

St Bede's Preparatory School

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Liz Driver
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Head/Principal	
Nominated person	Nicholas Bevington
Date of last inspection	04/12/2006

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the 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

St Bede's Preparatory School (St Bede's Prep) is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged two to 13. Boarding is available for pupils from the age of nine. The school was founded in 1895 and is located in Eastbourne, East Sussex. The school overlooks the sea and is at the foot of the South Downs on the edge of Eastbourne.

The school forms part of the St Bede's School Trust, a registered charity, which also includes a senior school and an international language school.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced full inspection covering all the key national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Overall the service is rated as good, however there are many outstanding features that have been commented on in the report. Four recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection.

Boarders are very happy at the school and receive an excellent level of health care and food provision. Kitchen facilities to encourage older boarders to learn life skills should be considered. Boarders are kept safe from abuse as a result of comprehensive policies and practices and through knowledgeable and experienced staff who are fully trained in child protection procedures. The school has identified the need to tighten up their recruitment procedures. Boarders participate in numerous activities and are provided outstanding levels of support to ensure they reach their potential both educationally and socially. Each individual boarder has numerous avenues where they can raise their views and opinions about the school and boarding house. They are confident and comfortable in doing so. Much work has taken place in the boarding house to bring it up to a good standard. The school is committed to a rolling programme of redecoration and refurbishment. The management of the school is very good with full support from an active governing body.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last welfare visit in 2006 the school was asked to ensure all information was shared across the school to ensure a consistent approach to boarders specific needs being achieved. This has been achieved with very good procedures now in place. The second recommendation referred to an individual child no longer at the school however appropriate care plans are in place if needed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders receive excellent health care and catering provision.

Boarders' health is promoted to a high standard with robust admission procedures that ensure all relevant health information is gained. This information is shared with appropriate and relevant staff to enable consistency of care.

Health needs, including first aid and the administration of medicines are carried out by trained staff plus a qualified nurse during school hours. Consents for medical procedures and administration of medicines, including prescribed and non prescribed, are in place. Individual care plans are put in place if a specific health need is identified. Boarders have easy access to a local general practitioner who also regularly visits the school. The option of a male and female general practitioner is on offer. Excellent links with health related professionals is promoted with some specialists working on site; such as speech and language therapists. Boarders receive medication from staff who are trained and competent and follow robust policies and procedures. Boarders have access to a very comprehensive personal, health and social education (PHSE) programme that is both sensitive to individual experiences and age appropriate. Boarders feel happy that if they are unwell they know who to go to and are well cared for.

The provision of a varied and nutritious diet is met to a high standard with excellent quality meals on offer. The dining room, opened in 2009, is welcoming, spacious and well laid out with bespoke furniture. Meals taken during the inspection were well organised and calm events. Much thought has been put into the logistics of meal times and the system of dual distribution lessens the time of queuing for children making it a pleasurable experience. Boarders have the opportunity to experience food from different cultures and feedback identified no real issues around the food they receive. Some boarders stated they did not like specific foods but there is always an alternative on offer including a vegetarian option, salads and fresh fruit at every meal. The last environmental health inspection report was excellent with one or two very minor recommendations made that have been addressed.

Boarders can have their say about the food via the food committee which the catering manager takes very seriously. Changes have been made as a result of views expressed.

The kitchen facility for boarders in the boarding house is satisfactory but does not provide older boarders with opportunities to store appropriate food and prepare their own hot and cold snacks and drinks hygienically, however they can learn cooking skills in a designated kitchen area in the school.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are protected from abuse through the setting's robust child protection and safe guarding policy and procedures that have been written in accordance with local procedures. A competent child protection officer with a good depth of knowledge and

understanding takes the lead in the school and keeps up to date through close liaison with local child protection agencies. All staff attend regular child protection training.

Boarders surveys did highlight some issues around bullying and when discussed with the head teacher it was clear the school is aware of triggers that may lead to bullying situations. Boarders stated that if any bullying occurs the staff act immediately to stop it. There is a very good awareness of individual behaviour and personalities together with high levels of supervision that lessens the risk of bullying occurring. The school carries out regular activities around bullying awareness and actively participates in the national anti bullying week.

Throughout the inspection the standard of behaviour seen was excellent. Boarders feel any disciplinary measures delivered are fair and consistent; these are very low in number. They are very well informed of what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. Staff and boarders follow the setting's code of conduct and cycle of respect.

Boarders and parents have access to a robust complaints procedure that clearly outlines the process the school will undertake in response to any concerns raised. Numbers of complaints, both minor or serious are extremely low in number. Some minor details in the current policy are incorrect; for example the contact details of Ofsted need to be included. Boarders stated they feel confident in raising a concern or complaint to a wide range of adults in the school.

Boarders are protected from the risk of fire with excellent fire procedures in place. Boarders know what to do if a fire occurs and experience very regular fire evacuation drills. All aspects of fire checks and training are carried out to a high standard with records kept.

