

# St Swithun's School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Veronica Crowley / Sue Shaw
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	1 November 2004

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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**

St Swithun's is a senior day and boarding school for girls situated on a 45-acre site on the outskirts of Winchester. It is within easy reach of the town, transport and motorway networks. At the time of the inspection there were a total of 226 boarders and 252 day pupils. Boarding pupils are aged between 11 and 18 years and are accommodated within six boarding houses on site. St Swithun's is a Church of England foundation but girls of other denominations and faiths are welcomed.

### **Summary**

St Swithun's School operates its boarding provision to a very high standard with outstanding outcomes for its boarders. This inspection was carried out as part of the normal inspection process on an announced basis. The aim of the inspection was to review the 21 key standards for Boarding Schools. As part of the inspection process questionnaires were sent to boarders to gain their views. Responses received were, in the main, extremely complimentary and included a high level of satisfaction with the pastoral care provided. The school excels in providing excellent health care underpinned by meticulous record keeping. This intrinsically demonstrates how a boarder's health, safety and wellbeing are promoted. There are extensive and robust systems in place which aim to protect boarders and ensure effective responses are made in all safeguarding areas. Boarders benefit from exceptional levels of individual support both from staff and external agencies. The school clearly demonstrates its commitment to anti-discriminatory practice, valuing and embracing diversity. There are pro-active forums, both formal and informal, for boarders to contribute their views to the boarding practice. Effective communication is a strength of the school, which is achieved through regular meetings, electronic communication and face to face contact. Staff are encouraged and supported to undertake training opportunities and have their performances reviewed on a regular basis. There is very strong leadership overseeing and monitoring all aspects of the care provided.

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 at St Swithun's School carried out in November 2004 highlighted six recommendations. Three related to safeguarding boarders and three related to health issues. The school promptly addressed all recommendations, demonstrating their commitment to providing high quality care for boarders. The child protection policy now includes all elements as required under the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools. All necessary checks on recruitment files are clearly demonstrated. The hot water levels in the junior house are safe and monitored regularly. With specific regard to health, boarders can now summon assistance from sickbay beds. Permissions have been sought for the giving of non-prescription medication and records of personnel administering medication is clearly evidenced.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' health is promoted through an excellent range of health education policies and procedures. The staff actively put into effect a thorough, well structured personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, which is reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis. External

agencies are used where appropriate. The method of teaching allows the school to be responsive to world events and change subjects as required. There is excellent liaison between teaching and boarding staff enabling consistency and good awareness when covering sensitive issues. Boarders benefit from an extensive range of resources available to assist in the delivery of PSHE. Creative initiatives have been introduced, including involving the local Community Police to provide a session on keeping safe in the community, the "Wicked" project looking specifically at issues of bullying, and undertaking a certificated first aid course. Boarders' health is maintained through a very well organised Sanatorium, which is modern, well equipped and staffed 24 hours every day. The Sister oversees all matters relating to health and medication. Continuity of care for boarders is ensured by the excellent liaison between the boarding house staff and Sister. Assistant housemistresses meet with the Sister on a daily basis to discuss and update on any health issues. Regular meetings also take place between the Sister, Headmistress and the senior staff team. In addition all staff use the school's intranet system to communicate effectively. Boarders' health is protected and promoted by the safe storage and administration of medication. Detailed records and comprehensive procedures are in place for this purpose. Medical consents from parents, and staff suitably trained in first aid in the boarding houses, ensure that emergency treatment can be provided. Boarders' specific health needs are managed effectively, with an extensive range of relevant health professionals being consulted where necessary.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are protected effectively through the school's positive approach to dealing with bullying. A comprehensive, purposeful policy is followed in practice. Staff have received training in how to respond to any alleged incidents, and are unquestionably committed to addressing bullying, and the impact it may have on others. This is achieved both through the academic curriculum and the pastoral system within the boarding houses. Any form of bullying is taken seriously and responsive, sensitive action taken immediately. Boarders report very low levels of bullying incidents throughout the school. Boarders live in a very stable and safe environment where their welfare is paramount. There are robust child protection procedures in place, which are in line with the Local Safeguarding Children procedures. All staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of boarders and how best to safeguard them. The staff have access to regular and appropriate child protection training which includes 'online' training from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) to ensure boarders are kept safe at all times. No child protection referrals have been made since the last inspection in November 2004. Boarders confirm they feel staff afford high priority to keeping them safe. Boarders develop positively through the culture adopted at the school to celebrate achievement. Reward incentives include the 'daisy' awards for being kind, helpful or sensitive to others. Commendations for good work go to the Headmistress who keeps a permanent, signed record of achievement. The school has clear policies and practice on behaviour, discipline and the use of punishments. Very few punishments are given. Boarders are aware of the punishment system and feel it is both fair and appropriate. Boarders benefit from the positive, nurturing relationships that are fostered throughout the school. Boarding houses are run on trust and building effective living and working relationships. Boarders' welfare is protected through a rigorous complaints procedure. There is a clear understanding within the school that any concern or complaint will be taken seriously and properly resolved, either formally or informally. Boarders confirm they know how to raise a concern and that they would be listened to and the issue dealt with appropriately and promptly. Documentation includes how to access the Children's Rights

