

St Andrew's School

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Karen Malcolm
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Nominated person	
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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 Andrew's is a preparatory school for boys and girls situated in a rural setting in Berkshire not far from the town of Pangbourne. The school is primarily a day school with a small or limited uptake for the flexi-boarding and weekly boarding, which they can make use of on a planned basis when they and their parents wish, providing overall boarding capacity allows.

The school can accommodate a maximum of 20 boys and 20 girls at any one time on Monday to Thursday nights, although these levels are rarely reached. Pupils usually stay for a maximum of one or two nights at any one time. On some evenings there are one or more boarders at the school and some pupils may choose never to board during their time at the school.

Boarding accommodation is provided in two separate areas for boys and girls on the second floor of the main school building and an adjacent school building. There are three dormitories for boys and two for girls. During boarding time pupils also make widespread use of various areas of the main school and its grounds for recreational pursuits and activities. At the time of this inspection two boarders were weekly boarding. However, the current list is up to 150 pupils who may wish to board throughout the year.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced inspection of the school's welfare provision for its boarding pupils. The inspection concentrated primarily on assessment of the school's boarding provision against the National Minimum Standards identified by Ofsted as key to the promotion and safeguarding of boarders' welfare. Recommendations made at the last inspection were followed up.

In the context of the limited levels of boarding offered, the school provides a good overall standard of care to pupils who choose to board. Health care needs are well managed and pupils are provided with a generally safe and secure environment in which to live while they board. The school staff team provides good support for pupils' academic and emotional well-being and are seen as approachable and friendly by pupils. Pupils have good opportunities to express their views about the way in which the school and, more specifically, boarding is run. Accommodation for boarders is good and satisfactory staffing arrangements are in place to provide support and oversight from experienced boarding practitioners. Staff with boarding duties are supported in their roles and there is good oversight and monitoring of the management of boarding arrangements.

Some minor shortfalls were identified with regards to window restrictors and the boys' shower facilities which need updating; the school is reviewing these. During the inspection, the issues relating to the window restrictors were addressed and made safe.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last welfare inspection in 2007, four recommendations were made. The school was asked to have in place a robust child protection policy and procedure and to ensure all staff understood the importance of protecting children in their care. The school was also asked to review the recruitment procedures to ensure these are consistently completed for all staff, including staff who are casual workers such as the independent listener. Following this inspection, improvements were made with regards to the selection and vetting of staff and the child protection procedures. The school now ensures all staff receive child protection training and this is monitored appropriately.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Due to the very limited periods of time pupils may spend in boarding, the primary responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the health of boarders remains with their parents and families. The personal social health and economic (PSHE) education is supported by a robust curriculum programme. The school obtains and maintains relevant individual health care information for all school pupils. This is used to ensure boarding and other relevant staff are made aware of any particular health care needs they may have, and any particular procedures for emergency intervention that may be required.

There is an on site sick bay which supports boarders and pupils of the school. The sick bay is managed by the matrons who are also the housemistresses for the boarding. The sick bay can support up to two pupils at any one time. If there is an overflow, then one of the dormitories may be used. The sick bay is situated on the top floor of the main building, therefore it is not accessible to all. The matrons attend all emergencies within the school, as they are provided with portable first aid equipment and 'walkie talkies'. All the house staff, including the matrons, are qualified first aiders. While there is no ongoing support from a local doctor, the school does have a medical advisor who they can contact at any time on matters relating to health or the medical needs of pupils. All boarders have their own doctors and the majority of boarders live nearby so their parents are contactable in an emergency.

There is a robust medical policy and procedures in place. The matrons ensure that any prescribed medication is safely administered and records are maintained. Records are kept of all accidents, injuries and illnesses. All accident reports are copied to the school's health and safety officer alongside any trends or patterns that

may have been picked up.

The school provides a very good menu choice. The main meals always have a choice of a meat and vegetarian options. There is a salad bar and soup served daily for Year 8 pupils and plenty of fresh fruit and a choice of desserts. All pupils have input into menu planning via a School Council. Food is prepared and served hygienically by staff trained in food handling and mealtimes are relaxed occasions during which boarders and pupils are afforded sufficient time to finish their food. Some boarders, via questionnaires, stated that they do not have sufficient to eat. However, when this was discussed with boarders, they overwhelmingly said there is plenty to eat. For some boarders the replacement of sweets and tuck before bedtime with toast and hot chocolate has not been a popular change. However, responses from parents show that they feel that the sweets and tuck being removed was a good idea.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Boarders are well protected from bullying. The school policy and procedures on bullying ensure any issues are quickly spotted and appropriately addressed. Boarders and staff gave examples of how such situations are managed if an issue arises. The boarders said that bullying rarely happens and if it does it is quickly resolved by talking it over with staff. Boarders also said that if they feel unsafe or threatened there are a number of people they could talk or go to such as their friends, the matrons or their form tutors. The school encourages the highest standards of behaviour and addresses poor or inappropriate behaviour in a suitable manner. Boarders consider that the sanctions are reasonable and are generally only implemented to reinforce the rules. The use of sanctions is kept to a minimum and the school prefers to nurture effort, responsibility and positive behaviour with recognition of children's effort wherever it occurs.

