

# Bethany School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Diane Thackrah
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<b>Head / Principal</b>	Nicholas Dorey
<b>Nominated person</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	18 January 2007

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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

Bethany School was founded in 1866 and is set in a spacious, parkland campus on the outskirts of Cranbrook in Kent. The age range of students is 11 – 18 years of age. The school offers places to day pupils and both flexi and full time boarding students.

Accommodation for boarders comprises of five separate boarding houses, four of which are on the main campus and one which is reached by crossing a country lane. The sixth form accommodation offers single room accommodation.

Facilities on the school campus include: an outdoor swimming pool, sports hall, climbing wall, gymnasium, fitness room, squash courts, drama studio, music school, art school and library. The extensive grounds provide sports pitches and hard courts.

At the time of this inspection, the school was accommodating 125 boarders. Many of whom were spoken with, and contributed their views to this inspection.

### Summary

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

This was an announced scheduled key inspection. All key national minimum standards were inspected.

The school has many strengths. Young people enjoy being at the school and share positive relationships with staff. Young people feel safe and protected and appreciate the good facilities. Parents are also happy with the care that their children receive at the school, and with the close communication that they enjoy with the staff. There are generally good arrangements for ensuring that young people enjoy good health, including an effective medical centre and well balanced and healthy meals. The safety of young people is promoted in many ways. Bullying is taken seriously, as are complaints. Behaviour management is well handled and young people think that they are treated fairly and with respect. There are good fire safety arrangements and good systems for monitoring the safety of the environment.

Young people are supported to enjoy and achieve. There is a varied activities programme that young people contribute to and enjoy. Young people say that staff are always available to provide support. There is no discrimination at the school and young people are treated as individuals. The views of young people are taken seriously and there are a number of ways in which they can contribute their views to the running of the boarding provision. Young people are able to maintain contact with their family members and can do this in private. They are also well supported when starting as a new boarder.

There is satisfactory boarding accommodation and a rolling programme of refurbishment and redecoration. There is good management of the boarding provision. A staff training programme is in place to help provide staff with skills that promote young people's well-being. A quality assurance system is in place to help monitor quality within the boarding provision.

Recruitment practice has not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure that only suitable people are employed to work with children and young people. However by the time of the inspection

improved recruitment and checking procedures were in place. There are minor shortfalls in other areas, such as the systems for the recording of administered medication, the training of contracted catering staff in child protection and in the provision of a secure storage space for all young people.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection it was recommended that: a separate waiting area be provided in the medical centre to improve privacy for young people, the views of young people are canvassed in regards to food and to continue to make improvements to the boarding houses. Positive action has been taken in relation to these issues and these steps go some way in promoting the well-being of young people.

At the last inspection it was recommended that a physical link is provided between a boarding house, and a housemaster's home. The school has taken action to address this issue; however, a link between the two areas still does not exist. The school has explained that this continues to be in its plans.

At the last inspection it was recommended that there is greater evidence maintained with regard to the vetting of ancillary workers. Evidence is now in place in regards to the vetting of ancillary staff, however, shortfalls have been identified in recent practice relating to the recruitment of peripatetic staff. These shortfalls were rectified by the time of this inspection.

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

The provision is good.

The school has policies and procedures in place that serve to ensure that young people's health is promoted and protected. Good health is promoted through the school's personal, social, citizenship and health education programme. Staff are clear about the school's policies regarding alcohol, smoking and illegal substance abuse and follow policy in practice.

Young people's health is also promoted through the school's arrangements for first aid and health care. All staff members have received training in first aid and there are first aid boxes situated around the school. Parental permission is sought in advance of the administration of medication and first aid. Young people are able to see medical professionals as required and a general practitioner visits the school on a weekly basis. A qualified nurse runs the school's medical centre. Young people feel that their health needs are well met by the medical centre and have positive experiences of being there. One parent commented that 'medical facilities are excellent'. Medication is generally well managed with records kept of stock held and administered. Medication administered in one house at weekends is not always recorded in line with good practice.

Young people receive good quality catering in pleasant surroundings. Menus are varied and young people enjoy a healthy and nutritious diet. Special diets can be catered for and individual likes and dislikes are respected. Young people are able to contribute their views about the catering provision and are able to give examples of menus being changed to reflect their preferences. Some young people think that the portions are too small; however this was not noted to be the case during the inspection. Young people eat together in a pleasant dining

room that is sufficient in size for the numbers dining. Staff preparing food have undergone training in food hygiene.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

In the recent past there has not been vigorous vetting of some staff members which may have placed the well-being of young people at risk. Documentation required for checking the suitability of staff to work with young people had not been obtained for some new staff members. However, by the time of the inspection improved recruitment procedures were in place. The school has been able to demonstrate good recruitment practices in relation to the most recently appointed staff.

There is a comprehensive policy in place regarding child protection. This goes some way to safeguarding young people's well-being. There is staff training in child protection and staff are clear about their roles in reporting alleged or suspected abuse, however, this training has not yet been extended to the contract staff who work in the kitchens. These staff members have, however, limited contact with young people. Young people are protected from bullying. Bullying is not reported to be a major issue in the school and young people are confident that staff would take appropriate action to prevent it. The school has a clear policy on how staff should address bullying and staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to this. Some staff have received training in how to respond to bullying.

Behaviour management in the school is good. Young people report that they enjoy being at the school and think they are treated fairly. One young person said 'The school is fantastic at caring for each pupil'. A parent commented that the 'House mistress takes very good care of students'. Another said 'our daughter is very happy here'. Parents report that they enjoy very good communication with school staff and this supports good behaviour management. There is a clear written policy on discipline which staff understand and follow. The disciplinary powers of prefects are minimal and clearly defined. The school takes complaints seriously and ensures that young people and their parents have the information they need should they wish to make a complaint. Young people think that their privacy is respected at all times.

