

Tudor Hall School

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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

Tudor Hall School is an independent boarding school for girls aged 11-18, located just outside the town of Banbury in Oxfordshire. The school currently accommodates 250 boarders and an additional 81 girls attend the school on a day basis. Boarding is offered on termly basis with occasional weekend breaks during each term. The school has an explicit Christian ethos but does accept pupils from different religious faiths. The majority of pupils are based in the UK with a small number of overseas pupils currently attending the school.

Boarders are housed in six main areas of boarding accommodation on the school site, organised according to age. Some of the accommodation is modern and purpose built, other areas are converted parts of the older main school building. The school has extensive recreational facilities for boarding pupils including astro-turf sports pitches, a gym and swimming pool. There is a new library and dining room. The school has extensive and attractive grounds surrounded by rural countryside.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

The purpose of this visit was to conduct an announced key inspection of the boarding provision. During the inspection all of the key national minimum standards for boarding schools were inspected. Some additional standards were also inspected.

The overall standard of care for the boarders is outstanding. The outcome groups relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and organisation are assessed and judged as outstanding. The outcome group for achieving economic well-being is assessed and judged as good.

The school continues to provide the boarders with a consistently high standard of care. The boarders live in a safe, secure and supportive environment. Boarders are looked after by a trained, competent and a committed team of boarding staff who take an active interest in the boarders and get to know them well. Boarders enjoy good relationships with the boarding staff and express their confidence in being able to talk openly with them about any issue or concerns. The head and head of pastoral care provide excellent management oversight of the school, which ensures that the boarders are kept safe and that high standards are achieved.

The school fully engages with the inspection process and uses this and its own internal monitoring and reviewing systems to reflect, review and improve boarding practices. The school is fully aware of some shortfalls with its boarding accommodation. It is part way through an extensive programme of reorganisation

renovation and refurbishment which is providing outstanding improvements to the standard of accommodation.

Boarders feel safe in the school and enjoy their boarding experience. The school views itself as a community and boarders are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and an active interest in the welfare of others.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has been proactive and addressed all of the recommendations made following the last inspection.

The school was recommended to review systems for the administration of medication and for the risk assessment of boarders who self administer their medication. A complete review of the administration of medication has been undertaken in consultation with a pharmacist, school doctor and school nurses. New arrangements are robust and ensure consistency and continuity in the receipt administration and recording of medication. Risk assessments are undertaken for those boarders who wish to take responsibility for the self-administration of their medication.

The school was recommended that it ensures that staff recruitment files contained clear evidence of telephone confirmation of references having been undertaken. Recruitment files show that telephone verification with an applicant's current or last employer is routinely undertaken and recorded.

The school was asked to clarify how boarders are able to make a complaint. The school has devised and implemented a boarder's complaint procedure. Details of this are made available to, and understood by, all of the boarders.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health and well-being of boarders is promoted exceptionally well through the school's personal, social and health education programme, the health centre, school doctor and boarding staff. Younger boarders receive guidance on personal care from the school's nursing staff. Older boarders are encouraged and supported to take on personal responsibility for their health-care and to independently access community health services. Positive steps are taken to raise the boarders' awareness of social and health issues including alcohol and illegal substance abuse.

The school provides excellent medical support. The boarders' health and welfare is safeguarded by the school's policies and procedures for administering medication, providing treatment and first aid. On site medical care is provided by four registered nurses who provide continuous nursing cover. Boarders comment positively of the support provided by the nursing staff. Younger boarders are comforted by the easy access to the nurses when they are feeling unwell or homesick. Boarders medical and health needs are fully met. The school has close links with a local medical

practice where each of its doctors provides a specialism. The school doctor provides a weekly surgery in the school's well-equipped health centre. Boarders with specific health needs are supported well to be fully integrated into school life and their health needs are subject to agreed welfare plans. The doctor reports that the girls receive, 'excellent' health care and that the nurses and staff know the girls really well and therefore notice the slightest change in health or presentation.

School nurses provide training to school staff on response to allergic reactions and any specific medical regimes required for individual boarders. School staff are trained in first aid skills, and in the management of medication by a local pharmacist. These arrangements ensure that boarders' ongoing medical needs are dealt with promptly by suitably trained and qualified staff.

The school has revised its medical welfare policies and procedures in consultation with the school doctor, pharmacist and school nurses. There are robust procedures that provide safe administration of prescribed and non-prescribed medication both on site and during school trips and visits.

