

Adams Grammar 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

Adams' Grammar School is a Voluntary Aided, selective, day and boarding boys' grammar school, which admits girls to the sixth form on a day basis. The school is operated by the Haberdashers' Federation. Being a state school, all tuition is free. Students' parents pay only the costs of boarding, making boarding an affordable attraction of the school.

The school is located over two sites providing two boarding facilities. Longford Hall accommodates junior boys. It is housed within a listed Georgian mansion set in 125 acres of fields, woodland and recreational grounds and sports its own fishing lake. Within walking distance from here, the main school campus is unassumingly located in the local town centre. On this main site, senior boarders live in three adjoining 18th century town houses.

All classroom education is provided on the school main site with the grounds of Longford being extensively used for recreational and sporting fixtures.

Summary

This report is of an announced full inspection undertaken as part of the three-year inspection cycle for boarding schools. The overall judgement of boarding practice for Adams' Grammar School is satisfactory although there are features of the provision that are outstanding.

Measures to help boarders be healthy are satisfactory.

Boarders are kept safe by the application of good protective safeguarding policies and staff recruitment procedures.

The school provides ample opportunities for boarders to enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and actively incorporate a diverse range of cultures in to its community, making these areas of boarding practice outstanding. Effective management systems and good leadership ensure that the school has clear objectives for the future development of its boarding provision.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since its last inspection of boarding in 2006 the school has made improvements to the overall decoration of the senior boarding houses and the manner in which they are structurally maintained.

The school's child protection policy has been amended to reflect national measures for the safeguarding of children and has included shortened timescales for the formal referral of any concerns.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Students and boarders have their medical and health needs promoted with the provision of medical cover by matrons on both school sites. The school provides good medical treatment and first aid at all times during the school day on the main school site. Qualified matrons are

available in the school's main site sick bay during the day for the treatment of minor ailments and illnesses and provision of first aid. The school has well-established links with local community health services and has direct access to the local General Practitioner when needed. The school operates a comprehensive medication policy incorporating practice guidance that specifically addresses the use of non-prescribed medication.

School matrons are trained in the administration of medication and are proactive in promoting health education policies through their positive relationship with students and boarders. Formal consent for medication and first aid is sought from parents prior to any boarder's admission. Records for all students requiring medical treatment confirm that their health and medical welfare is promoted. School matrons notify parents about any changes to their child's health.

The school provides an accessible good standard of accommodation for short periods of isolation, privacy and convalescence to those students who cannot go home when ill, within the sick quarters on the main site. More basic provision also exists at Longford Hall.

By being provided across the two sites existing deployment does not facilitate students immediate access to the overnight services of a matron for one boarding house. The provision of first aid trained staff, on call out of school hours, is also minimal for a dual site school.

Students and boarders are provided with access to age-appropriate guidance and information about health and social issues. These issues are comprehensively addressed through the education curriculum and notice boards around the school site and individual boarding houses. Boarders present as being well informed and readily identify who they may approach to confidentially discuss personal, health and social matters. The school additionally provides an independent listening service that can be readily accessed through the sick bay and by direct phone call.

Adams' Grammar School has introduced ongoing improvements to its catering facilities over the past term. This has increased student and staff satisfaction with the quality, production and delivery of meals. The nutritional, religious and health-related dietary needs of students are currently being well met by the catering staff. The locum catering manager demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes a well-balanced and varied diet thereby promoting student satisfaction and meeting the energy needs of the school's competitive sports teams. School menu planning effectively includes culturally appropriate meals, particularly recognising the integration of overseas students and encourages all students to try a cosmopolitan range of dishes. Students' comments about the quality of the catering provision are enlisted through the student committee food group and by judging reactions at mealtimes. Catering staff have received training about food hygiene and nutrition that effectively enables them to put their skills into practice.

Students and boarders eat their main meals during the day in the central dining room area on the main school site. The Longford site has its own refectory that caters for the needs of the younger boarders in the evening and at breakfast. An additional provision of snacks and essentials are made for boarders outside main mealtimes.

Students can also buy food from the well-provisioned school tuck shop and have access to drinking water fountains and a potable tap water supply around both school sites.

