

Sherborne 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 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

Sherborne School is an independent single sex school for boys. It was founded in 1550 under a royal charter granted by Edward VI. The school is set in a country town adjacent to Sherborne Abbey and has a Christian foundation. Whilst being firmly embedded in its Christian traditions the school also has a modern and all embracing ethos and it welcomes boys of all traditions and backgrounds. The school has a strong working partnership with Sherborne Girls, a separate nearby school which has its' own ethos and traditions.

At the time of this inspection there are 570 boys on the roll of which 517 are boarders. There are eight boarding houses each of which has its own unique character which is underpinned by the overall ethos of the school.

Summary

At this announced full inspection all key standards were inspected. The outstanding recommendations at the previous inspection were followed up.

This is a very efficiently managed school which provides a high quality boarding provision. Boys are offered a traditional boarding experience within an environment that provides great emphasis on the spiritual, moral and cultural development of each child. Individual needs are recognised and boys are very well supported. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding throughout the standards inspected. Completed questionnaires from both boys and parents were generally very positive.

Two recommendations were made at this inspection.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection highlighted the fact that one house was not maintained to the same standard as other houses. The school has a rolling plan of refurbishment and this has now been addressed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a large and well equipped sanatorium which has excellent facilities. The sanatorium is staffed by four registered nurses one of which is responsible for the overall management of the facility. Nurses provide 24 hour cover and there is always a nurse sleeping in at night. Boys are referred to the sanatorium by their matrons and one of the nurses will then decide whether a consultation with a doctor is necessary. The sanatorium has a waiting room and two consulting rooms where two local doctors take surgery each morning. Boys are able to choose whether they see the doctor alone or are accompanied and the waiting room is well equipped with health promotion literature which they can peruse whilst they wait for their appointment. Boys are able to stay in the sanatorium if they are sufficiently unwell and there is a total number of 12 beds for sick boarders which are situated on two floors. Each boarding house also has a sick bay which can be used should an unwell boy prefer to remain in his boarding house.

The nurse in charge (Sister) is responsible overall for the administration of prescribed and non prescribed medication within the school and she trains up the house matrons to administer the medication. All medication is normally administered in the boarding houses and Sister visits the boarding houses regularly to monitor and sign the medication records. Medication records are accurate and consents for the administration of prescribed and non prescribed medication are in place. Medication is kept in a locked cupboard attached to the wall in the sanatorium. Smaller supplies of medication are kept in locked cupboards attached to the walls in the boarding houses. Nursing staff state that the school provides them with good training and they have recently completed asthma, minor injuries and child protection training.

The school's dining room provides a comfortable and attractive venue for mealtimes and is bright, colourful and clean. There are staggered timings and this prevents queuing and ensures that mealtimes are leisurely and orderly occasions. There is an extensive choice for breakfast, lunch and supper. Lunchtimes in particular have several vegetarian and meat options as well as a wide range of salads. All prepared meals are of a very high standard and are healthy and nutritious. Special diets for medical or religious reasons are catered for with, for example, the provision of packed breakfasts and later evening meals at Ramadan. All catering staff receive training in food handling and senior catering staff are also trained in first aid. The school has a dining hall committee which is comprised of sixth form boys. They state that they consult all boys about the quality of the food and then feedback to the committee. Most boys are generally positive about the food although there are a small number of exceptions. The school's catering facilities were recently inspected by Dorset County Council and standards were found to be very high overall although a small number of recommendations were made. Boarding houses provide additional healthy snacks for the boys (such as toast and fruit) and matrons in the houses have also received food handling training.

The school has a very comprehensive Personal Development (PD) Programme which covers personal, social and health education. Appropriate advice and guidance is given on topics such as smoking, alcohol, drugs, sexual relationships, citizenship, bullying, homophobia, eating disorders and internet safety. All boys receive one PD lesson a week and over 35 teachers participate in the programme. External speakers who are specialists in particular fields are also invited to speak on various topics. The school has a policy in place on illegal drugs, substance abuse and alcohol.

There are welfare plans in place for any boys with significant needs and the school employs a Special Educational Needs Coordinator.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

There are robust policies and procedures in place to safeguard the boys and the school has a strong and efficient staff team which is vigilant in enforcing these policies and procedures. Key staff involved in safeguarding the boys are the Deputy Head (Pastoral), the Bursar (who is also the School Safety Officer), the Assistant Bursar, the Estate's Bursar, the Housekeeping Supervisor and all House Masters. The school has a Health and Safety Committee which meets each term in order to monitor all health and safety issues and move them forward. Staff are transparent and the school's open approach is a positive factor. It was clear from conversations with boys that they had not been made aware of the dates of the current inspection until inspectors arrived on site and that the school is functioning as it normally does during this inspection.

