



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

BOARDING SCHOOL

Thomas Adams School

Thomas Adams School
Lowe Hill Road
Wem
Shropshire
SY4 5UB

Lead Inspector
Jackie Callaghan

Key Announced Inspection
6th February 2007 11:00

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Boarding Schools*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Name of school	Thomas Adams School
Address	Thomas Adams School Lowe Hill Road Wem Shropshire SY4 5UB
Telephone number	01939 233311
Fax number	
Email address	adamshouse@thomasadams.net
Provider Web address	
Name of Governing body, Person or Authority responsible for the school	
Name of Head	Mr Neil Hemming
Name of Head of Care	Mrs Nicki Cooper
Age range of boarding pupils Date of last welfare inspection	

Brief Description of the School:

Adams House is a Maintained Boarding School with places for 61 boarders. Pupils attend the Thomas Adams School, a mixed comprehensive, which is arts college specialising in the media arts. The management of the Boarding School has transferred from the Trustees to the Local Education Authority and the school is now inspected as a Boarding School, by the Commission for Social Care Inspection, and under section 87 of the Children Act 1989 and the Care Standards Act 2000.

The school is situated in Wem, a market town in North Shropshire, which is approximately 13 miles from Shrewsbury, the nearest 'big town'.

Boarding accommodation is provided in five separate areas of different ages and types. There are three, older terraced houses in which sixth form boarders live, an older house in which the Lower School Girls live and a newer, two storey block in which the Lower School Boys are accommodated. The sixth form college, the Ruscoe Centre, which is used by boarders and sixth formers from the Thomas Adams School, is also on the Boarding School site. There is also a teaching block, with a Library and IT rooms on site.

The Boarding School site adjoins the Thomas Adams School grounds and boarders use the facilities on offer at the school. The School currently charges £7,500 per year.

Pastoral care and support are provided to boarders by house staff, teaching staff with occasional boarding responsibilities and ancillary staff, under the leadership of the Head of Boarding and the Head Teacher of the Thomas Adams School.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection began on Tuesday 6th February and was undertaken by three inspectors, the School knew that they were going to visit. The inspectors stayed at the School for three days and were able to spend time talking to the young people that board at Thomas Adams School.

The inspectors also:

- Spoke to the Head Teacher, Head of Boarding and House Parents
- Looked at some files
- Watched how the young people and staff got along together

To help the inspector to write the report the Headmaster, Mr Hemming sent the inspector information about the School. The inspector also used other information, which she already knew about the School.

What the school does well:

These are some of the good things that the inspectors saw and the young people and staff told them about.

What the young people said:

- "You meet and make friends, learn about different nationalities and learn how to be independent".
- "Privacy is respected".
- "We have internet access and can send emails to family, we have wireless internet from the library and we are awaiting it to be fitted all around the School so we can email from our dorms"
- "I feel secure in my bedroom, I know if I need anything I can ask for staff to help me, but I also know that staff recognise that I need space".
- **This told the inspectors that the young people are supported to maintain contact with their families and that staff respect their privacy.**

- "The staff are very caring, they respect what we say and they listen and help solve our problems".
- "They are the best boarding staff I have come across in three colleges"
- "In modern lingo the way we are getting looked after is 'mint'".
- **This told the inspectors that the staff are very supportive and approachable.**
- When asked about punishments these are some of things that the children and young people said;
- "The status system really works you want to be on a higher status because you get more privileges, which encourages you to be responsible".
- "Punishments are fair, you know what you can or cannot do. Status works really well and encourages you to achieve and behave".
- "There is no bullying – house parents are very friendly and helpful. They are very quick to intervene if they are feeling that someone is unhappy".
- **These comments showed that staff only used punishments when it was really necessary.**

What staff told the inspectors:

- "Its important that we recognise the difference between young people and treat them as individuals".
- "We take young people from different countries which makes it easy to recognise that they need different support, help and guidance, like extra English lessons. It is important that these boarders get the right support and help to settle into life at Thomas Adams".
- **This told the inspectors that Thomas Adams feel that it is important to recognise that all young people are not the same and need help and support in different ways.**

What the inspectors saw

- There were working locks on all the toilet doors and all the showers either had curtains or a cubicle door.
- Young people were relaxing in their common rooms on an evening when the inspector visited boarding.
- The bedroom walls were full of posters or interesting articles.
- Young people were freely talking to staff and those that needed help were openly asking for staff to assist them.