Director; an addition that exceeds the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools. The excellent contact arrangements that exist between staff and parents ensure that any potential area for concern is defused and addressed immediately. There have been no formal complaints since the last full inspection carried out in November 2004. Boarders are protected from fire by stringent fire safety precautions and well trained staff. Regular fire safety evacuations take place and all fire safety equipment is checked with meticulous records kept. The fire system is linked to the local fire station. They attend any unscheduled fire alarm. There are no outstanding recommendations from the Hampshire Fire and Rescue service. Boarders demonstrate a very good understanding of the school's fire evacuation procedure. Boarders' privacy is respected by non-intrusive staff that are sensitive when entering bathrooms or bedrooms. All bathrooms, toilets and showers have appropriate locks and are private. All boarders have a lockable place in which they can store treasured possessions. Boarders have their own mobile telephones should they need to make or receive a private call. They also have access to landline telephones in each boarding house. Boarders' welfare is protected by a robust staff recruitment process. The school follows a very clear policy on recruitment in line with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidance. A punctilious record of the selection process undertaken ensures rigorous checks are in place prior to new staff commencing work. Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks at enhanced level are undertaken on all staff employed at the school prior to appointment. This includes visiting music teachers and sports coaches. Boarders are further protected as staff of external transport firms and maintenance contractors used by the school are also rigorously checked through the Criminal Record Bureau process. Any adult not employed by the school but living in the same building as boarding accommodation has a suitable agreement specifying their terms of accommodation. Boarders' welfare is safeguarded through significant security measures. The school has a comprehensive security policy restricting public access, which is regularly reviewed. The school also makes full use of external consultants to review and update health and safety issues and requirements. Boarding accommodation is reserved solely for the use of those boarders designated to it. All boarding areas are suitably protected by the use of window restrictors, door key pads and locks. Closed circuit television is strategically placed and a caretaker lives on site. All visitors to the school have to sign in and wear badges in order to identify themselves. Boarders are safeguarded by an exhaustive health and safety policy, effective risk assessments and well trained staff. The school employs a health and safety consultant who regularly reviews risk assessments and makes recommendations as appropriate. Maintenance issues are prioritised and dedicated staff make particular efforts to ensure boarders are protected from unavoidable hazards. Boarders are protected by effective checking of electrical appliances and gas installations, water checking and safe storage of all substances hazardous to health. Record keeping is meticulous. Boarders' welfare is protected through a raft of risk assessments relating to activities undertaken, the school grounds and any other known risks.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders benefit from excellent levels of individual support received from both pastoral and academic staff. The distribution of staff in the boarding houses is well managed and includes the housemistresses, assistant housemistresses, house tutors and gap students. In addition there are numerous staff readily available to encourage and support boarders to flourish and fulfil their individual potential, regardless of ability. These staff include the members of staff responsible for English as an additional language, learning support, nursing staff and the Chaplain. Boarders know how to access an independent listener, although they rely mainly on

