

Taunton Preparatory School

Inspection report for Boarding School

Unique reference number	SC423119
Inspection date	02/02/2011
Inspector	Tola Akinde-Hummel / Barbara Davies
Type of inspection	Key

Setting address	Taunton School, Staplegrove Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6AD
Telephone number	01823 703 703
Email	
Registered person	Taunton School Educational Charity
Head/Principal	J M H Beale
Nominated person	J M H Beale
Date of last inspection	N/A

© Crown copyright 2011

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services 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

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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

Taunton Preparatory School is an independent school with four hundred and fifty pupils that provides day and boarding facilities for girls and boys. The school is set close to the town centre in Taunton. Boarding facilities on offer include full boarding and some temporary places. Accommodation is provided in a three storey house situated in the school grounds. There are currently 36 boarders aged between eight and 13 years. 34 boarders returned surveys and all boarders participated in the inspection. The school is based on a Christian ethos but does accept pupils from different religious faiths.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a key announced inspection carried out covering the Every Child Matters outcomes. This is the first inspection of the boarding provision conducted by Ofsted.

The school provides a good level of care. Boarders are well looked after and enjoy their boarding experience. Boarders receive high levels of individual support from a number of staff at the school. Boarders are safeguarded through the consistent implementation of robust procedures and the few instances of bullying are well managed. There are strong relationships between the staff, boarders and their parents which promotes open communication.

The headteacher leads by example. He recognises the shortfalls in the boarding accommodation outlined in this report and has already started taking positive steps to improve this. The whole boarding team are open and responsive to the needs of boarders with a desire to continually improve their boarding experience. The house parents are committed to finding new ways to engage and entertain boarders and make life there as similar to home life as possible. One of the younger boarders captured the general sentiment within the school and wrote, 'Boarding is really fun, I really like it because the staff care about me so much, it's really nice here.'

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

There is a whole school approach to the personal, social and health education of boarders. This is delivered in classrooms, tutor groups, assemblies and within the boarding house. A range of teaching methods are used to ensure the subjects are delivered effectively. Topics vary from children's rights to sea and beach safety. Nurses from the health centre contribute to delivering information relevant to the age of the boarders. These include caring for teeth to changes in physical and emotional development.

The recently built health centre provides excellent provision for sick boarders and day pupils. This also operates as a satellite to the General Practitioner's surgery. Male and female doctors are available four times a week and the health centre is staffed by qualified nurses providing 24 hour cover with some periods covered by an on-call service. There are protocols in place for the administration of medication approved by the doctors. Medication is stored securely and appropriate records are made. Health centre staff provide boarding staff with medical guidance where required for individual pupils. Records of medication kept in the boarding house are monitored and checked by the senior nurse. Parental consent is in place for medical treatment and first aid; this ensures pupils receive medical care according to their parents' wishes. Boarders said, 'The nurses are really nice, they will stay with you and tell your parents if you are ill.'

The accommodation in the health centre is of a very high standard. The centre provides consulting rooms, a waiting area, and gender specific bedrooms for boarders who are unwell. The surgery also has a lounge for boarders not confined to bed and a physiotherapy room that can also act as an isolation room should there be an outbreak of an infectious disease. Posters and leaflets in the waiting area provide information and advice to boarders.

The senior nurse is an accredited first aid trainer and ensures all boarding staff and other relevant staff are trained. Training is also provided in the use of adrenaline pens and the management of asthma. Medical welfare plans are produced by the nursing staff to identify medical conditions, how to respond to them and strategies for all staff to follow in managing them. The boarding house has informative welfare plans in place to ensure individual boarders are properly supported and monitored during their time at the school.

Boarders enjoy food that is of an exceptionally high standard. A wide choice is available for breakfast, lunchtimes and evening meals. Mealtimes are orderly and the food is plentiful. Staff monitor boarders' food intake to ensure a healthy balanced diet is maintained. Catering is provided by the school and good arrangements are in place for monitoring safety and hygiene matters. There is good liaison between the catering manager and the boarders to ensure that pupils' needs are catered for. The menus reflect choices to accommodate vegetarian options, international dishes and an awareness of individual dietary needs. In addition to main meals, boarders have

access to a reasonable range and quantity of snacks, drinking water, milk and juice in the boarding house. The school also operates its own tuck shop twice a week for boarders to purchase treats of limited monetary value.