What has improved since the last inspection?

- A central Log is now maintained of all complaints and the procedure contains details on how to contact the Commission for Social Care Inspection.
- Adams House has a good knowledge of the welfare needs of its boarders and works closely with other professionals to provide required support. This work is now reflected in written welfare plans, which are monitored and reviewed regularly.
- There is now a written protocol and guidelines on the use of Non Prescribed medication (Homely Remedies).
- The School is now able to evidence that it is monitoring records as required under the National Minimum Standards and that risk assessments are in place for identifiably high-risk activities.
- The school now ensures that no member of staff begins work without a satisfactory CRB check having been received by the School.
- The school was aware at the last inspection there were areas in which the premises did not meet Minimum Standards. As a result the standard of bathrooms and showers and toilets has improved. The school recognises that further developments are still required here and has plans in place to further improve these facilities.

- The school has updated many of its policies and procedures. This includes the complaints procedure, prevention of bullying and child protection. The school in discussion with the Commission for Social Care Inspectors demonstrated a real commitment to improvements throughout boarding. The school must be commended for their ongoing hard work and dedication.

What they could do better:

- Not all of the important information was on staff files. There are some things that are useful to check. For example, a direct discussion with both of the people who wrote their references to make sure they are genuine. This would help the people in charge know that they are the right person for the job they are doing.
- Consideration needs be given to making the payphones on boarding more private, so all young people who wish to use these payphones can have conversations with out other people listening in.
- The new showers in the boy's lower School boarding house should be fitted with non-see through doors.
- Whilst the School are conducting regular fire drills, a drill should be taken during nighttime so as to expose all the young people and staff to this scenario and to help boarders practice which exit to leave by.

The inspectors would like to thank all of the students for their help, support and involvement with this inspection. The inspectors were very impressed by all of the young people.

Please contact the Head for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

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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)

The Commission considers Standards 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

6, 7, 15, 16, 17, 24, 25, 48 & 49

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Boarders' health is promoted and relevant health and welfare needs of individual pupils are supported with access to medical, dental and optical services. Key members of boarding staff maintain their first aid qualification to ensure competent designated staff are available to administer first aid and minor illness treatment.

Boarders receive meals that are nutritious and sufficient in quantity and quality.

EVIDENCE:

In practice Inspectors identified that the school effectively covered the major risks to children's health as part of the curriculum and is backed up by the boarding policies. Staff spoken with confirmed that they were aware of appropriate actions to take in response to suspected alcohol, smoking and illegal substance abuse. The school have developed policies for both the taking of Alcohol and smoking. These policies refer to the PSHE programme, which encourages the responsible attitude to both drinking and smoking. The Alcohol policy makes reference to both legislative requirements and raises awareness of possible health risks. The school have also written an Alcohol policy for staff. The School has forged strong links with a local Medical practice, where boarders have access to both female and male doctors. All boarders are registered with the Practice in Wem.

Confidential Health Records are available for each boarder. These are developed from information given by parents and guardians as part of the admissions procedure to the School. These records include any visit to the local GP, vaccinations, referrals to other health professionals, any health problems and any requests from parents regarding health matters.

The Medical Treatment and First Aid Policies have been updated to include both prescribed and non-prescribed 'homely remedies' procedures. Five staff have completed first aid training, enabling a designated member of staff on at all times to administer first aid. The accident record book was examined and all accidents were recorded appropriately. The business manager monitors the accident sheets so as to identify any patterns or trends that may require action to minimise future risks.

Prescribed medication is only given to the relevant boarder and this medication is kept within a locked cabinet within the boarding house. Medication is recorded on individual young people's medication record chart, which documents medication name, dose, date and time of medication given. A member of staff then signs this.