the strong relationships built within the boarding houses. Boarders also enjoy the support they receive from being part of a 'vertical boarding' or 'cluster group' system. 'Cluster groups' consist of boarders from different year groups in the boarding house enjoying activities, outings and meetings together. This further promotes the strong sense of family that exists within the school, across the age range of the boarders. Boarders' lives are enhanced through the school's commitment to equal opportunities and the reciprocal, caring ethos experienced by them. The school positively welcomes, embraces and celebrates the diversity of its boarders. Appropriate arrangements are made for boarders for whom English is not their first language. All staff support and promote the integration of the international students. Arrangements are made for boarders to attend churches of their own choice. Religious festivals are celebrated and boarders are encouraged to observe the requirements of their own faith. Sixth form societies, such as Amnesty, ASSIST (the community service committee), the Christian Union and others, contribute to whole school assemblies. They raise awareness of issues such as inequality, injustice or prejudice and ways in which these can be combated. Considerable changes have been made to the school and three boarding houses to ensure that they are accessible to people with disabilities.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have an abundance of opportunities to contribute their views regarding the operation of the boarding provision. These include the school forum, the food forum, house meetings, cluster groups and the 'open door' policy to access house staff. Many changes have been made as a result of these forums and these recently include an increase in the provision of water dispensers both in school and boarding houses, more pin boards, full length mirrors, additional socials, specific activity weekends for some year groups and regular catering changes in response to issues raised. Where requests are not viable documentation demonstrates explanations given. Boarders benefit from additional extracurricular activities, such as the Gospel Choir and Badminton Club, which are pupil initiatives introduced and run by the senior girls. Boarders' welfare is enhanced and maintained through positive contact with their parents, families and friends. They have their own email addresses and can use the boarding house landlines in addition to their personal mobile telephones. Communication between parents and staff is a real strength of the school. Boarding house staff provide parents with a monthly newsletter in addition to the weekly opportunities to meet face to face. There is also close contact between house staff, tutors, nursing staff and senior management to ensure parents are kept up to date with progress or any worries that may arise.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The statement of boarding principles and practice is readily available to parents, boarders and staff and can be found in the prospectus and accompanying literature. This is reviewed regularly and updated if applicable. In addition each boarding house has its own booklet welcoming girls and setting out the expectations of life in the house. The upper sixth and junior house has a parents' 'survival guide' and the remaining four boarding houses have generic parents' guides. They accurately and creatively reflect the boarding provision. Boarders benefit from a very well

run school. The monitoring of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents is exemplary. Reasonable action is taken to reduce risks identified by risk assessments and when trends or patterns may emerge. Communication is a strength of the school, underpinned by an effective intranet/email system. Various weekly meetings take place between personnel on the Senior Management Team to ensure consistency across all disciplines. The Headmistress submits detailed reports to the Board of Governors three times a year and meets with them regularly. Boarders' welfare is protected and promoted by adequate staffing levels, day and night, with relevant experience to meet their needs. Boarders confirm they always know who is on duty at any time and how to summon assistance should the need arise. There are good arrangements for managing and supervising staff throughout the 24 hour day. Boarders enjoy the care provided by dedicated and well trained staff. Staff meet regularly through various forums to ensure consistency for boarders. Staff receive induction and are encouraged and supported to access further professional development opportunities. Each member of staff receives a regular appraisal. Boarders commented very favourably on the "amazing staff" at the school and how well they are cared for.

## **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.

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Due date</b>
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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):



## 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.**