The matrons have a good system in operation to ensure that boarders have access to clean clothes and bed linen at all times.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is a robust system for the pastoral care of pupils. Boarders speak positively about the non-tolerance of bullying in the school. The vast majority of pupils state that they are not bullied. A typical comment from a pupil is, 'Staff are good at dealing with bullying.' Where issues are identified, boarders report that staff deal with the situation promptly and effectively. The surveys also show that pupils can approach various members of staff and senior pupils should they have a problem. The school is good at encouraging pupils to raise concerns and manage these well. The school has a good accessible policy on cyber bullying which is understood by boarders. Boarders understand that access to electronic means of communication will be restricted if they are found to use these forms of communication to bully others. Good systems and monitoring is in place on the use of school computers to prevent pupils from accessing inappropriate sites or material.

An embedded and proactive approach to child protection is adopted by the school with written information and training provided for all staff. The policy and procedure includes contact details of all key services and individuals responsible for safeguarding children. These are updated to reflect any changes. The designated person has established good relationships with key colleagues and agencies responsible for the protection of children. This ensures that information is appropriately passed on and advice is sought in a timely manner. All staff members spoken to across the school know who the designated person is and their own role and of their responsibility to report any concerns.

Boarders confirm that the sanctions used at the school are fair and understand the behaviour that is expected of them in school. This is simplified into the seven golden rules. Boarders understand that they should respect each other, their possessions and their living area. If the rules are not respected, boarders know the consequences, which include, a reduction in tuck money, early bed, confiscation of games or videos and very rarely the refusal of permission for town leave. All sanctions relate to issues that occur in the boarding house and are for a specified time. Records of sanctions are properly recorded and the confiscation book shows when items removed from boarders have been returned.

There is a well publicised complaints policy. The strength of positive and open relationships in the school, both with pupils and parents, minimises the need for formal complaints as there are frequent opportunities to address issues informally. Boarders say they enjoy good relationships with staff. One boarder commented, 'I'm

very happy here, it is the best boarding house for me and the staff is strongly great.' The headteacher responds promptly to any formal complaints and maintains a record of these. House parents and matrons also receive compliments from parents and boarders for the way in which they have cared for children in the boarding house. This demonstrates the consistency and the dedication of the staff to the boarders.

Boarders understand the importance of fire drills and evacuation procedures. These take place as required and additional tests are carried out if house staff are not satisfied with the time taken to evacuate. The school ensures weekly, monthly and annual checks are carried out to reduce the risk of fire.

Pupils report that their privacy is well respected and gave the example of staff knocking on bedroom doors before entering. Records in staff meeting minutes demonstrate that staff discuss boarders privacy.

The safety of pupils is promoted through a meticulous approach to the recruitment of staff and checking of other adults as appropriate. All personnel policies and forms are reviewed and updated as necessary by the personnel manager, whose team has also recently undertaken an audit of staff records. Senior members of staff have completed safer recruitment training and interviews do not take place without at least one trained representative on the panel. Staff receive induction training and are provided with a detailed staff handbook which is read and signed as understood. Mandatory training is recorded and kept up-to-date. Staff appraisals are currently underway and are used to identify additional training and development needs.

The security in the school has been updated. An electronic access system has been installed to prevent entry from unwelcome visitors. Suitable and adequate security measures are in place to protect boarders when they are in school or if they leave the premises.

There is generally a good system in place to minimise the risk of safety hazards. Accident records are clear and concise. The health and safety committee is made up of representatives from various parts of the school, including the health centre and sports department to look at how hazards can be minimised. A clear audit trail is in place to ensure reporting is prompt and follow up is completed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There is a good pastoral care system in place that provides pupils with a range of adults that they can approach for support. Boarders are clear that they do find staff helpful. Good communication between staff means that they are aware of issues when they need to be; providing pupils with consistency and sensitivity on an individual basis. Boarders describe the school as 'friendly', 'a home from home' and 'a fun place to be'. Boarders understand the role of the independent listener but do not know who the independent listener is, although their name and telephone

number is displayed on posters and literature.

There is an equal opportunities policy in place. This document is used to inform practice and makes clear that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and sanctions will be given if breached. There is a good awareness of minority groups in the school and boarders say that they are helped to settle into life at the school. Boarding staff play a significant role in addressing any discrimination. They are also on hand to help boarders understand boarding life and aspects of British culture. The junior international group is coordinated by the house tutor to provide additional support to overseas boarders to adjust to their new environment. Boarders with physical health needs are equally supported by sensitive and alert staff.

Boarders enjoy the variety of activities available to them during their free time. They do not report any onerous demands or lack of time and space to relax. One boarder commented, 'I really like the house staff because they are really nice and caring, there is always something fun that you like to do.' Boarders complete their prep with day pupils in the main school building. Any additional time spent studying is by choice and completed in classrooms in the boarding house where there is ample space to study.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are strong formal systems in place for boarders views to be sought. Boarders participate in the social committee, make representation to the catering staff and use the suggestions box within the boarding house to express their ideas. In addition boarders have weekly meetings where they write the minutes and raise issues they wish to address. This meeting is facilitated by house parents. Generally, pupils feel their views and opinions are heard and there are examples where their ideas have influenced decisions about boarding. One boarder stated, 'I am part of the social committee organising the talent show this year.' Another boarder expressed how they managed to get additional cereals on the breakfast menu and influence weekend activities such as dry slope skiing and snowboarding.