Currently only 6th formers are allowed to self medicate. One young person who has a specific health care need is enabled to administer his own medication. The School met with his parents to discuss the process and ensure they could accommodate his health care needs and safety before he began Thomas Adams. It would be good practice if the School were to devise and introduce a formal risk assessment and policy approach to self-medication for all yp in collaboration with their local GP. The School would also need to provide a lockable and secure storage in the bedrooms for all young people who have a diagnosed and specific health care need and on prescribed medication, as they currently do for this one young person.

Ancillary staff was observed as having a good relationship with the boarders. Boarders with medical difficulties appeared to be treated and supported in a satisfactory manner and there was much evidence received to indicate that fellow boarders and staff are fully supportive at times of personal stress and homesickness. Where there may be a need for health, or other professional involvement, in relation to a boarder's welfare, links exist through the Wem medical practice for such involvement to be put in place.

At the time of this inspection there were several young people who were subject to a Welfare/Care Plan being accommodated at Thomas Adams school. The school has produced a specific policy relating to children with Special Needs and works very closely with other professionals. The inspector examined these Welfare Plans and they were considered to be exceptional documents that enabled staff to consistently meet the diverse individual welfare needs.

The inspectors felt that the food was of adequate quality providing a balanced nutritious diet. A vegetarian option was always available and the school are mindful about providing flexible options for overseas young people if they struggle with a British diet. There is a salad bar option for pupils and there is always fruit available. A food committee has been set up where the young people's representatives put forward suggestions for forthcoming menu options. Several issues about the food were raised via the pre-inspection young people's questionnaires however, at the time of the inspection all pupils spoken to were satisfied with the food and felt the School were listening to their views and requests about food.

Drinking water is accessible in the houses, main house, dining hall and school.

Crisps, chocolate, biscuits, fruit and toast is accessible outside of meal times from vending machines in the Ruscoe centre, the 'tuck' shop which is sited in the Main House common room and which boarders commented on positively, or the local town.

Boarder's spoken to informed the inspectors that they have been adequately looked after when sick. Boarders confirmed that they were not left alone for long periods and that they always felt able to summon support. It is understood that, where a sick boarder is sharing sleeping accommodation, the other boarder or boarders maybe moved to another area to allow the sick boarder privacy and to prevent the spread of infection. The school does not have a sickbay or sanatorium, but there is a 'sick room' on the top floor of the Head of Boarding's house, which is within the Main House. This is a large room, with adequate space for visitors. The adjoining bathroom has a toilet, hand basin, bathrooms and shower. Sick boarders are usually cared for in their own rooms so this room is potentially for use by a boarder with a contagious illness or, presumably, where a sick boarder is accommodated in a dormitory and where it would be more appropriate to move one sick boarder than 5 well boarders. Those staff and boarders who spoke to the inspectors about arrangements for sick boarders did appear to be aware of this room or its potential for use, however it has only been used so far for two sick boarders.

The laundry is now washed in-house on a daily basis. In addition the home provides two washing machines, two tumble driers, an iron and ironing board, which is accessible on a rota basis from Mon to Thurs, with free access from Friday to Sunday. Laundry is reported to be returned appropriately to its owner, provided it is named.

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 appropriately responded to.(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 and there is supervision of all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises.(NMS 39)
- Boarders have their own accommodation, secure from public intrusion. (NMS 41)
- Boarders are protected from safety hazards.(NMS 47)

The Commission considers Standards 2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 22, 25, 28, 29, 37, 38, 39, 41 & 47

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The School has made positive advances in their policies, procedures and practice in safeguarding their pupils. The selection and vetting of staff requires further improvement to the level of checks undertaken so as to ensure that those who work with the children are suitable to do so.

Practical child protection is afforded a high priority and pupils' rights are respected and their privacy is recognised and enabled.

EVIDENCE:

The code of behavioural conduct expected from all young people attending Thomas Adams, either as a day pupil or a full boarder, is described within the schools bullying policy. The content of the policy promotes the culture as being resistant to the emergence of bullying and prescribes actions to be taken when staff encounters bullying behaviour. The inspectors gained strong evidence from talking to the students that Thomas Adams provides a supportive and happy boarding environment where boarders thrive and where they can benefit from opportunities to grow and develop in a range of contexts. All school staff plays a critical role in caring for the young people, a responsibility that they take very seriously and thus effectively communicate any concerns they may have about individuals. It was clear that there were no bullying behaviours at present, which demonstrated to the inspectors that this policy was clearly working.