Boarders are offered privacy and respect with excellent practice observed throughout the inspection. No incidents of inappropriate practice were heard of during the inspection.

Boarders are protected from abuse through the school's recruitment procedures. These procedures have recently been identified by the school as needing reviewing as gaps in some staff records do exist. All staff have an enhanced criminal record bureau check.

Boarders live in accommodation that is secure from public intrusion with an outstanding and innovative security system in place. Boarder feedback states that they feel safe and secure.

Overall the health and safety policies and procedures are extremely comprehensive and cover every aspect of the school and the children's lives at the school. Risk assessments are in place that cover actual or potential risks from environmental risks to on site and off site activities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school has an extremely well thought through approach to providing its boarders with a range of support and opportunities that encourage them to achieve both educationally and socially. There is a clear process of identifying individual need and those needs being met, with support from related professionals. All children are treated with equal worth and given equal opportunity. Boarders are well informed about the numerous people they can seek help and advice from. The school staff are very aware of individual needs and vulnerabilities and offer an excellent range of support.

Boarders do not experience any inappropriate discrimination. Each child was seen to be treated with respect and dignity with no onerous demands. The introduction of the 'chill out time' after school is working well. All school documents show a commitment to equality and avoidance of inappropriate discrimination of all forms. Culturally sensitive and appropriate support is provided for boarders for whom English is not their first language, in boarding as well as through the curriculum.

There is an excellent programme of weekend activities that boarders have a voice in choosing. All activities both on site and off are extremely well risk assessed and provide a safe environment for boarders to enjoy and achieve. Boarders stated that they do enjoy the activities on offer both after school and at weekends.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have numerous avenues to voice their views and opinions. House meetings, school council meetings, suggestion boxes, access to an independent listener, tutors and staff combined with the day to day informal interactions with members of staff ensure that boarders are able to express themselves freely. The food committee and school council are proactive in bringing ideas forward.

The school offers excellent support for boarders to ensure they maintain contact with parents, family and friends. Staff are quick to contact parents if there is a concern or problem and maintain contact during difficult times. Most boarders said they use mobile phones; however, the boarding house has phones boarders can use.

There are excellent procedures in place for new boarders who receive information about the school and the boarding provision prior to arrival. They receive a good introduction with help from more experienced boarders and staff. Feedback from boarders was highly praising of a 'new boarders experience'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders are provided with suitable provision for protection of their personal possessions. Each boarder has a lockable box to keep personal possessions and valuables or they can be given to the house master for safe keeping. Pocket money is administered through a robust system via a designated bank account with individual records kept. The laundry provision is good with no complaints from the boarders. Boarders are able to personalise their bed space areas.

Boarders live in accommodation that is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated. Present accommodation is not suitable for boarders with disabilities. The school has and continues to invest large sums of money in the fabric of the boarding houses with major changes seen over the last year. Some minor maintenance issues were noted during the inspection and plans were in place for these to be addressed. Robust and well managed maintenance programmes ensure boarders live in a safe environment. One boarder's dorm was seen to have limited space between beds. All other dorms were satisfactory. Windows have restrictors in place enhancing the safety for children. All furniture is being replaced on a rolling programme to ensure it is fire retardant.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding with excellent examples seen throughout the inspection process. From the admission process to the boarding provision, the catering provision and cultural, race and religious needs, all are highlighted and met. The school's policies and procedures overall evidence the commitment the school has to ensuring each child has equal opportunity.

The school provides very clear information to both parents and boarders about the principles and practice of boarding life at the school. Information can be found in paper format or electronically. The school's mission statement is clear in its objectives.

The organisation of the boarding house ensures full consideration is given to safeguarding the welfare of the boarders. The boarding house has a house master who although relatively new in post has made positive changes that the boarders are very happy with. There is a real warmth and homely feel to the boarding provision that the children enjoy. The number of staff available for supervision of boarders is good. Staffing is consistent with a good gender mix. Boarders know who is on duty and who they can go to for assistance at all times. Staff receive induction training and further training is encouraged and welcomed by staff.

There is a clear senior management structure with a head teacher who is fully committed to the boarding provision. He is visible in the boarding and will carry out

boarding duties if needed for staff cover. There is very close monitoring of all aspects of the boarding provision which is fed back to the governors. The governors meet very regularly, are fully committed to the school, have a wealth of knowledge and experience, and carry out visits to the boarding house.

Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for crises that relate to the welfare of boarders. The school has a well developed system for risk assessment. The head teacher is very well informed about all aspects of the school, including the boarding provision. He has an open and friendly approach with a clear commitment to the welfare of the children.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- consider upgrading the boarder's kitchen facilities or create a new kitchen for older boarders, to enable them to gain life skills and experience (NMS 25.1)
- continue with the review of the Trust's recruitment procedures to ensure they meet the national minimum standards (specifically contracts for boarding staff) (NMS 38)
- ensure boarders have adequate space around their beds so they can change comfortably (NMS 42.6)
- ensure parent's and boarder's complaints procedure have the contact details for Ofsted. (NMS 5.4)