Fire safety systems in the school offer protection to young people. Each building has been risk assessed regarding fire safety with action being taken to reduce serious risks. There are regular safety tests on fire equipment and young people say that they are required to take part in fire drills. The school has taken steps to protect young people from public intrusion. Young people are protected from safety hazards. There are environmental risk assessments in place and a health and safety committee meets monthly to monitor safety issues. Safety tests occur on electrical appliances, the electrical installation and on the oil and gas supplies. Staff members have received training in areas such as the safe use of chemicals and fire safety in order to carrying out their work safely. Concerns have been raised by a parent about the safety risks posed by a road separating a boarding house from the school. It is evident that some risk is posed by this road; however, the school have taken action to reduce this.

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

The provision is good.

Young people have access to a wide range and choice of activities. One young person said 'there are lot's of activities'. A weekend programme of activities has been devised for young

people which includes activities such as trips to the London Eye, museums and on-site activities. Young people are consulted in advance over suitable activities.

Young people receive good personal support from staff. Young people say that there are a number of staff who they could approach for support and advice. One young person said 'I trust staff'. Another said 'I can talk to staff'. Parents think that staff provide good support with many commenting that there is 'excellent pastoral care'. There is an effective tutor system and good communication between staff members which ensures a consistent approach to young people's care. There is a school councillor and an independent listener who young people may contact about personal problems. The contact details of a number of outside support agencies are made easily available to young people. Young people do not experience inappropriate discrimination. Religious needs are respected. This includes allowing young people time and space to pray and providing appropriate provision for special dietary needs. Support is provided to young people for whom English is not a first language.

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

The provision is good.

Young people are listened to. There are a number of ways in which young people are able to contribute their views to the operation of the school. These include questionnaires, a school council and meetings with the catering manager. Young people say they can also raise any issues in house meetings. Young people and staff say that the school has a very open and friendly atmosphere and that this promotes freedom of expression. One young person said 'we get a chance to have our say'. Young people gave examples of fruit salad being added to the menu and a SKY box being purchased as a result of them requesting this.

Young people are able to maintain private contact with their parents and families. Many young people have their own mobile telephone which they use to stay in touch with their parents. There are also telephones in private booths in each of the houses. Young people are also able to use the internet to email their parents. Parents report excellent communication with staff at the school. One parent said 'staff make efforts to know parents well'. Staff are committed to keeping parents informed about significant issues relating to young people.

There are good arrangements that help new boarders to settle into school life. Young people are provided with a written handbook which provides lots of information about life at the school. Young people think that the 'shadowing' system also helps them to get to know the school.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The school has made some provision to ensure that young people's possessions are protected through the allocation of locked desks and bedside cabinets. Some young people are able to lock their bedrooms. However, not all young people have access to these facilities and they state they would like somewhere to store their valuables securely.

Young people are generally provided with satisfactory accommodation that is suitably lit, furnished, decorated and ventilated. Some houses have décor that is worn, however, there is a rolling programme of decoration and these areas are scheduled to be repainted. Some window frames are rotting in one of the houses but assurances have been made by school staff that

there are plans to replace these in the Easter break. Other windows in this house have recently been up-graded. Accommodation is kept clean. Some young people say that some areas can get cold, however, others say they are warm enough. Staff say that they ensure that heating is always monitored. Young people have satisfactory sleeping accommodation. Young people are able to personalise their rooms and there is adequate space for changing and for storage of possessions. Accommodation is fully separated by gender and appropriately separated by age group. There is adequate private toilet and washing facilities. Young people say there are enough toilets and showers and no queuing. There is some flooring outside of one shower block that is not well maintained. Staff have made assurances that this area is scheduled to be repaired.

## Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The outcome area staying safe has been judged as satisfactory due to practices in relation to staff recruitment and therefore organisation within the school is also judged satisfactory.

There are many strengths in this area. There is suitable information available to young people, parents and staff that ensures that the school's boarding principles and practices are understood. This information is regularly reviewed in order to ensure that it reflects current boarding practices at the school. Organisation of the boarding provision is good and this contributes to the well-being of young people. There are clear lines of communication and accountability within the management of the boarding provision and staff meet regularly to discuss boarding issues. There are good systems in place for monitoring record keeping and this contributes to young people's welfare. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly and there are systems for monitoring punishments, complaints and accidents.

There are sufficient numbers of staff on duty at any time to ensure that young people are well supervised. Young people say that they always know where to find a staff member if they need to. Staff have clearly defined roles which supports them to provide good care and support to young people. Boarding house staff undergo a formal induction programme when they commence work in the school and job descriptions are provided. Appraisals occur and there is staff training in a number of areas and this helps to promote staff development. Systems for monitoring peripatetic staff have not been robust in the school in the past, however, improved systems now ensure the close monitoring of all school staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Special dietary needs are catered for and religious needs are respected. Young people are treated as individuals and are encouraged to explore equality and diversity issues as part of the personal, social, citizenship and health education programme.

## 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 all staff members working with boarders are subject to recruitment checks in line with national minimum standard 38, prior to them working with young people (NMS 38)
- ensure that a record is maintained of any medication administered to a young person (NMS 15)
- ensure that contracted staff who work in the kitchens have been given a briefing or training on responding to suspicions or allegations of abuse (NMS 3)
- ensure that each young person has a suitably secure, accessible place to keep personal possessions and valuables. (NMS 20)