In practice, Adams House child protection system is closely linked with that of The Thomas Adams School. The member of staff with responsibility for child protection matters is involved in training staff in-house in relation to child protection procedures and would also be involved in any referrals made from the boarding school to the local Safeguarding Board, through the Head of Boarding. It was noted that, although no recent child protection referrals have been made from Adams House, the School itself had made 11 referrals in the past two years and have been highly commended by the safeguarding board for an open and proactive approach to safeguarding their pupils. Boarding staff spoken to were clear about the schools child protection procedures and their responsibilities within. There were many members of staff including boarding staff that had received additional external child protection training.

School prefects have received some child protection instruction/training and were clear about the schools child protection procedures.

Catering and ancillary staff however, have not received guidance or training. This must be given to catering and cleaning staff to ensure they are skilled up to effectively recognise and refer any possible child protection concerns appropriately. When exploring this with the School their response was very proactive and the inspectors left feeling very confident that this training would be given to these staff members after half term. It was felt by the inspectors that the school puts a lot of work into ensuring that there is a positive atmosphere.

Behaviour management was seen to exceed minimum standards with the young people presenting as being happy and relaxed, showing a caring attitude and helpful demeanour towards others, thereby upholding the school's ethos. Thomas Adams has an appropriate policy on behaviour, discipline and use of punishments. The school has full and comprehensive policies and information on the School's code of conduct, House Status System, Sanctions and Concerns, which is well known to boarders, staff and parents. Policies and procedures are under review constantly to ensure a consistent approach and an effective and successful system. Responses to the pupils' questionnaires indicated that, in general, the use of punishments is seen as fair. At the time of this inspection the boarders stated to all three inspectors that they considered the punishments to be very fair when rarely used and they were positive and complimentary regarding the treatment and respect they have from their House Masters, Tutors and Head of Boarding. The Schools approach to behaviour management is wholly proactive, with a strong emphasis placed on reinforcement of positive behaviour. It was considered that there are no unacceptable, excessive or idiosyncratic punishments used and that the disciplinary powers of prefects are clearly defined. A record of punishments is kept. These were seen to be satisfactory and the Head Teacher and Head of Boarding cross reference these and review them at weekly meetings.

A central Log is now maintained of all complaints and the complaints policy contains details of how to contact the Commission for Social Care Inspection. There have been no formal complaints made since the last inspection. The School has a formal complaints system that is available to parents and boarders. The staff handbook contained a copy of the complaints procedure, so staff are made aware of the process that they would need to follow.

The prefects are voted in by all of the students at the end of the school year (July). The students voted in are then asked if they wish to take on those duties next year, this process also includes staff who oversee the candidates to ensure that possible prefects are young people who are both able and deserving of the post. Prefects attend a meeting at the start of the year informing them of their duties and a prefects 'book' is in place, which is used by each group of prefects each year. The prefects enter their ideas into this book for discussion. They receive support from staff and learn 'the job' from the previous years' prefects.

No evidence was seen to suggest that any prefect is abusing their role; it was considered that the prefects are respected not feared at this school. Again the Status System that is used at the School promotes positive behaviour. The prefects do not have any powers to punish their peers.

The School does not currently appoint guardians.

Full emergency evacuation procedures are available and have been tested from sleeping and living areas. Discussions with students and house staff confirmed that this takes place. Fire drills are regularly carried out and always take place twice each term. However, to further improve practice the School should undertake a nighttime drill to expose the young people to this experience and enable staff to identify any possible issues that could arise from completing fire drills once the boarders are in bed.

Emergency lighting, fire alarms and fire fighting equipment are regularly tested and records are maintained. Records were seen to indicate that the School has its fire detection and prevention systems maintained and checked by contracted agencies.

No other children other than pupils are accommodated at Thomas Adams School.