The catering provision is an outstanding aspect of the school that clearly demonstrates its commitment to the promotion of healthy eating. The boarders and staff are provided with healthy nutritious balanced food that meets their individual dietary needs. Special diets are fully catered for. The menu provides an excellent choice and variety of food and incorporates meals from many countries in addition to themed meals. The boarders have a good understanding of healthy living. The large majority of the boarders indicate that they enjoy a balanced and healthy diet. Boarders are fully consulted about the food provided. The school's food council meets formally with the catering team to discuss menus and provide feedback. The catering team and school management are very responsive to girls' requests and observations.

All main meals are taken in the school's purpose built dining room. This is furnished and equipped to a high standard and provides a light spacious environment promoting the social occasion of mealtimes. Meals are self service and boarders are free to make their own choices. The catering department was given a platinum award for healthy food choices, high standards of hygiene and commitment to training in food hygiene following the last visit from the environmental health officer.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Safeguarding is a clear priority within the school. Excellent practices and procedures have been established by the school that safeguard the boarders, promote their welfare and ensure that they live in a safe, secure and caring environment.

The school effectively raises the boarders' awareness of bullying including cyber bullying. Policies and guidance clearly indicate that bullying is not acceptable. Staff and boarders understand that they share the responsibility to act promptly if any

incidences of bullying are suspected or occur. The overwhelming majority of boarders state that bullying is not an issue in the school. Boarders express their confidence in staff responding to and dealing with any incidents or concerns. Staff and boarders feel that the organisation of boarding by year groups is a significant contributory factor to the absence of bullying in the school. Boarders receive good guidance and advice on the dangers of cyber bullying. Positive steps are taken to ensure that, while maintaining appropriate levels of privacy, the boarders' access to the internet is monitored to protect them from unsolicited and unwanted contact and access to inappropriate websites. Boarders sign up to an acceptable use of the internet agreement before being provided with email accounts and access to the internet. Boarders understand the potential dangers of not adhering to the school's guidance and procedures and there are very few intentional breaches of the agreement.

The school has robust procedures in place that ensure the boarders' welfare is fully promoted and that they are protected from abuse. The school has developed strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The school's policies and procedures have been scrutinised by the LSCB to ensure that they comply with current requirements. The school ensures that all of its staff have the knowledge, understanding and skills required to respond to child protection concerns. Regular training is provided to the whole staff team on child protection and safeguarding awareness. Staff are fully aware of the procedures that are in place and demonstrate a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in responding to an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The response to any child protection concern is led by one of the school's designated people who have completed appropriate training for this role. The LSCB confirms that there have been no recent safeguarding issues at the school. An officer from the board explained that there is a 'good working relationship with the school, not based on any actual concerns but on practical involvement and regular consultation.'

The school has established robust and consistently applied systems and processes for the recruitment and vetting of staff and other adults closely associated with the school. The recruitment and vetting process for boarding staff meets the requirements of the national minimum standards. Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks at an enhanced level are obtained before staff are allowed to take up their employment. The school extends enhanced CRB checks to adults not employed by the school including governors, named taxi drivers, subcontractors and other adults living on site. These measures are a significant contributory factor to the safeguarding of boarders and help to ensure that they are not cared by staff or have contact at school with adults who may cause them harm.

Boarders know how to complain and to raise concerns. Boarders are advised about, and have easy access to, their own complaints procedure. However, boarders have to date chosen not to use this and express their confidence in being listened to by a number of adults within the school. Boarders are fully aware of how to contact a number of external welfare agencies and national helplines. This ensures that boarders have a choice of seeking advice or raising concerns with parties independent of the school. Parents have access to information on the schools

complaint procedures. Very few formal complaints have been made and those that are received are dealt with promptly and effectively.

The house staff follow practices that demonstrate a high level of respect for the boarders' privacy. Boarders confirm that they have no issues or concerns regarding their privacy. Boarders advise that staff always knock on dormitory doors and wait for their response before entering and that supervision at bath and shower times is not intrusive. Boarders have access to their own mobile phones, and there are a number of phone booths around the campus, which ensures that they can make and receive phone call in private if they choose to do so.

The successful management of behaviour is a significant aspect of the school. Boarders understand that the school's rules are devised to keep them safe. Boarders have a clear and good understanding of the level of behaviour that is expected from them. Standards of behaviour are extremely high. Boarders were seen as being helpful, courteous and considerate to visitors, staff and other boarders and pupils. Boarders are encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their behaviour. Good behaviour is publically acknowledged and rewarded through the whole school's manners system and individual boarding house reward schemes. The earning of age appropriate privileges and rewards reinforces good, helpful and considerate behaviour and is seen by the boarders as a great motivator. Boarders are fully aware that there are consequences for unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour. Incidents may result in a sanction or, on rare occasions following a more serious misbehaviour, a punishment being issued. Boarders are routinely warned before a sanction is given. This provides them with the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and to consider how it is impacting on others and to take action to modify it. Sanctions and punishments used by the school are age appropriate and proportionate and records of these are kept.