Boarders have access to efficient laundry facilities that return personal belongings promptly, repaired where necessary and in good condition.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Adams' Grammar School effectively protects its students and boarders from bullying by encouraging a tolerant and accepting culture where any form of unkindness between students is quickly addressed. Prompt action promotes the school's anti-bullying policy and sets behavioural expectations. All students and boarders know about the different forms bullying may take and confirm that such behaviour is not acceptable. Staff and older students, by being watchful, prevent such behaviour developing and in doing so protect all students from the potential of emotional harm. Boarders unanimously confirm that bullying does not occur in their school.

The school, in conjunction with its fellow Haberdashers' Federation of Academy has well-established safeguarding procedures that provide for an effective response to any child protection concerns. Scholars and boarders know who they can approach to share any personal matters that may concern them. All tutors, boarding staff, ancillary staff, support staff and prefects receive annual information about the school's responsibility for safeguarding children, including how to practically identify child protection concerns. The school has developed professional links with the area Children and Families Department and Local Safeguarding Children Board. This has effectively contributed to the procedural development of the school policy. The designated child protection officer together with other key staff have regularly attended external training to improve their knowledge of national and local child protection procedures to ensure students and boarders are effectively safeguarded.

The school status system, that forms the main part of the behaviour policy in boarding, is known to all boarders, staff and parents. The whole school approach that promotes personal responsibility and positive communal behaviour works very effectively alongside this, re-enforcing the need for high standards of behaviour in every aspect of school life. This code of conduct is embraced particularly by senior boarders as a way to enhance their independence and reward responsibility. The overall management of behaviour is extremely effective, with students imposing high levels of expectation and self-control with the need for few adult reminders. Senior boarders and heads of house act as effective role models who do not impose sanctions without consultation with house tutors. Standards of behaviour are excellent, negating the need for the use of any control identified by the school restraint policy. Boarding students say that attaining status is considered as an added bonus that can be usefully included in their future curriculum vitae or university application form, and as such is a valuable attribute.

The school has an accessible and responsive complaints procedure with information being made readily available to all scholars, boarders and parents. Boarders confirmed that they know how to complain and to whom they would make any concerns known. House masters and staff are proactive in addressing boarders' concerns well before they become serious enough to become recordable or a formal complaint. The regulator has received no complaints concerning Adams' Grammar School.

The school is protected by effective fire prevention and detection equipment and procedures. Students and boarders are well protected through the regular system testing, drills and the maintenance of all detection equipment, extinguishers, fire alarms and other electrical

equipment. Boarders have routinely scheduled opportunities each term to practise the evacuation of their respective boarding houses on both sites. Boarders expressed confidence in the safety and security of the school.

A rigorous risk assessment approach underwriting all aspects of safety of the premises, grounds and all sporting and recreational activities by the school ensures that any areas used by students and boarding houses are free from avoidable or potential safety hazards. The school has effective strategies and discrete security in place to address any risks to boarders by virtue of its busy location. Identifiably high risk activities, both on and off campus, are well supervised and supported by proven, appropriate safety measures that are subject to ongoing review. A systematic recording procedure underwriting this risk assessment approach assures the school's commitment to keeping all students as safe as is reasonably possible.

Very good contingency plans are in place to address any foreseeable crises that may adversely affect students or boarders. Staff are aware of the arrangements for the action to be taken in such circumstances.

Boarders are looked after by staff who are respectful towards their needs for privacy while being responsible for their supervision, welfare and safety. Boarders say that they do not feel intruded upon by staff and confirm that even with this vigilance that there are areas within the boarding houses and school grounds where they can enjoy quiet time.

Staff recruitment procedures and checks on adults who have access to students generally comply with national minimum standards and requirements; however evidence of comprehensive checks taking place are not recorded on all temporary staff files. More recent recording processes identify improvements in line with educational and social care guidelines.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Adams' Grammar School provides a significant range of academic support services and recreational opportunities that allow all students and boarders to develop to their full potential educationally and socially. The school attracts students from a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and religious beliefs and actively promotes the equality of all. The school provides pastoral support and guidance in a framework that fully accepts the contribution of students from all faiths and denominations. The positive social contribution of overseas boarding students to the academic community is a well-recognised attribute in the school's boarding and higher year groups. Boarders say that living-in is a vehicle that helps facilitate their high achievement without any distractions and many choose this opportunity to its full advantage both academically and recreationally.

