

St Peters School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Jennifer Reed
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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 Peter's School is a co-educational day and boarding school for 266 pupils, aged from three to 13 years. The school is set in 28 acres of grounds and playing fields. The school is a limited company and is managed by an Executive Management Team, closely assisted by a Board of Reference which acts in a consultative capacity. In a Christian community, the school aims to provide children with the tools and self-belief to learn and work independently and to appreciate the need to be courteous, considerate and use their common sense.

The boarding house provides accommodation for up to 16 boys and 12 girls. All boarders are either weekly boarders, who spend a maximum of four nights at the school, or flexi-boarders, who stay for any number of the four nights available. A minimum team of three staff are on duty every evening and overnight.

Summary

This was an announced full inspection of the school and all key National Minimum Standards were looked at. Parents and boarders were able to contribute their views about the quality of the boarding provision by completing written questionnaires. Seventeen boarders met with the inspector and participated in the inspection process.

Boarding provision at the school is good, with many outstanding features. Boarders are happy and enjoy living in the boarding house, benefiting from the good, individualised support provided by the very competent and cohesive staff team within a 'family-style' boarding environment. Strong leadership and management within the school underpins well organised and ably delivered boarding practice, enriched by good communication processes and the inclusion of teaching staff in boarding duties. Positive regard and mutual respect are evident in interactions and relationships within the school community.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The school has improved their administration of medication practice and detailed medical records are kept, ensuring that boarders' welfare is promoted. Fire safety checks now take place within recommended timescales and are satisfactorily recorded. The headmaster has completed 'Safer Recruitment' training and boarders are protected by the rigorous recruitment and selection processes carried out by the school. Although the school has carried out some work to improve the functioning of the boys' showers, as recommended at the 2006 inspection, the action taken has not been effective in resolving the identified problems.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Comprehensive health policies and procedures guide staff in promoting boarders' health and welfare. Staff are aware of the school's policies and know how to appropriately respond to any arising health issue. The school is committed to delivering a healthy living environment for children and takes positive action to fulfil this objective. Pastoral care is strong; the school looks holistically at the needs of each child and monitors their development and welfare in

partnership with parents. The school's core academic framework includes health education and there is a comprehensive personal, social and health curriculum and policy delivered to pupils. Boarders also benefit from the health advice and information provided by the matrons during the course of their boarding duties, for example, how to undertake effective hand-washing before each meal.

The two matrons employed by the school provide boarding provision with 24 hour medical support; they are not registered nurses. Both matrons hold current first aid certificates but neither have completed the safe handling of medicines training recommended at the previous inspection. The matrons work collaboratively together to effectively meet boarder's health needs and have access to a local doctor for advice. The matrons have reviewed medical systems and records and have set up an efficient system to monitor the administration of medication given to boarders. The school has secured advice on the suitability of 'household' medication and parents sign to identify the suitable options to be given to their child if treatment is required for minor ailments. Parents are informed if boarders are unwell and children usually return home if they are ill. There is a sick bay which provides one bed for any boarder who becomes unwell. The carpeted flooring within the sick bay makes spillages difficult to effectively clean up. However, cleaning standards in boarding are high and infection control procedures in the boarding house are very robust. Ill children are closely monitored by the matron and they can easily summon assistance if the matron is not with them.

Staff vigilantly monitor children's eating pattern and encourage each child to eat a healthy and balanced main meal each day. Staff make sure children include a portion of vegetables or salad in their main meal and eat a sufficient quantity on a regular basis. The school makes an outstanding effort to provide children with wholesome and nutritious meals; where possible, food is locally sourced. The quality of the produce delivered on a daily basis to the kitchen is excellent and meals taken during the inspection were well presented, tasty and adequate in quantity. 'Seconds' are available for those children with larger appetites. The school operates a four weekly menu which provides a good balance and variety of meals for boarders, promoting healthy eating whilst occasionally including some firm favourites, for example, pizza and chips for the evening meal. The school provides a vegetarian option each day and an excellent salad bar, which includes cold meat and fish. Breakfast alternates between a 'full English' and a 'continental' breakfast. The catering staff are aware of each child's dietary restrictions and meals provided take account of their health, religious or family considerations; the school is a 'nut free' zone. The head cook thoughtfully provides alternative food items where required, ensuring that individual children can enjoy similar meals to their peers, for example, providing beef sausages rather than pork or using gluten free thickening agents. Boarders said they had no complaints at all about the standard of meals; one boarder said, 'The food is amazing'. However, both parents and boarders thought that boarding would be improved by the provision of more hot drinks being made available. Boarders suggested a hot blackcurrant drink as an alternative to tea at breakfast and requested hot chocolate at bedtime. These requests were shared with senior staff at the end of the inspection and received a favourable response.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a very effective policy on countering bullying; all boarders report that there is no bullying within the boarding house. Boarders are confident that they can always find a member of staff they feel comfortable talking to and they are able to freely discuss any concerns