The school takes positive steps to keep the boarders, staff and visitors safe from fire and other hazards. Established systems are in place for the regular checking and servicing of fire safety and detection equipment. However, for a short period of time checks to the emergency lighting was not completed in accordance with agreed schedules. The reason for this has been identified by the school and appropriate action has now been taken to rectify this. The potential impact to the boarders was reduced as other related fire safety activities did take place and did not identify any faults. Boarders are fully aware of the individual boarding houses' fire emergency procedures and routinely participate in practice evacuations. Recent testing of the fire alarms undertaken in the main building has not been recorded. A fire risk assessment is in place and has been reviewed. .

There is an established culture of risk management within the school. There are established and robust systems for the effective implementation, review and updating of risk assessments completed on all areas within the school, individual boarding houses and on activities taking place on and off site. Positive steps are taken to reduce levels of risk and this helps to ensure the safety of the boarders. The physical environment is well maintained and no significant actual or potential health and safety hazards were identified during the tour of the school, grounds and

boarding.

Boarders feel safe in the school and feel protected by the school's effective security systems. Effective measures are taken by the school to ensure that boarders do not have unsupervised contact with adults who have not been checked by its vetting procedures. Visitors are required to sign in and wear identity badges at all times. Contractors working in the school and boarding houses during term time are supervised while they are on site. All boarders feel reassured and comforted by the access and availability of staff. Boarders say that, 'staff are around all of the time and there is always someone in the houses.'

Boarding accommodation is reserved for the use of the boarders and day pupils who make use of some communal areas. A small number of external groups have restricted access to some of the school facilities during term. Group leaders are briefed on child protection procedures and enter a contractual agreement that clearly sets out the restrictions regarding the group's movement around the campus and contact with the boarders and pupils. Accommodation agreements are in place clearly advising those adults living on site, but not employed by the school, about the restrictions regarding access to school areas and unsupervised contact with the boarders and pupils .

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The extra-curricular activities programme is clearly a high priority for the school and the staff invest considerable time and energy providing an outstanding programme. Boarders participate in a wide range of group, team and individual activities during the week and at weekends. Both competitive sports and the arts have a high profile in the school enabling boarders to pursue personal interests and preferences. Boarders are encouraged and supported to participate and compete in county and national competitive sports and events. Weekend house trips visits and events are appreciated by boarders as are the opportunities to participate in a number of overseas trips.

The level of pastoral support and guidance provided by the school is excellent and highly valued by the boarders. All of boarders identify a number of adults, including the head of pastoral care, chaplain, school counsellor, nurses, group tutors and housemistresses, who they are confident about talking to about personal issues and concerns. Boarders describe the adults as being approachable and keen to help resolve any difficulties. Parents comment positively on the support provided to their children during periods of home sickness and family crisis. Boarders who experience personal difficulties receive a high level of individual support from staff who know them well. One of the boarders comments that, 'staff are really good at knowing when something is bothering you.' The level of awareness of amongst staff of boarders with significant welfare issues is high and welfare plans identify the action being taken to support them. The boarders also provide each other with emotional and practical support. A boarder explained that, 'boarding with the same year group

means you all have the same understanding of the issues you may be having.'

Boarders do not experience discrimination. There is no evidence of boarders feeling isolated or excluded. The school provides a caring and inclusive environment where pupils are valued as individuals. The small number of international pupils are welcomed into the community and helped to integrate. The school is an Anglican community but welcomes and provide practical support to those of other faiths.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school. There are a number of established forums which the boarders use to express their views and opinions on aspects of the boarding provision .These are fully integrated into the boarding practice and include questionnaires, suggestion boxes and house, school and food councils. Boarders take an active part in the school's selection and recruitment of staff. Consultation with boarders is effective and meaningful. Boarders feel listened to and influence changes that are significant to them, for example changes to: menus and food in houses; printed service sheets for Chapel; clothing rules; and revision of policies including the anti-bullying policy.

The school fully understands the importance of boarders being able to maintain regular contact with their families and friends and takes positive steps to enable this to happen. Boarders have access to personal mobiles phones and landlines in the houses. Boarders can use mobile phones during agreed times, dependant on their age and level of privileges. Arrangements are flexible and accommodate the needs of overseas students and those boarders who need more frequent contact with home during periods such as homesickness and family crisis. Boarders have individual email accounts and school computers have Skype installed allowing face to face contact. Older boarders have access to social networking sites which provides a much appreciated alternative means to keep in contact with family and friends.