Activities identified as High Risk are subject to a detailed risk assessment. It is then the responsibility of staff involved to ensure that high-risk activities are competently supervised and accompanied by adequate and appropriate safety measures. Risk assessments seen were satisfactory. It was considered that adequate and appropriate safety measures were in place and it was reported that parental permission is obtained, in advance, at all times.

The School has an established and effective staffing rota in the boarding houses. This includes an appropriate balance of male and female staff. An appropriate balance between privacy and supervision were seen as being exercised on the evening and during morning calls. None of the pupils spoken with considered that being a boarder compromised their personal privacy. There was no indication that any staff supervision of boarders was inappropriate, all staff observed were sensitive to the young peoples needs.

In both boarding houses that were visited on several occasions, it was evident that boarders considered their bedrooms to be their private space. Staff were seen to be supervising, available, but not intruding at inappropriate moments. Improvements to showers in the boy's senior boarding house have improved facilities but there are still problems around privacy. Currently the shower doors are see through. The School have placed an opaque covering on these doors but it peeled off with the steam. They are currently in discussions with the repairs department at the local County about making these doors opaque. The Commission would strongly support this action, if the doors were not covered to make showering more private then the School would be criticised for not meeting the minimum standards in this area.

An improved Personal File Check List and a Recruitment Procedure has been introduced since the School was last inspected. A selection of staff files was examined and all new staffing files had evidence of CRB checks, references, interview notes copies of qualifications, employment history and Curriculum Vitae. The School also vets any adult that has contact with the young people, for example the Independent Counsellor. However, there is still a need to explore and actively check referees ensuring that they are the owners and writers of the reference submitted. When checking references a check on the dates employed with the previous employers is also good practice.

Boarders sleeping and living areas are for the exclusive use of boarders and other scholars must seek permission from the resident boarders and the staff to enter. Where feasible, given the nature of the site, suitable and adequate security measures are in place to prevent unauthorised access by the public. These include security lighting in key areas, key pads on doors and a set of procedures for staff to lock access to parts of the school at specific times of the day and night. Public use of the facilities does not involve substantial or unsupervised access and people, who visit the school report to reception and sign in.

It was felt that indoor and outdoor areas used by, or accessible to, boarders were free from reasonably avoidable safety hazards. A risk assessment approach was used to minimise the risks that any outdoor activities may pose.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- Boarders have access to a range and choice of activities.(NMS 11)
- Boarders receive personal support from staff.(NMS 14)
- 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)

The Commission considers Standards 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

11, 14, 18, 27, 43 & 46

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Pupils' activity and recreational needs at Thomas Adams are generally well met. There is no evidence of discrimination happening at the School. The School's helping ethos positively assists young people with any special needs. The young people are practically encouraged to achieve by having access to a choice of quiet spaces and work areas in which to study.

EVIDENCE:

The responses to the Boarders' Questionnaires indicated that 91% of them felt that activities were good, which is a very high percentage. Sports sessions currently take place twice a week and these are supplemented by a wide range of trips out including trips to the cinema, ice-skating and paintball. Young people that were spoken to described the different clubs that they can access outside teaching time of School that included aromatherapy, dancing and yoga.

Boarders have wireless Internet access, which is suitably safeguarded, although it was understood that this was only accessible from the library. The School are currently looking at putting in a stronger system so as to enable wireless Internet across the boarding site.

At present there are 61 full time boarders in the school almost equal numbers of boys and girls. There is a mix of cultures with a proportion of students coming from overseas. The main criterion for acceptance is that a child will be happy and successful in the school community. All of the young people were found to be supported and treated equally with support for overseas students and children with special needs being tailored for the individual. The School has a large teaching facility for students with special needs including a behavioural unit but there are currently no boarders with these needs. Considering the wide and diverse range of needs that the School states that it can cater for it would be wise for the School to enable boarding staff to undertake a wider range of training for example de-escalation skills that will help enable them to confidently cater for any young person with challenging behaviour that could become a boarder.