The school's Deputy Head (Pastoral) is the designated Child Protection Officer. There is also a Deputy Child Protection Officer and the school has a designated Child Protection Governor. Both the Child Protection Officer and the Deputy Child Protection Officer have recently received two day child protection/safeguarding training. The school has a safeguarding policy which is very comprehensive and gives good guidance to staff on the correct procedures to follow in the event of any disclosure or suspicions of abuse. There have been no child protection referrals since the last inspection. The school has an anti bullying policy which is very comprehensive and describes proactive action that can be taken to prevent bullying. Boys state that the school does not tolerate bullying and it is not allowed. Almost every boy completed a questionnaire for the purpose of the inspection and there was a unanimous consensus amongst boys that incidents of bullying are extremely rare within this school. All boys are issued with a leaflet which gives them guidance and advice on what to do if they are worried about bullying. The topic of bullying is also covered in the school's PD programme.

The behaviour of the boys in and around the school is exemplary. Boys are courteous, pleasant and polite. Very firm boundaries are in place and boys state that they know and understand the school's rules and that the rules are fair. The school has a behaviour management policy which gives very clear guidelines on behaviour. Positive reinforcement is used to manage behaviour and there is a reward and conduct scheme. Each house has set punishments and rewards with points being awarded for good behaviour and points being deducted for poor behaviour. Boys are able to earn prizes for good conduct such as lucky dip, book tokens and trips out depending on age and circumstances. The school keeps a record of all sanctions and rewards on line. The Headmaster also keeps a bound book in which any major sanctions are recorded. The school has a policy on the permissible use of restraint. The school manages behaviour effectively through the use of fair and firm guidelines and there has been no occasion where it has been necessary to use restraint since the last inspection.

The school has risk assessments in place for all boarding houses although windows are not included in these risk assessments. There is a very robust set of policies and procedures in place for the conducting of activity risk assessments and all activity risk assessments are extremely detailed and comprehensive.

The fire authority inspected the school in October 2008 and made some recommendations which have since been met. Matrons receive fire marshal training which enables them to train the rest of their staff in fire safety. Fire risk assessments are in place for all boarding houses and fire drills take place at least once a term. All fire equipment is regularly checked and tested. Boys confirm that they are aware of fire safety procedures.

The school has vigorous procedures in place for the selection and vetting of staff and records sampled are extremely robust. All records sampled have proof of identity, a Criminal Records Bureau Check (CRB), two references which have been confirmed by phone, an application form, copy qualifications, contracts of employment, terms and conditions, medical references, interview notes and an offering letter. An equally robust system is in place for the recruitment of gap students. Staff also ensure that any taxi driver used by the school has a CRB and that there are written agreements in place between the school and any adult not employed by the school who lives in boarding accommodation.

Security measures at this school are robust and all visitors are required to sign in and are issued with a visitor's badge. Staff are very vigilant and are very aware of who is visiting the premises.

Access to all parts of the school and all boarding houses can only be granted by invitation or by a swipe card which is issued to all legitimate visitors. Teachers have swipe cards which enable them to access all parts of the school. Boarders have swipe cards which enable them to access main school buildings and their own boarding house. Privacy is respected at all times and no one can access a boarding house without the necessary authority or permission. Staff also ensure that they respect the privacy of each boy within the boarding houses and they do not enter boy's rooms or bathrooms without knocking and receiving permission.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The Deputy Head (Pastoral) is responsible overall for the pastoral care of the boys and the school also has a pastoral committee which oversees all aspects of pastoral life. The school takes a holistic approach and very stringent guidance is given to tutors on the importance of seeing their role as enhancing the spiritual, moral and cultural development of each boy rather than purely academic. Staff treat the boys with respect and clearly know them as individuals. Each boy is given literature in his welcome pack which gives clear guidance on which staff can be approached in the event of any difficulty or personal problem. Individuals available to the boys include the Headmaster, the chaplain and assistant chaplain, the school counsellor, school nurses, the Deputy Head (Pastoral), personal tutors, two independent listeners, the housemasters, matrons, personal tutors and all teachers. Boys state that they know who to approach if they have a problem and they name a variety of staff.

Staff state that the school was originally founded, nearly 500 years ago, as a Church of England Free School and in keeping with this tradition the school seeks to be inclusive. Whilst Christian values underpin the ethos of the school staff also ensure that all other faiths are respected. Festivals such as Chinese New Year, Diwali and Ramadan are celebrated and boys can visit a mosque in Bournemouth and a Buddhist temple in Croydon. Roman Catholic Christians can attend the local Roman Catholic Church. The school has strong equal opportunities and anti harassment policies which are implemented pro actively for example workshops and groups are arranged to discuss issues such as homosexuality and 'coming out'. Family planning education is also available from the Sister. The school employs a Special Educational Needs Coordinator to ensure that any boys with special needs are appropriately supported. All boarding houses also have disabled access to ensure that any boys with disabilities can be accommodated. There are a variety of financial awards which the school offers to talented students in the areas of art, academia, music, sports and design technology. There is also an International Society which boys can join. The school offers 'English as a Foreign Language' to overseas students.