There is an impressive range of recreational activities provided as a fundamental part of the individual enrichment and sporting curriculum. While openly celebrating its many sports teams triumphs, the school recognises the importance of individual effort and achievement as a strength of the school community. The school's sporting activities are supplemented by active communal, cultural and environmental projects outside of class time which assist students in broadening their academic knowledge, personal interests, community awareness and practical experience. There are no evident onerous demands made upon boarders other than those which are self-imposed to improve personal standards by fully utilising the facilities and help provided.

Boarders requiring individual personal support are clear about the peers and tutors from whom they can receive additional help, mentoring advice and guidance. Established and senior boarders are keen to take on responsibility for providing support to their peers. Helping others is actively encouraged as a notable feature of the school culture and being a good citizen.

Boarders have access to a professionally qualified health practitioner as an independent listener who regularly visits the school to offer, wherever necessary, confidential guidance or health-related information. The school is proactive in assessing and addressing the needs of students with any disabilities or learning support needs, by including into the curriculum additional levels of individual support as required. Students for whom English is not their first language receive extra support to integrate fully into the school. English students celebrate other cultures by artistic performances originating from other countries or in other languages.

The quality of the facilities for boarders' private study, including furnishings, lighting, space and access to IT systems is variable but of a generally good standard across the various school boarding houses reflecting in many areas the ability of individual boarders to work without staff supervision in their own dormitories.

The school provides a broad range of indoor and outdoor recreational areas for use by boarders at different times of the day. Students and boarders are proactive in maximising the constructive use of their free time following sporting and intellectual pursuits. Boarders can involve themselves in a range of activities individually, in small groups or as competitive houses with additional support from staff whenever necessary. Supervised and self-arranged weekend activities both on- and off-site are regularly timetabled for boarders. The school forms the base for a very active and well-regarded Combined Cadet Force.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Each boarding house demonstrates its strong commitment to securing the views of its residents. Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of their houses by having daily contact and discussion with their house masters, house tutors, matrons and communal house discussions.

Boarders say they can contribute views that influence the operation and practice in the boarding provision. These are confirmed by regular school audits within boarding to assess the level of satisfaction of the service being provided. Boarders say they can influence their individual facilities, activities and room decoration within reason. Boarders have influenced a variety of issues such as catering arrangements, outings and internet access.

Boarders have access to facilities that enable them to maintain private contact with their parents and families. The school provides access to public phones and a policy allowing a liberal level of use of their own mobile phones during and outside of school hours. There are no restrictions on familial contact. The school provides facilities for students, including those from overseas, to send and receive emails using the school server where necessary. Notice boards around the school provide external helpline contact numbers.

Boarders have access to a wide range of information about life in the world outside their school. Subject to age and status, boarders can access local facilities and the local and wider community.

The school has an appropriate and sensitive process of induction and guidance for new boarders. New boarders are provided with written information about the school that assists them with the settling-in process. The culture of boarding is supportive towards students newly joining the boarding houses. Boarding staff and matrons are very experienced in making new students feel wanted and welcome, and parents of boarders comment favourably about this aspect of boarding life.

There are extremely positive, supportive and nurturing relationships between boarders and staff. Staff are always approachable and fair in their treatment of boarders. There is a tested mechanism for boarders that can be used to deal with any disagreements. There is no evidence of inappropriate favouritism. All boarders have the opportunity to demonstrate that they can take responsibility for themselves and help others.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The school provision of boarding is located over two separate sites, both affected by limitations imposed by their age and architectural heritage. The school provides a range of boarding accommodation varying in condition from poor to very good. None the less, boarders speak highly of the facilities they enjoy and the majority say that they would not want anything to change because the eccentric accommodation is part of what makes the school appealing. The boarding accommodation provided by the school is generally comfortable, functional and individualised wherever possible to reflect boarders' own interests.

