommodation, which is secure from public intrusion (NMS 41)
- boarders are protected from safety hazards (NMS 47)

**Ofsted considers 2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders have access to a range and choice of activities (NMS 11)
- boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination (NMS 18)
- boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands (NMS 27)
- boarders have satisfactory provision to study (NMS 43)
- boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas (NMS 46)

**Ofsted considers 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.**

**Annex A**

## **Making a positive contribution**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school (NMS 12)
- boarders receive personal support from staff (NMS 14)
- boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families (NMS 19)
- new boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in (NMS 21)
- boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school (NMS 30)
- there are sound relationships between staff and boarders (NMS 36)

**Ofsted considers 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.**

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- boarders' possessions and money are protected (NMS 20)
- boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation (NMS 40)
- boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation (NMS 42)
- boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities (NMS 44)
- boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day (NMS 45)
- boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school (NMS 50)

**Ofsted considers 51 the key standard to be inspected.**

## **Organisation**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- there is clear leadership of boarding in the school (NMS 8)
- crises affecting boarders' welfare are managed effectively (NMS 9)
- the school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare (NMS 10)
- risk assessment and school record-keeping contribute to boarders' welfare (NMS 23)
- boarders are supervised adequately by staff (NMS 31)
- staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site (NMS 32)
- boarders are adequately supervised at night (NMS 33)
- boarders are looked after by staff which have specific boarding duties, and have received adequate induction and continued training (NMS 34)
- boarders are looked after by staff which follow clear boarding policies and practice (NMS 35)
- the welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 51)
- the welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

**Ofsted considers 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.**