

# St James Independent School

Inspection report for boarding school

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**Unique reference number**

SC017401

**Inspection date**

9 November 2009

**Inspector**

Paula Eaton / Karen Malcolm

**Type of Inspection**

Key

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**Registered person**

St. James Independent School for Boys

**Head / Principal**

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**Nominated person**

Samuel Moss

**Date of last inspection**

6 December 2006

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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 James Independent School for Senior Boys is a member of the Independent Schools Association and provides education for boys aged 11 to 18 years old.

St James offers a distinctive educational philosophy, inspired by its founder Mr Leon MacLaren, who was also a founder of the School of Economics Science. The school's adoption of this philosophy is made clear in information provided to parents and pupils.

Junior boarders are accommodated in twin rooms while senior boarders have single rooms, and there is a clear distinction between the junior and senior accommodation. The houseparents live in a separate flat in the boarding accommodation located between the junior and senior areas. The assistant houseparent also lives in a separate flat in the boarding accommodation.

The school is situated beside the River Thames at Twickenham, having moved to its current site in 1996. Twickenham provides good access to public transport, shops and community leisure facilities. The school is moving to a new site in Ashford during the summer of 2010.

At the time of the inspection there were 288 day students and 18 boarders. All boarders go home at weekends and all but one boarder was spoken to during the inspection.

### Summary

This was an announced inspection that assessed all of the key national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Boarders are well cared for and there is a strong ethos throughout the school that promotes mutual respect and consideration for others that includes respecting each other's differences. Staff build positive relationships with boarders, and boarders feel safe and well looked after. Good systems are in place to ensure that the welfare of boarders is promoted and protected at all times. The accommodation for boarders meets their needs and is maintained to a good standard.

Systems in relation to the safe storage, administration and disposal of medication are not sufficiently robust, and not all records in relation to health and safety are kept up to date. Although recruitment checks are taking place, these are not always completed prior to staff commencing their employment. Not all staff who are involved in the preparation of food have an up-to-date food hygiene certificate.

The current staff responsible for boarding have made positive changes since their arrival, and are committed to further development and improvement of the service and care provided for boarders.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection of the boarding provision the school was asked to ensure that all the required recruitment checks were carried out. It was noted that this has been achieved and

recruitment procedures have improved. However, it was noted that some recruitment checks are taking place after an employee has commenced work. In particular this relates to references for prospective employees.

## **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Boarders receive guidance regarding personal and social health issues as part of the school curriculum. This is then followed up in a more informal manner on an individual basis when required and in group discussions within the boarding house. For example, there is a period of quiet time before evening meals that provides an opportunity for such discussions. A particular session that was observed involved discussing safety issues with regard to social networking sites using a newspaper article to spark debate. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place in relation to drug and alcohol misuse and the school has a zero tolerance policy on drug taking that is very clear.

The health needs of boarders are met. The school has access to a named general practitioner who visits the school, and boarders can access a local surgery as a temporary patient if required. Good systems are in place for reporting health concerns to parents and carers and houseparents attend appointments with boarders when parents are unable to. If boarders become ill during school time they are able to return to the boarding accommodation and are monitored by the houseparents.

Systems for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medication are not sufficiently robust. For example, there is not a comprehensive medication policy in place, and medication administration records are maintained but are currently not signed, as the houseparent is the only person who administers medication to boarders. Risk assessments are not currently completed for boarders who manage their own medication and there is not a clear system in place for the receipt and disposal of medication in the boarding accommodation. The school uses homeopathic remedies whenever possible and some over the counter remedies. However, the protocol for the use of these treatments is not clear. Parental consent forms are completed for medication and first aid treatment and all medication is securely stored.

Boarders benefit from a varied, nutritious diet and fresh fruit and vegetables are available at all meals. Organic, locally sourced produce is used wherever possible. The school only provides a vegetarian diet as this is in accordance with the general ethos of the school. Although the majority of the boarders are not vegetarian they understand the reasons why a vegetarian diet is provided and accept this as part of school life. Boarders are actively encouraged to comment on the food provided via regularly distributed food surveys and feel that their views are listened to. Boarders currently use the school dining hall for meals. The housemother is involved in meal preparation, however, she does not hold a current food hygiene certificate. This would ensure that she had up to date knowledge of good food hygiene practice.

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

The provision is good.

The school promotes an environment where mutual respect and understanding are paramount. Bullying is not tolerated and any incidents are responded to promptly. There is an appropriate anti-bullying policy in place and records are maintained of any incidents that occur. Robust systems are in place for protecting boarders from abuse. Staff receive annual safeguarding

training from the designated child protection lead, and there are very clear procedures in place to guide staff if they have any concerns. Staff spoken to during the inspection were able to demonstrate their understanding of the procedures and accurately relay what action they would take if they had any concerns about the welfare of a boarder. Appropriate policies are in place for if a boarder was to abscond.

Good systems are in place for managing the behaviour of boarders. A reward system has recently been introduced to encourage positive behaviour and sanctions imposed generally involve performing additional chores. All of the boarders spoken to said that they felt the system was fair and were clear about what was expected of them. Physical restraint is not used within the school.

There is a clear complaints procedure in place that is included in the staff and boarders handbooks. Very few complaints are received by the school, but those that are, are dealt with promptly and records maintained including the action taken and the outcome.

Fire safety equipment is checked at regular intervals to ensure it is in working order. Appropriate fire evacuation procedures are in place that are known to boarders and staff. Regular fire drills take place and any issues observed during the evacuation of the building are noted and acted upon. Recruitment procedures are sound and all the required recruitment checks are taking place. However, some current employees commenced work prior to all the required recruitment checks being completed.