they might have. The school curriculum and tutor system reinforces the school's strategies to address bullying and encourages children 'to tell'. The school's Social Organisation and Pastoral Care manual provides staff with clear and detailed guidance about how the daily operation of the school promotes children's welfare and keeps them safe. All staff working in the school receive child protection training on a bi-annual basis, effectively delivered by the school's child protection coordinator. Staff know how to recognise and report any suspicion of abuse and there are defined reporting systems within the school to ensure pupils are safeguarded. New staff receive a prompt child protection briefing from the designated child protection coordinator and all staff sign to show that they have read and understood the relevant policies. The child protection coordinator undertakes regular update training and is knowledgeable about local networks, practice and processes to keep children safe. Boarders' personal privacy is respected. Staff demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of individual boarders and make suitable arrangements to ensure that each child has sufficient privacy whilst living within dormitories and using communal facilities. Child Exploitation and Online Protection training has been recently undertaken and the school has reviewed their policies to ensure that pupils are protected from internet and communication systems abuse. Child protection matters are robustly addressed by the coordinator and the school has established good communication and liaison with local safeguarding workers to keep children safe. The child protection policy had not been updated to include Ofsted as an alternative contact, neither did it clarify the process of 'whistle-blowing' for staff. These minor amendments were made to the policy during the inspection by the child protection coordinator and the policy now meets all points within this standard. Boarders are closely supervised and no boarders have been missing from the boarding house at any time.

Detailed and well written staff, parents and boarder's handbooks provide clear information about the expected standards of behaviour of pupils within the school and boarding. Boarders are fully aware of what sanctions may be given in response to any misdemeanour; the permissible sanctions are defined within the boarder's handbook and are displayed on the boarding house noticeboard. Boarding staff carefully and successfully consider the best way forward to help boarders manage their behaviour. The school has a policy on the use of physical intervention, but this has never been required to be used in the boarding provision to address unsafe behaviour. Structured worksheets help boarders to reflect upon their behaviour and identify how their actions impact on others and how they could make changes. Behaviour management issues are very rare in boarding provision; only five sanctions have been given since September 2008. Boarders say that discipline within boarding is very fair and usually just talking through issues resolves matters. The school has a formal complaints system in place; no complaints about boarding provision have been received. Boarders report that they either use the suggestion box located in the common room or raise issues at the weekly boarding meeting; they are satisfied that these mechanisms effectively respond to any concern. Appropriate records are kept by the school to monitor all safeguarding and disciplinary matters.

The school has completed a detailed fire risk assessment and carries out regular fire safety checks on alarm systems and fire fighting equipment. Regular fire drills undertaken during school hours and night-time hours in the boarding house, ensure that staff and boarders know how to safely evacuate the buildings in an emergency. Excellent risk assessments and good attention to health and safety matters promotes boarders' welfare and protects them from foreseeable hazards.