The students each have a personal academic tutor, houseparent, boarding staff and the Practice Nurse who is the independent listener to whom they can turn and boarders are encouraged and enabled to approach any member of staff at the School. Discussions and observations indicated that the boarders always felt that they could turn to someone. The tutoring system at the School appears to work satisfactorily and records are maintained. It was evident that there are communication channels between academic and pastoral staff when relevant information is shared and matters followed up. The local clergy and the local rector who is chaplain to the boarding house are also on hand to act as independent listeners if required.

The School is committed to securing equality of opportunity through the criteria of an environment in which individuals are treated on the sole basis of their relative merits and abilities. There are clear procedures for dealing with any incidents of discrimination or harassment.

The Head Teacher ensures that appropriate training is undertaken by all members of teaching and non-teaching staff and governors to ensure they are fully aware of their responsibilities in respect of equal opportunities, harassment and discrimination on grounds of race, gender or disability. Wherever possible, provision is made for pupils with particular religious, dietary, language or cultural needs.

Equality and diversity is an area that the School continues to develop particularly with the student's themselves. The student's discussed with the inspectors that they value the opportunity make friends and learn about different nationalities it was felt that cultural and spiritual awareness of others was found to be very important to the School.

Although the School aspires to high standards and has high expectations of each student, inspectors saw no evidence that demands made were excessive or unduly onerous. This was confirmed during discussions with boarders.

Inspectors observed suitable study facilities and staff supervision available to boarders during homework.

Safe recreational areas have been provided, both indoors and out, for boarders. Students and staff were clear about the practice for supervising boarders' use of and access to areas within the School buildings and grounds. These areas were safe and provided boarders with a range of activities and places they could go on their own or in a group.

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 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)

The Commission considers Standards 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The management and staff team are very strong at enabling both formal and informal opportunities for boarders to express their views with regard to the boarding provision. All views are taken into account in the development and practice of boarding. The children are generally well supported by boarding staff but could be further enabled to retain positive links with their families, whether in England or abroad if the payphones were made more private. A comprehensive induction and guidance for new boarders ensures they are able to settle in and feel welcomed.

EVIDENCE:

The students have both formal and informal opportunities to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision. There is a food committee, and students reported that the representatives did try to represent their views. A personal academic tutor system is established, and most students questioned felt comfortable about expressing views to their tutors. All of the staff operates an open door policy for boarders; indeed, students reported a high level of confidence that matters taken directly to the Head Teacher would be listened to, although sometimes they preferred to use the Houseparents as intermediaries. Students spoken to spoke highly in regard to their Houseparents and boarders generally felt that their views were considered on most issues. Reasons are always given for rejection of suggestions and boarders stated that they could always raise the issue again. During the inspection there was an opportunity to see the open door policy operate, with the students seeking out the Head Teacher and or house staff on several occasions. Observation substantiated that boarders are able to contribute, raise issues, ask questions and make suggestions. It was considered that this standard is exceeded.

Boarders are able to contact their parents and families via the following means –fax, mail, E mail, School telephones, mobile phone, verbal messages passed by administrative staff, visits, week-ends at home. Pay-telephones are available in both lower and upper School Boarding, however some boarders did comment on the lack of privacy of the house phones. The School need to either re-locate the payphones or create a more private space around the existing phones so as to enable more privacy. It is recognised that most students have mobile phones; however particularly for overseas students it is often more cost effect to use payphones.

All new boarders are assigned a 'buddy' to help then get to know the School. This buddy will make contact with the new boarder before they begin to attend School. The buddy will help with any queries by being listened to and supported with any anxieties. All relevant information is given to new boarders via a boarder's handbook, which was updated in September 2006. Reports from a number of boarders who were admitted to the School in September 2006 indicated that they had been very pleased at the welcome and help that they had received from all at the School.

Boarders are able to access information about events in the world outside the School in several ways. The boarding houses have a television in each common room and newspapers are provided. Boarders have access to computers and a number have mobile phones. Boarders can go on shopping trips and access Wem and Shrewsbury town centres. Boarders attend numerous off-site facilities and activities that are accompanied by staff.