Boarders are supervised well without any unnecessary intrusion of their privacy. There are appropriate measures in place to prevent unauthorised access to boarders and their accommodation. Security measures include key coded doors and external CCTV cameras are used to monitor who is coming in and out of the school.

Health and safety policies and procedures are in place and appropriate window restrictors and safety glass is used within school to ensure the safety of boarders. Very detailed environmental risk assessments are completed for any identified risk to the welfare of boarders and these are regularly reviewed to reflect any changes that occur. Although it is evident that electrical and gas checks are taking place the required safety certificates were not available for inspection. The system for the portable appliance testing of equipment brought into the accommodation by boarders is not currently sufficient to ensure that all equipment is adequately tested and safe to use.

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

The provision is good.

Boarders report that they have various people that they can contact should they have a problem including their parents, buddies within boarding and the houseparents. Boarding staff have built positive relationships with boarders which enables open communication and encourages boarders to raise any concerns that they have. In addition to this there are two independent listeners who boarders can contact, their contact details are widely available and even displayed in the bedrooms of junior boarders. However, boarders stated that they would not consider talking to one of the independent listeners as they were not aware of who she was and they were sufficiently comfortable talking to boarding staff. Boarders are also given the contact details for ChildLine.

Boarding staff are very sensitive to the needs of individual boarders and strive to ensure that they feel safe and comfortable boarding at the school. The school takes a holistic approach to the care of boarders aiming to meet their emotional, social and physical needs, as well as providing good academic opportunities. Staff monitor the behaviour of boys and respond sensitively to any difficulties they are facing, especially in relation to new boarders who may be having trouble settling in.

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

The provision is good.

Boarders are consulted about life at school in various ways. Individual and group meetings take place with the houseparents on a regular basis and surveys are conducted to ascertain boys' views about the food provided. There is a feedback box that can be used anonymously placed in a prominent location within the boarding accommodation, and the houseparents have recently introduced a boarding council that has been received well. Staff are approachable and boarders feel able to freely express their views.

Staff encourage boarders to maintain contact with their families. All boarders have mobile telephones and access to a payphone should they wish to use it. In addition, where appropriate boarders are supported to use the office telephone in the boarding accommodation to contact their parents in private. During the inspection boarders confirmed that they were allowed to maintain as much contact as they wished with their parents. As boarders board on a weekly basis they go home every weekend and, therefore, have contact with family and friends every week. Staff ensure that parents are kept informed of any developments in relation to the care of their child.

An induction process is in place for new boarders, however, this is in the process of being reviewed to extend the time available for new boarders to arrive and settle prior to the return of existing boarders. New boarders are allocated a buddy from a senior year and are given a handbook that contains useful information about boarding and expectations with regard to conduct. Buddies spend at least one evening meal with new boarders a week and younger boarders find this support valuable.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Good systems are in place for ensuring that boarders personal possessions are looked after. Money can be locked away for safe keeping in the office and all boarders have lockable space in their bedrooms that can be used to store items safely.

The boarding accommodation is well maintained and any maintenance issues that occur are dealt with promptly and effectively. Boarders confirmed that any time they report a repair it is completed almost immediately. The boarding accommodation is kept clean and the lighting and ventilation are sufficient. Boarders commented that the senior sitting room had a tendency to become very hot in the summer due to the restrictors fitted on the windows. This was reported to the staff and possible solutions will be looked into.

All senior boarders have a single room and junior boarders share with one other boarder. All rooms are adequately furnished and boarders are able to personalise their rooms as long as the

material is suitable. There are a satisfactory number of bathroom facilities that are located close to bedrooms and communal space.

## Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a good statement of the school's boarding principles and practice in place which is available to parents, boarders and staff. The information provided reflects the practice of the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school promotes an ethos of mutual respect and understanding providing equal opportunities for boarders whilst acknowledging and supporting individual differences. Cultural and religious needs are met.

The boarding accommodation is organised well and ensures a clear distinction between the boarding accommodation for junior and senior boarders, which supports safe caring principles and enables staff to put in place clear boundaries for different age groups.

The headteacher regularly monitors the operation of boarding. He has regular meetings and discussions with the houseparents and checks and signs records maintained for the boarding service at least every half term. In addition to this the headteacher teaches most of the boarders and lives in close proximity to the boarding accommodation, and is, therefore, available if needed for support and is familiar with all of the boarders.

Staffing levels meet the needs of the boarders and allow them to participate in a variety of activities outside of school hours. Two of the teaching staff support boarding on two evenings a week and there is an assistant houseparent who provides additional support and lives on site. There are adequate contingencies in place to cover any sick leave.

Staff receive an induction to boarding and receive regular supervision from senior members of staff. A new staff handbook has been developed that contains copies of key policies and also the job descriptions for boarding staff ensuring that staff are clear about their role and the role of others within the boarding service. Training is provided for staff including child protection training. The houseparents have recently attended a training day entitled 'Meeting the emotional needs of boarders' and an introduction to boarding management training day.

## 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 robust systems are in place for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medication within the boarding accommodation (NMS 15)
- ensure that all staff involved in the preparation of food have a current food hygiene certificate (NMS 24)
- ensure that all of the required recruitment checks are completed prior to an employee commencing work at the school (NMS 38)
- ensure that all of the required health and safety checks are taking place and the appropriate certificates obtained (NMS 47)