Accommodation at Longford Hall for junior boarders is mainly provided by dormitories and larger communal areas. The main site boarding provides smaller and more compact dormitories in converted period town houses. Further refurbishment is needed to maintain a consistent standard throughout all senior dormitories. All dormitories provide ample space and lockable separate storage for boarders' belongings and clothes.

Communal areas, such as recreation rooms and television lounges are well maintained and provide sufficient space for all boarders to convene and relax in comfortable surroundings. A period of complicated refurbishment in the junior boarding house has recently reduced boarders' enjoyment of some communal facilities. Most boarding houses provide discrete individual bed space areas for preparatory work as well as formal 'prep' work areas and facilities. Older scholars have internet connectivity and computer terminals in their rooms that facilitate private study.

Standards of maintenance and cleanliness throughout the boarding accommodation on both sites are kept high and boarders are encouraged to look after their rooms and maintain the general condition of the boarding house. Matrons ensure that any slippage in standards by individuals are quickly addressed.

The communal toilets and washing provision in all boarding houses are adequate in number and condition, providing boarders with appropriate levels of privacy. The school has introduced a phased process of renovation geared to systematically refurbishing the bathing facilities. Much of this work has been completed.

Boarders are able to purchase stationary and personal items while living at the school. At weekends boarders can access local retailers in the town.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The school's Statement of Boarding Practice and Principles clearly states its values and aims. The Parents' Guide and Boarders' Handbooks contain all required information for students, boarders and their families about the services provided.

The school has an effective and coordinated management system. The management of boarding provision is overseen by the deputy head pupil welfare and the headteacher and as such assumes an important role within the school's senior leadership team's priorities. There is an important commitment to the development of boarding as an intrinsic component of the developing school provision for the future.

Boarding house staff are clear about the established lines of communication and accountability. House masters, house tutors and matrons are responsible for monitoring the welfare of their respective boarding houses and share concerns and achievements using the school intranet and regular pastoral meetings, thereby demonstrating their ongoing commitment to resident students.

Staffing arrangements within the houses are set at a level that ensures that the needs of boarders are consistently met at all times either by duty staff or the direct availability of the house master or matron supported by responsible senior boarders or appointed student heads of house. Boarding houses can draw from a complement of both resident and non-resident staff, tutors and house staff to provide enhanced levels of supervision for organised extracurricular or recreation activities. Boarders know how to contact staff on duty should they need to do so both during the day and at night.

The school provides induction training for all staff new in post including those with boarding responsibilities. Expectations from full-time staff are outlined by job descriptions and reinforced by access to the developing policies related to boarding practice. Recruitment to the position of boarding master is by a proven interest, competence and on-the-job experience. Boarding staff receive ongoing access to courses as a component of their in-service training and the school's boarding training plan.

Collective boarding house practice is regularly monitored by the senior leadership team with good practice being shared between boarding staff. Statutory monitoring by the headteacher is well evidenced. Record keeping relating to the everyday needs and performance of boarders is effective and of a good quality for all school related matters. In these ways Adams' Grammar School ensures that boarders are well looked after by competent and caring boarding staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. This is evidenced by the school's inclusive policies underpinning day-to-day practice. The school successfully integrates a diverse group of English and overseas students. The ability, harmony and cohesiveness of the cultural range of students is particularly evident in the senior boarding houses.

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 that there is an appropriate level of first aid and minor illness treatment at all times throughout the day and night specifically available on both school boarding sites (National Minimum Standard 15.1)
- ensure that boarders are able to summon staff assistance readily and rapidly when ill by day and night. Boarders should not have to be moved between school sites to facilitate this requirement (National Minimum Standard 16.3)
- ensure that boarders who are ill at school can be cared for satisfactorily and separately from boarders where necessary, within boarding, sick bay accommodation. Such provision should be readily accessible (National Minimum Standard 48.2)
- ensure that all pre-employment requirements made by this standard are evidenced by personnel files in all cases (National Minimum Standard 38.2)
- ensure that the repair programme for maintaining the condition of bedrooms in the senior boarding house is adequate. (National Minimum Standard 40.4)