School maintains regular contact with parents by phone, emails newsletters, meetings and school events. Parents comment positively on the contact with the school and the accessibility to the housemistresses.

New boarders are welcomed into the school and allocated a 'keeper' to look after and befriend them. Programmed events are held before and at the start of term to promote interaction and friendships. New boarders are provided with handbooks and have access to areas of the school's internet which provides good information about how the school and houses are organised and details of the help and support that is available. A sensitive approach is provided by staff to support girls new to the boarding environment who may be homesick

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders' possessions and money are protected. Boarders are provided with secure lockers in their boarding house in which they can keep tuck and valuables. Money and valuables can also be handed to the housemistress for safe-keeping.

There are separate boarding houses for the different age groups. The standard of boarding accommodation is variable. Some boarding houses are purpose built and provide comfortable study-bedrooms decorated and furnished to a high standard. Houses located in the older part of the campus are of a satisfactory standard and mainly consist of dormitories shared by a number of boarders. The board of governors and senior management team aspires to improve the standard of accommodation for all boarders. The school is part way through an extensive improvement programme consisting of both refurbishment and some new build. All boarding accommodation is clean and well maintained. Boarders like their accommodation and take an interest in looking after it. There are no signs of damage. Boarders appreciate the freedom to personalise their bedrooms and bed spaces. Boarders report that the beds are comfortable and there is ample storage for clothes and possessions.

Staff accommodation is self-contained and separate from pupil accommodation

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Parents have access to a range of appropriate documentation and information that clearly sets out the school's ethos and details of how the boarding is organised. The school's website is comprehensive and provides information including the aims of boarding, admissions, facilities, welfare support, religious aspects of the school and relevant school policies. The information provided accurately reflects actual practice within the boarding provision. Boarders are provided with individual house handbooks enabling them to have a clear understanding of the boarding practice in their house. Detailed statements relating the boarding ethos of each boarding house is available in the staff handbook.

The boarders and boarding staff benefit from excellent leadership and management provided by the headteacher and the assistant head with lead responsibility for pastoral and the boarding provision. There is a strong commitment demonstrated by the senior management team and the board of governors which ensures that boarding maintains a high profile within the school. The school's organisation of boarding makes an outstanding contribution to the boarders' welfare. Boarding is arranged by separate year groups which are allocated to individual boarding houses. Overall, there is consistency in the application of rules and the practice of boarding whilst housemistresses are granted appropriate autonomy to tailor the boarding practice so that the particular needs of each age group are met.

There are established robust monitoring and recording system in place which contributes to boarders' welfare and safety. These arrangements ensure compliance with agreed guidance and practice and enable action to be taken in response to any emerging concern.

There are sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of the boarders. Boarders benefit from good supervision. Boarding house staff are on duty in each house throughout each evening and night with a clear handover time from day staff to boarding staff. Boarders are aware of who is on duty and know how to access members of staff at all times. There is no reduction in staff cover across the weekends. Staff are available to cover for boarding staff absent e.g. through illness. The school has a clear missing boarder policy though it hasn't had to be implemented. Boarders are very appreciative of the care provided by their housemistresses.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. All of the boarders are valued and respected as individuals. They are all given the same opportunities regardless of age and ability. Boarders are encouraged to make and express their views and opinions on matters that affect their boarding experience and these are listened to. Boarders develop an active interest in the welfare of the other boarders and in groups and organisations outside of the school. Positive steps are taken which ensure that the specific needs of minority groups are supported and given the same opportunities and access to resources. The school is an Anglican community based on Christian values but provides practical and emotional support for pupils of different faiths and cultures ,

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to the boarding staff's professional development. Boarders are looked after by staff who themselves benefit from induction and continued training. New boarding staff receive a comprehensive induction programme which introduces them to policies, guidance and the organisation of the day-to-day running of the boarding houses. New staff are assigned experienced staff as mentors who provide professional and personal support. Boarding staff complete a range of mandatory training including child protection and first aid as well as having the opportunity pursue professional development opportunities relevant to their boarding roles. There is a detailed appraisal policy for boarding staff involving review of their performance and agreement of targets. Boarding staff appraisal is also informed by information from boarders' evaluations.

Boarding staff follow clear boarding procedures outlined in the boarding handbook and also in individual staff handbooks for each house. The full set of pastoral policies is available to all staff through the school intranet.

The head of pastoral care effectively oversees the management and coordination of boarding and education staff who provide pastoral care for the boarders. Regular meetings are held between the house staff which provides the opportunity for

reflection on boarding practices as well as consideration of individual boarders' welfare.