Security arrangements within boarding provision have been upgraded and boarders are kept safe and are secure from public intrusion. The school is continuing a work programme to further

increase the surveillance of exits and entrances to the school buildings and grounds. All visitors to the school are required to sign in and out and all unchecked visitors to the boarding house are closely supervised at all times to safeguard the boarders. The headmaster has completed the Safer Recruitment training and recruitment and selection procedures within the school are rigorous and in line with best practice guidance. Robust interview processes and detailed recruitment and selection records help protect pupils.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

A broad and balanced curriculum is delivered by a committed and enthusiastic staff team. The excellent communication systems in place between the teaching and boarding staff ensure that boarders receive outstanding support from staff. Daily meetings are held to highlight any arising issues for particular children and the school staff team work well together to meet individual needs. Where appropriate, the school involves parents in decision making and helps identify external support if required. Staff are clear about how to support each child well and boarders know that they are able to take any personal concern to any member of staff in the school. Boarders are confident and cheerful, benefiting from the inclusive and individualised support provided to them. All children are either weekly or flexi-boarders, four nights being the maximum continuous stay for any child. Boarders tend to speak with their parents and families if they wish to discuss an issue with someone outside of the school. However, the School Chaplain is available to speak on an individual basis with any boarder who may wish to do so.

The school's policies demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities and all boarders have the same opportunities to enjoy and achieve what is offered by the school. Staff encourage all boarders to take part and the boarding house has established a culture where every member of the boarding house family is valued and their individual differences are acknowledged and respected. The school ensures that pupils do not experience inappropriate discrimination and provision is made, where feasible, to meet the special requirements of individual children. Boarders are helped to integrate into boarding life and additional supervision and support is given to those children who initially find difficulty in fitting in. Boarding ensures that children have sufficient space and time to themselves. One boarder said, 'I love the boarding house and I love the feel, because I get on with younger people, older people, boys and teachers. I like having younger friends that I help if they get upset. We are one big happy family!'

A range of activities are organised for the boarders each evening. Scheduled activities are planned by the house-parents and boarders are able to contribute their ideas to this programme. Children enjoy taking part in activities, for example, archery, bowling, circus skills, golf, swimming, going to the beach, attending pantomimes and local facilities. Teaching staff plan an activity to share with boarders on their evening duty, providing a wide range of interests and pursuits for children to try out new things. Boarders are able to use the gym, music and computer room facilities. Internet access is safeguarded by the school's systems in place.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders can contribute their views to the operation of boarding in the school in a variety of ways. The School Council acts as a forum for feedback from pupils to staff and the school's senior management team, giving pupils a 'formal voice' to express their opinions. Pupils elect their peers to represent them on the council. Weekly meetings are held each Thursday evening

in the boarding house. The meetings are led by the boarders and the minutes are taken by boarders and kept in the common room for all to access. Boarders report that these are useful meetings; they feel that they can raise any issues and believe that they are listened to by their peers and adults. Changes have been made to boarding practices as a result of boarders' participation and the school listening to their views. For example, the activity programme has been extended and boarders can now watch the news before breakfast. A suggestion box is located in the common room wherein boarders can make written representations to boarding staff. Overall, boarders said they had a good say in how they could improve life in boarding provision and they reported that staff were very approachable. Relationships between boarding staff and the boarders are excellent. It was evident during the inspection that boarders were willing to listen to each other and participate in constructive problem solving together to resolve minor operational issues. Older children supported younger children to make their point and each child showed respect for others' differing perspectives and views.

New boarders are given the boarding handbook, which provides them with clear information about boarding routines and rules. New boarders are supported by the boarding prefects who help them settle in and the vigilant supervision provided by staff members. Pupils at the school can try 'boarding tasters' within the flexi-boarding system provided by the school, to help prepare them for full boarding in senior schools.

The school encourages boarders to keep in contact with their parents and families. Boarders can use the cordless phone to make calls in private and contact their families by e-mail. An improved Skype connection has been set up in the boarding house, enabling boarders with parents who are working overseas to see them on the web-cam. Older boarders write a weekly letter home. The house-parents encourage parents to visit and contact the school and excellent relationships exist between parents and boarding staff. Staff contact parents about any significant welfare concerns relating to their child at school. Parents report that the house-parents are friendly and helpful.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school does not encourage boarders to bring valuable personal items into the boarding house; mobile phones are not allowed. The boarding provision does not provide a secure place for boarders to keep their personal items as this is not seen as necessary or in keeping within the 'family' atmosphere operating within the boarding house. However, any valuable item may be given to the house-parents who ensure that the item is securely stored.

