



Inspection Report on

Llandovery College

**Llandovery College
Llandovery
SA20 0EE**

Date Inspection Completed

25 March 2021

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About Llandovery College

Type of care provided	Boarding School
Registered Provider	Not Applicable
Registered places	147
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	2 March 2016
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	Working towards

Summary

Llandovery College is an independent co-educational boarding and day school for children aged four to eighteen years old. The school is located in the town centre of Llandovery, Carmarthenshire and at the time of the inspection was providing boarding accommodation for 84 children. The day-to-day operation of the school is undertaken by the Warden and the senior leadership team, including the Head of Boarding.

Welsh Government requested Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and Estyn Inspectorate undertake a joint announced inspection of Llandovery College, due to concerns relating to the robustness of welfare and safeguarding arrangements for children.

We found safeguarding policies and procedures to have been reviewed and strengthened over the past 18 months, and current safeguarding arrangements are generally robust. Children spoke positively about their experiences of boarding at the school; they feel safe and well supported by staff.

Whilst covid-19 restrictions have impacted on children's boarding experience, measures have been put in place to support their emotional well-being. Children's views are actively sought and valued by the senior leadership team and staff group and their contribution to the day to day operation of the school is evident.

Improvements have been made to the boarding environment, with a rolling programme of major works underway, to provide boarders with a safe and comfortable environment.

Well-being

Children have a voice; they are able to express their views, individually and through formal mechanisms within the school; their rights are promoted. They are regularly consulted on matters of importance to them, most recently in relation to the impact on their well-being of the Covid 19 restrictions. At an individual level, children are provided with information on how to raise a concern or make an informal or formal complaint. The school council had contributed to the development and review of the children's concerns and complaints procedure and devised an easy read version of the school's anti-bullying policy. Children's complaints are acted upon. However, written records do not demonstrate that they are informed of the outcome, nor that they are satisfied with the action taken to resolve their complaint.

Alongside the school council, a boarders council deals with boarding matters, and in response to children's dissatisfaction with school meals, a separate food council has also been established. Comments from children have been taken on board by senior management and catering services, with a new menu launch due after Easter 2021, including a "sports fuel" menu.

Children are appropriately safeguarded and their physical and emotional well-being is promoted. Safeguarding arrangements have been strengthened; policies and training provide guidance to staff and adherence to procedures is evidenced. Action is taken to protect children from bullying.

Children's well-being is accorded a high priority and action is taken to monitor and address issues relating to children's physical and emotional health. Children have positive relationships with boarding staff and are able to discuss any worries. They are able to access support within school, and are provided with information on how to access external support. Infection control measures are in place to reduce the risk of children contracting Covid-19.

Remedial works to boarding houses is being undertaken, to improve the standard of accommodation and to provide a more comfortable living environment for children. Systems are in place to monitor health and safety matters, including campus security.

Care and Support

Children know and understand the arrangements in place to support their well-being and are able to access support, when needed. Boarding children are given house handbooks, providing information about day to day boarding life at the school. The handbook includes brief guidance on how children can seek help if they have any problems or worries. Although the handbook does not provide information on complaints, safeguarding or independent visitor arrangements, this information is on display within the boarding houses, together with contact details for organisations which provide a range of services to support emotional well-being. Children attending from overseas are provided with additional support from a designated member of staff. Discussions with this staff member, confirmed they knew the children well and had a good understanding of their individual needs. Children told us about the “family environment” within boarding houses and the positive relationships they had with boarding staff. They knew who to go to if they had any worries or concerns and most children felt that they would be listened to and supported in this respect.

The school’s organisation of boarding contributes to children’s wellbeing. Staff consider the well-being of children to be a core value of the school and it is accorded high priority. Boarding staff spend a great deal of time with the children in their houses and get to know them well. The impact of Covid-19 restrictions on boarders is recognised; a recent survey of children regarding their well-being provided staff with information, which helped them to address their worries and concerns. Weekly meetings of house masters and house mistresses include a standing agenda item on children’s welfare and discussions cover a range of issues, including welfare plans, safeguarding, health and safety, children’s voice, activities and catering arrangements. Broader activities are arranged alongside work undertaken with individual children, to encourage positive behaviours, including a curriculum based well-being programme and an “anti-bullying” week. Additional action is taken to identify and deter bullying, with school council members available as points of contact for children who want to raise a concern. An electronic recording system allows staff to record information about individual children on a single record, ensuring that relevant staff have access to the most up-to-date information, in order to best meet children’s needs. Staff are made aware where there are particular concerns about individual children, welfare plans are in place, providing guidance to staff. Records are reviewed at weekly pastoral management meetings to determine whether any additional action is required. Although the school does not employ a school counsellor, parents are sometimes “signposted” to independent counselling services, if children do not meet the threshold for statutory services. Children are able to make an appointment with the counsellor for an initial consultation, free of charge, though subsequent sessions require payment.