General observations of interaction between pupils and teaching staff, boarders and boarding staff over the course of this inspection supported the judgement that overall there exists very positive relationships. This was supported by comments from the pupils' questionnaires and verbal feedback. All spoke highly of the staff involved with boarding. Boarders spoken with generally stated that they felt they were looked after well and treated reasonably. Students, who were asked about how they would make a complaint and to whom, were clear that they could talk to a range of staff that would listen. The majority of pupils liked the School and the staff, and indicated that it was a good place to be. The impression of the inspectors was that disagreements were dealt with reasonably between pupils and staff. Discussion with individual children also identified that staff would often give them the benefit of the doubt if they were breaking a School rule on a first occasion. It was our assessment that this standard was exceeded.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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)
- The welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted.(NMS 51)

The Commission considers Standard 51 the key standard to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

20, 40, 42, 44, 45, 50 & 51

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The ethos of the school is one where trust is developed to an extent that personal possessions are respected and left alone. Students do however have secure places for the storage of valuables and money.

The school accommodation strives to provide a warm and homely environment and atmosphere for boarding students. Some significant improvements have been made to the living environment, it is recognised by the School that certain areas still require further development.

EVIDENCE:

All boarders at Adams open a bank account with Barclays bank to keep their pocket money in, when they join the Boarding School. Families of boarders are requested to send a float of £250 at the start of term to cover the cost of school trips, stationary and books. All boarders have access to a locker within their houses.

Standards of provision across and within the five boarding houses at Adams House were found to be variable and it was acknowledged by the School that work still needs to continue to be undertaken to improve some areas of the accommodation. It must be acknowledged that considerable work has been undertaken since the last inspection. New showers have been put into the lower School boys' boarding house however; the shower doors need to be made opaque so as to be offer more privacy. The school has adequate numbers of toilet and washing facilities.

Sleeping accommodation across the boarding house is suitably furnished. All areas were found to be of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders accommodated. The sleeping areas in all the houses were found to provide adequate storage space for boarders' possessions. Some rooms were seen to have been personalised by the students occupying them. The general impression was that the rooms and dorms were a 'home from home' and that pupils were allowed and encouraged to create their own space.

Families of boarders are requested to send a float of £250 at the start of term to cover the cost of school trips, stationery, books and personal items.

No educational lodgings are arranged by the School to accommodate students. This standard does not apply to this inspection.

Management

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 effectively managed.(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 adequately supervised 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 with specific boarding duties, with adequate induction and continued training.(NMS 34)
- Boarders are looked after by staff following clear boarding policies and practice.(NMS 35)
- The welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

The Commission considers Standards 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1, 8, 9, 10, 23, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 & 52

Quality in this outcome area is **good**.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Thomas Adams has drafted a clear statement regarding its aims including the principles for boarding. Boarding practice is generally sound and is underpinned by staff training. The school have produced appropriate policies and guidance for boarding staff. There is generally competent supervision and care of boarders.

EVIDENCE:

The School's statement of boarding practice is updated regularly and meets all the requirements set out in the National Minimum Standards. It is presented in a style that makes it accessible to parents, boarders and staff. There are booklets for parents and boarders. All have similar main policies included and are developed to reflect the boarding environment and practice.

There is very clear defined leadership and management of boarding at Thomas Adams. Both the Headmaster and Head of Boarding lead by example and are supported by a professional, committed and caring team of staff that effectively manages the School's organisation of boarding. Boarding staff are encouraged and enabled to attend courses (BSA and other). It was felt by the inspection team that the School have enhanced their boarding facility by providing specific boarding staff that do not have teaching commitments. The inspection team were extremely impressed by how the Head of Boarding and this team are working together to enhance the boarding experiences of the students living at Thomas Adams. It was therefore considered that this standard was exceeded.

The school has a Crisis Management Plan; this is detailed within the Thomas Adams School 'policies and practice'. The plan details immediate, short term and medium term action. Staff who was spoken to during the inspection were aware of the plan, which includes a full list of people to contact in the event of various crises.

The School has excellent support from the governing body; there are various committees who meet including the Boarding House committee who meet once a term. The head boy has a role within this group and they have a standing agenda that includes, student welfare, accommodation, and staffing issues as an example. This committee appear to take their responsibilities seriously and it was felt from evidence gained from School records and talking to the young people, they effectively monitor the welfare provision. The School has the services of an independent counsellor. This person met with one of the inspectors and shared her background and experiences. The Head of Boarding and all of the Houseparents exhibit exemplary leadership and practice in their care of the boarders. It is clear that the School continues to be a community where the best interests of the young people are at the centre of everything. It was considered that this standard was exceeded.