The school offers a wide variety of activities to boys at various times during the evenings and also at weekends. Timetabled activities include community service, art, music, cricket, bridge, gardening, golf, chess, photography, squash and speech and drama. Voluntary activities include Amnesty International, Combined Cadet Force, Duke of Edinburgh Award, International Society, woodland conservation, Wine Appreciation Society (Upper Sixth), debating societies, Philosopher's Club, chamber music, chamber orchestra, choirs, jazz band, clay pigeon shooting, climbing, polo and walking. Internet facilities are available in all boarding houses with appropriate filters in place.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The school offers inductions for new boys who join as third or sixth formers. All new boarders are issued with a comprehensive welcome pack which includes a booklet called 'A beginner's guide to Sherborne school' as well as the school rules and other useful information. Boarders are also given a map of the town in which the school is located with very clear guidelines as to what places are in and out of bounds together with details of how to access appropriate leisure facilities. Boarders are able to maintain contact with their parents through the use of mobile phones and email. There are also pay phones in each house. Helpline numbers are given to boys in their welcome packs and are also displayed around the school.

There are a variety of ways in which boys can contribute to the operation of the school and to boarding within the school. These include boarding house assemblies, house prefect meetings, the school council, the dining hall committee and chapel wardens meetings. The headmaster also meets with prefects on a weekly basis. Boarders have sound relationships with staff at the school. They state that they like the staff and that they are treated very fairly overall.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school has eight boarding houses and these are School House, Abbey House, The Green, Harper House, Wallace House, Abbeylands, Lyon House and The Digby. Staff state that the school prides itself on offering a traditional boarding experience which provides boys with a rich and varied life seven days a week. All boarding houses have their own individual character and new boys are able to choose (in consultation with staff and their parents) which house they would like to live in. All boarding houses have day rooms, study rooms, libraries, age separated common rooms and meeting rooms or halls. Some houses also have TV rooms. There is internet access in all houses and there are computers in the libraries for students who do not have or wish to use laptops. Games facilities such as pool and table tennis are also available in all houses in various rooms. There are also galley kitchens where boys can prepare healthy snacks. Sleeping accommodation may be in dormitories, shared rooms or single rooms depending on age. All sleeping accommodation across the school is separated by age with the exception of some dormitories for new boys where upper sixth boys may sleep in on a duty rota. Boys reported that this was a positive experience which prevents bullying although it does not technically meet the National Minimum Standard. Beds are generally modern and of good construction although there are a few beds that are still awaiting replacement under the school's rolling refurbishment programme. There are sufficient showers, washbasins and toilets in all areas and all showers have suitable doors to ensure that privacy is respected.

There is a rolling refurbishment programme which is specified in the school's development plan and all boarding houses are well maintained overall. They are also appropriately lit and suitably furnished. In some communal rooms across all boarding houses the standard of furnishing is luxurious. All houses have a very high standard of cleanliness due to a very efficient and thorough team of cleaners employed by the school.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The Deputy Head (Pastoral) is responsible for the overall management of boarding and staff state that he offers clear and effective leadership. He also carries out effective monitoring of all risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents. The Headmaster also monitors

complaints and punishments. Generally the Deputy Head monitors all on line records whilst the Headmaster keeps bound handwritten logs of complaints and major punishments.

The school has a statement of boarding principles and practice which is detailed in the prospectus. Whilst every boarding house in the school is different in character there are no major discrepancies in principles or practice of boarding between different houses and there were no complaints from boys about any unequal treatment. Each house has a house master, a matron and/or housekeeper, a houseman, a resident tutor and a team of cleaners. One house has two housemasters. In all other houses the role of the housemaster's wife is made clear. Housemaster's wives do not have any official role in boarding. All duty rotas in all houses are followed in practice and there are no major staffing shortages. There are always at least two staff sleeping in each house at night.

All members of staff have a comprehensive handbook issued to them which covers safeguarding, child protection, behaviour management, anti bullying and all other key policies. All staff receive essential training such as safeguarding, child protection, health and safety, manual handling and food handling. The Deputy Head (Pastoral) has completed some Boarding School Association training. Staff state that they feel well supported and can access informal supervision at any time. The school has recently devised a formal supervision and annual appraisal system which it is in the process of introducing.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence supports a consistent commitment towards improving equality and diversity in practice. Boys' needs are well met and their individuality is celebrated and respected. The school is successful in combining its exclusive setting with an inclusive approach.

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):

- review the practice in some houses where an older boy prefect sleeps in the dormitory of younger boys on a duty rota (NMS 42)
- ensure that all windows in all boarding houses are risk assessed (NMS 47)