The boarding provision is located on the first floor of Harefield House, the main school building. There are two girls dormitories at one end and three boys dormitories located at the other end of the building. Each area is provided with showers and toilets. The common room and sick bay are in the middle, offering boys and girls a communal area where they can mix and socialise together. Dormitories provide each boarder with sufficient space and adequate storage arrangements; boarders are appropriately grouped in dormitories according to age and gender. Bunk beds are of sound construction and suitable for the age group accommodated in boarding; most mattresses have been renewed. Bedding is changed at regular intervals or as required. All rooms in boarding are decorated in styles aimed to appeal to younger children; they are well ventilated and well lit. Window restrictors are fitted to first floor windows to prevent any likely

accidents. Meals are taken on the ground floor of the building in the school dining room; boarders also have access to the computer and music room facilities located within the building.

Cleaning standards throughout boarding are excellent; all areas of the boarding house are kept spotlessly clean and the washroom areas are odour free. The matron's effective infection control regime includes the twice daily deep cleaning of door handles and banisters. Soap and towels are available at all basins, providing sufficient resources to encourage boarders to undertake effective hand washing and drying. Toilet and washing facilities provide boarders with sufficient privacy. However, some boys would prefer more privacy than is provided by the one toilet cubicle located within the boys' washroom. Staff have responded sensitively to this request and on occasion, boys have been given access to the visitor's toilet located on the ground floor. However, this facility does not meet the required standards; the lock is unsuitable and cleaning materials were seen to be kept therein. The previous inspection found an insufficient discharge of hot water in the boys' showers. The school has undertaken work to address this problem but the issue has not been satisfactorily resolved. Currently, the house-parent is required to manually override the system to provide sufficient hot water to the boys' showers; or alternatively, the boys use the girls showers once they have finished using them. The school's development plan includes the provision of new boilers; however, no timescales are given for the completion of this work.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available within the separate boarding handbooks written for parents, boarders and staff. The information therein reflects current boarding practice at the school and provides a very good level of information. The staff boarding handbook provides succinct guidance to staff about the operation of boarding, ensuring that boarders receive consistent standards of care delivered within known daily routines, promoting their wellbeing and security.

Effective leadership and management in the development of boarding at the school ensures that boarders' welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Senior staff are mindful of current legislation and best practice frameworks and keep the concept of Every Child Matters at the forefront of every decision made. Staff work collaboratively and cooperatively across the school to help individual boarders develop their abilities, both academically and socially. Boarding practice is excellent; the house-parents are highly regarded by parents, boarders and the school. One parent wrote, 'excellent pastoral care, excellent activities and excellent food'. Boarders were unanimous in their praise of the boarding provision, highlighting the kindness and approachability of the matrons and house-parents and their enjoyment of the meals and activities provided. One boarder wrote, 'I am very well cared for and we have fun with our house-parents'.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Boarding staff are sensitive to children's individual needs and they make sure that each boarder is looked after in the best way possible to meet their unique needs. Differences in boarders' individual abilities, family cultures and opinions are respected; boarding practice and ethos promote an inclusive approach within a communal living situation, where every individual is shown respect and valued. Effective communication systems within the school and open discussion with families ensures that boarders benefit from a holistic understanding of their developmental needs. The house-parents

ensure that all staff working within boarding complete induction training in boarding duties, contributing to the excellent standard of care provided to boarders. All staff undertake child protection training and matrons hold first aid certificates. The school's records of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents are monitored by the headmaster and the effective recording systems in place contribute to boarders' welfare.

All teaching staff work on a rota basis each evening in the boarding house, supporting the matron and house-parents in looking after the boarders. This is considered by the school to add value to the boarders' experience of boarding, whilst enabling teachers to get to know pupils outside of the classroom. The two designated teachers on duty each evening join boarders for their evening meal and then supervise boarders in their activities. The deployment of teaching staff within boarding on a regular basis extends the range of activities offered and provides the boarders with social opportunities to develop a good range of skills and abilities. A matron is available at all times to provide support and medical care to boarders as required. There are always three members of staff available overnight. Staff are located within the boarding house and are easily accessible to boarders should they need help during the night. The school does not place children in lodgings.

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 suitable flooring is provided within the sick bay to ensure that boarders who are ill can be cared for satisfactorily and separately from other boarders where necessary (NMS 48.1)
- ensure there is an adequate hot water supply to the boys' showers (NMS 44.6)