Environment

This was a focused inspection of the school. Our inspection has therefore primarily considered the extent to which the boarding environment contributes to children's health and safety.

Children's health and safety is promoted through the measures in place to reduce the risk of children contracting Covid-19, and enhanced cleaning arrangements are in place. Use is being made of lateral flow testing for children on their return to school and ongoing temperature checks are undertaken. Changes to the boarding arrangements have been made, with a reduction in boarder numbers.

Children health and safety is promoted through an improving living environment. Children told us they were pleased with the improvements made, though some children commented on the need for further improvements. At our last inspection, we noted that some of the boarding houses required significant remedial works to bring the fabric of the buildings up to an acceptable standard. A rolling programme of major works to repair, renovate and refurbish boarding accommodation has since been drawn up and is currently well underway, alongside an ongoing maintenance schedule.

Children's health and safety is maintained through the systems in place to monitor and address environmental hazards. Arrangements are in place for the regular servicing of heating, electrical installation and fire safety equipment. Maintenance schedules are in place and priority requests are completed promptly. Externally commissioned fire risk assessments have been completed for main campus and off campus boarding houses, with accompanying action plans using a "red, amber, green" system to detail the action required to address identified risks. Actions classified as high priority (red) are recorded as having been completed or are deemed to be ongoing. Emergency evacuation plans are in place and fire drills are undertaken, each term.

Leadership and Management

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that children are safeguarded, though minor amendments are needed to fully accord with new safeguarding guidance. Action has been taken by the school's senior management and governors to review and strengthen safeguarding arrangements, and routine oversight by the named governor with responsibility for safeguarding is evident. However, regular training specific to governors' role and responsibilities would ensure they are all equipped with the knowledge and skills required to provide robust challenge on safeguarding matters. Recording procedures and regular safeguarding meetings evidence oversight and management of wellbeing and safeguarding concerns, including allegations of bullying. However, the quality of some recordings require improvement. Where necessary, referrals to outside agencies are made by the designated safeguarding person. Good relationships have been established locally, with police and children's mental health services. In general, referrals made to social services departments have been appropriate and timely.

The frequency of internal safeguarding training has increased and the scope of training sessions provide staff with an understanding of their own role and responsibilities. Staff told us that they have a good understanding of policies and procedures and records demonstrate that staff adhere to written guidance. Additional external training is provided for staff with designated responsibilities. However, it is difficult to gain a general overview of staff training, in the absence of a training matrix for boarding staff, which would inform staff skills mix, supervision and staff development. We cannot be sure, therefore that all boarding staff have the training they require to fully meet children's needs.

The designated safeguarding person (DSP) carries out their duties competently and provides clear guidance to the staff team. However, processes rely heavily on this individual. Strengthening the role of the deputy DSPs would ensure that processes continue to operate effectively in the absence of the DSP.

Records indicate that the recruitment of staff is robust. However, accompanying documentation, including references and application forms are destroyed in line with the school's data retention policy, following appointment. The checklist within staff files does not currently evidence that employment gaps have been discussed, or provide details of the action taken to verify the authenticity of references.

Whilst generally safeguarding processes have improved, we found significant shortfalls in the implementation of robust staff disciplinary procedures. Disciplinary hearings linked to alleged safeguarding issues had not been taken to conclusion, and staff had left their employment prior to investigations being completed.

Measures are in place to ensure a prompt response to complaints from parents, with

issues raised generally resolved at an informal stage. However, formal complaints escalated to the governing board have not consistently received a response which accords with the school's complaints policy.

Areas where improvement is required

- Ensure staff disciplinary hearings linked to alleged safeguarding concerns are taken to their conclusion and information is shared with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and other regulatory bodies, where appropriate.
- Strengthen the role of deputy Designated Safeguarding Persons to avoid over reliance on one person leading on all safeguarding matters.
- Strengthen oversight by governors, through regular training specific to their role and responsibilities in order to ensure the general governing body have the knowledge and skills required to provide robust challenge to all safeguarding matters.
- Ensure the Wales Safeguarding Procedures inform decision-making regarding thresholds and timeliness of referrals, those responsible must check on the progress of referrals if feedback is not received regarding the outcome.
- Update the safeguarding policy, and internal training materials, to fully accord with the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (regarding definitions of abuse, safeguarding arrangements for pupils aged 18+). Provide guidance to staff on access to the safeguarding procedures website and app.
- Strengthen the recording of all safeguarding matters, including risk assessments and minutes, to ensure records routinely include the name of the individual who has completed them, meeting minutes include the names of attendees and where actions are listed, and it is clear who is responsible for carrying them out. Handwritten records must be easy to read.
- Ensure all complaints all dealt with in line with the school's complaints policy, ensure records of children's informally resolved complaints include the child's signature, indicating they have been informed of the outcome, and are satisfied with the action taken to resolve their complaint.
- Develop a training matrix for boarding staff.
- Confirm within staff employment files that any employment gaps have been discussed and provide details of the action taken to verify the authenticity of references.

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