Risk Assessment is kept under review. The Head Teacher with the Head of Boarding and Business Manager meet weekly to discuss and undertake direct monitoring of Complaints, Sanctions and Child Protection. Reports are compiled and submitted to the relevant governors committee for discussion. The Head Teacher has oversight at all times of every area.

Observation of the evening arrangements, on one day of the inspection, demonstrated that all the pupils were offered a range of activities, supervised by a range of different staff. Several staff live on the premises and make themselves available to the pupils throughout the day and, when dictated by circumstances, at night. The evenings are usually taken up with a range of sporting and recreational activities. It was considered that the boarders were supervised by good numbers of staff, a duty rota is displayed in each house. Weekend cover comprises of the House parents and offers sufficient numbers and degree of flexibility to meet the needs of the involved.

Visits off site, all school trips and trips abroad are covered by separate full and concise policies that have been given to all relevant staff and boarders. Policies and procedures appear to fully comply with DfES guidance. The boarding house mini bus has been scrapped as it had come to the end of its useful life. A decision has been taken not replace this instead a priority agreement has been made with the local community mini bus operator to enable the boarding house to use this vehicle after school hours and at weekends. A substantial budget for the hiring of another mini bus has been agreed to enable the boarding house to access a vehicle on the rare occasions the community bus is not available.

In the Boarding houses there are resident staff that includes the Head of Boarding and these staff are contactable in several ways. Students spoken to indicate that they felt that they were well looked-after at night.

Job descriptions are in place for all staff. Supervision of ancillary and cleaning staff takes place and the School is aware of its responsibilities in this area. There is an induction policy and guidance in place for staff. Ongoing training is provided to staff and training is evidenced in their personal files. The School are committed to providing good training. The inspection team had discussions with both the Head Teacher and Head of Boarding and would wish for the School to consider exposing the boarding staff to training courses that would enable them to meet the wider complex needs of any young person with special needs that may possibly become a boarder. For example, training around de-escalation skills and training on autism maybe appropriate.

When boarders require off site accommodation it is checked by staff and may, at times, involve the use of a third party. It was considered that every check possible and risk assessments are undertaken. When boarders are staying in such accommodation it was reported that School staff accompanies them at all reasonable times. The School have detailed contact information held on file of each young person's parents/guardians should the need arise to make contact when away from School.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
6	3
7	3
15	3
16	3
17	4
24	3
25	3
48	3
49	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	3
3	3
4	4
5	3
13	3
22	3
26	3
28	N/A
29	3
37	3
38	3
39	2
41	3
47	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
11	3
14	3
18	4
27	3
43	3
46	3

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4
19	2
21	3
30	3
36	4

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
20	3
40	3
42	3
44	3
45	3
50	3
51	N/A

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

Continued

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
8	4
9	3
10	4
23	3
31	3
32	3
33	3
34	3
35	3
52	3

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection? No

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

This section sets out the actions that must be taken so that the proprietor meets the Children Act 1989, Inspection of Schools and Colleges Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards.

No.	Standard	Recommendation	Timescale for action (Serious welfare concerns only)
1.	BS15	It would be good practice and the school should consider A formal risk assessment and policy approach to self-medication for all yp and provide lockable space within bedroom for young people with specific diagnose need and on medication.	
2.	BS3	It would be good practice if child protection training and or guidance needs to be given to all staff including both catering and cleaning staff	30/05/07
3.	BS26	It would be good practice if a fire drill should be taken during nighttime	
4.	BS37	Consideration needs to be given to making the showers on the boys unit more private.	
5.	BS39	The system for recruitment and selection of staff requires further improvement to ensure that evidence is held to show that direct contact is made by the school with each referee to verify the reference.	30/04/07
6.	BS19	The payphones on boarding should be made more private, so conversations cannot be overheard.	30/05/07

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