Boarders say that they use a range of methods to communicate with families and are supported to maintain contact. Most use their own mobile telephone or email with social networking sites being popular for older boarders. The boarding house has a private telephone booth available for boarders to make calls. Boarders from abroad have requested access to voice calls over the internet to maintain contact with families, relatives and friends. The house parents recognise this need and are looking at how this can be achieved.

Boarders are given a new boarders guide and a small informal booklet introducing them to boarding. While the guide is detailed and informative, it is not entirely appropriate for the younger age range of boarders. The pictorial booklet provided is written in a more relaxed fashion, however, the language used is also more appropriate for older boarders. New boarders are supported by a 'buddy' who helps

them adjust to boarding life and is a friendly face in the first weeks of joining the school. Boarders said they found this useful.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders are provided with the means of keeping their possessions safe, some use the facility others do not. Lockable storage space is available to boarders and staff keep telephones and games consoles safe over night.

The boarding house is going through a programme of refurbishment. This programme has been delayed and is now taking longer than anticipated. Work is almost complete on the female floor with two bedrooms and the bathroom refurbished to a high standard. Boarders are positive about these improvements. Boarders personalise their bedrooms and the communal areas have paintings on display that have been completed by boarders. There are also a number of pictures of boarders around the building. The male floor is awaiting the same level of refurbishment as the female floor. While their current sleeping accommodation is of a satisfactory standard, the male boarders' shower room requires more effective drainage and ventilation. The hot water which services the showers on both floors is presently too hot and needs adjustment to minimise the risk of burns and scalds. Some windows in the building are in need of replacement due to age. All areas for improvement identified are on the work schedule for completion. Boarders have a communal lounge on the ground floor where they have access to table tennis, snooker and other games. The lounges on the male and female floors are spacious yet cosy with adequate space to relax. The hub provides access to board games, dvd's, seating areas a small library and the tuck shop. Boarders benefit from a house that is cleaned well by dedicated ancillary staff, who take pride in their work.

Currently boarders records and information pertaining to boarding is kept in the house parents' accommodation. Access to this information is difficult and compromises the house parents' privacy.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school places a high priority on addressing issues of equality and diversity. Boarders are treated equally by staff and supported regardless of gender, ability or disability. International students are welcomed into the school and boarders wishing to embrace their own religion are supported to do so. While the school's Christian principles are not compromised, other faiths are also respected. Boarders are encouraged to share information about their differing cultures and all staff promote respect and tolerance, making clear the schools equal opportunities policy and practice of inclusion.

The information provided by the school in the prospectus, handbooks and on the

website accurately describes the principles, practice and ethos of the school. Boarders say, 'I love it here', 'We all get on pretty well' and 'I love weekends.'

There is clear management of the school. The headteacher was appointed in January 2010. He has made significant changes to the running of the school and developments in the boarding house including continuing with the decoration programme and establishing links with other schools to share good practice and training.

The restructuring has been welcomed by staff and boarders alike. Staff state that the headteacher is, 'Very down to earth and approachable.'

The headteacher along with the head of pastoral care and house parents monitor complaints. All accidents and punishments, of which there are few, are effectively monitored to ensure there are no emerging trends. Risk assessments are completed by individual departments and these are signed off by the health and safety coordinator. Health and safety meetings take place and action is taken to minimise any risks identified.

Pupils express no concerns about supervision levels. Boarders stated, 'There is always someone in the house.' Staff take a proactive approach to staffing issues, for example, they willingly cover shortfalls in staffing levels due to sickness. This goodwill shows the positive relationships between staff and their commitment to ensuring continuity for boarders. Staff maintain good records and know where boarders are at any one time.

There are formal systems in place to review the practice of boarding house staff. Appraisals are currently taking place and identify any training needs and areas for development.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- ensure that boarders are aware of the person the school has designated for them to contact outside the school staff (NMS 14.6)
- ensure that key information about boarding routines and rules is written in a style that is age appropriate for younger boarders (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that shower and bath facilities are adequately ventilated and the drainage in the male showers is addressed (breach of NMS 44.6)
- indoor areas are free from significant hazards to boarders and in particular, regulate the hot water to a safe temperature in both the male and female showers to reduce the risk of burns and scalds (breach of NMS 47.1)
- boarders' accommodation is generally free from numerous or significant items

requiring maintenance, in particular, windows are either repaired or replaced as necessary (NMS 40.6)