The school has implemented an appropriate policy in response to allegations or suspicions of abuse, which is consistent with Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures. This is known to all staff, and when appropriate, to older boarders in positions of responsibility. All staff including the ancillary staff have undertaken child protection training. There are two designated child protection officers; one of these is the headteacher. One of the board of governors is the link person for safeguarding and works proactively with the headteacher to ensure that safeguarding is at the forefront. There is a policy, which is known to staff and used in practice, for reporting any pupil or boarder who is missing from school. There are clear guidelines with regards to the use of the school's internet with clear safeguarding measures on keeping pupils safe while online.

Sufficient measures are taken to minimise the risk of fire. Fire drills are carried out termly in the boarding houses and additional drills carried out to ensure boarders who board only occasionally know what to do in an emergency. This was confirmed by the boarders when interviewed. Boarders gave examples of the procedures they undertook in a real emergency during a recent electrical power cut. All boarders and

house staff spoken to are familiar with fire evacuation procedures and know when they occur and why.

There are comprehensive measures in place to protect pupils and staff from safety hazards. Outdoor and recreational areas are well presented and suitably risk assessed. The school undertakes risk assessments for all activities, with particular attention paid to high risk ones. The risk assessment forms are reviewed and updated if any changes occur. All activities are properly supervised and instructors with relevant qualifications are used.

There are two head pupils who meet with the headteacher weekly to discuss any issues that arise. The representative from each class on the School Council are changed termly to ensure that this responsibility is shared across the pupil body. Pupils spoken to felt this was a fair system.

Improvements have been made in the selection and vetting of staff and volunteers working within the boarding. All criminal records bureau (CRB) checks for staff are undertaken. There are clear procedures to protect boarders from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's recruitment checking procedures. Spouses of boarding staff who live on site have appropriate checks undertaken and this includes a CRB check.

The overall security within the boarding provision is good to ensure that boarders are safe. Boarders feel safe and protected. The school has a good health and safety policy. The school ensures that the supervision of boarders is risk assessed daily, there are CCTV cameras around the perimeter of the school to ensure that boarders are kept safe at all times. The environmental risk assessments have recently been updated, with the help of an external consultant, and the boarding area was risk assessed separately. However, the windows within boarding areas did not have appropriate restrictors in place and therefore, were deemed unsafe. This was made a priority and addressed by the school before the end of the inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is a new independent listener assigned to the school, who was appointed in January. Boarders spoken to said that the contact details with regards to the independent listener and others are displayed throughout the school. They also confirmed that they had been introduced to the independent listener at one of the school's assemblies. Boarders also said that they are satisfied that there are a number of people they can turn to if they have a problems or if they just wish to speak to someone. The majority of boarders said that their first port of call would be their friends, family and then the matrons as they are always helpful and friendly.

The school does not accommodate any significant number of pupils from ethnic minority groups and the school recognises this. The school does have a strong sense of community and Christian values; the school is open to all faiths and

denominations. There is a sense of belonging within the school and all pupils and boarders feel that their needs are met when they are boarding. The boarding staff ensure boarders' cultural needs are met, and that they are exposed to different activities and cultural events throughout the year, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year.

There is a good balance between studying and activities for each boarder. The main reason given by boarders as to why they board is because of the activities; they see these as fun and an extension of their social learning. Boarders clearly understand that boarding is a part of the school day and having adequate sleep at night is also important too. Prep is completed prior to boarding, therefore all prep work is completed prior to pupils boarding.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Pupils have a variety of means by which they can ensure their views are heard about the way the school is run. There is School Council for the pupils which often discusses the items such as food. Representatives are voted on from each class on a termly basis. There are other formal opportunities for boarders to express views on relevant aspects of boarding provision, either directly or through representatives. These views are taken into account in the development plans and practice. Due to the short period of time boarders board, the level of contact with parents is high. Boarders can, if they so wish, call their parents or families by using the staff telephone. The contact details for ChildLine and other relevant contacts are displayed throughout the school.

The school maintains a good on-going level of contact with parents to ensure that boarders' needs and welfare is maintained.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Accommodation provided to boarders is of good quality. Boarders have adequate space to store their personal things. There are separate areas for boys and girls and a separate dormitory for the different age groups. Due to the low number of pupils using boarding facilities not all the accommodation is used. Boarders are proud of the dormitory facilities and feel they are comfortable and homely. However, the boys do feel that the bathing and shower facilities are less than adequate. At the time of the inspection, one of the baths was out of order and the general ambience of these facilities is not pleasant. The school is aware of this and there are plans in place to upgrade these facilities. The numbers of toilets and bathing facilities are sufficient. The girls' shower facilities have been upgraded. The communal areas within boarding are adequate, but due to the number of other activities provided, these are rarely used. Staff accommodation is nearby ensuring oversight of the boarding areas during the night. There is a clear system to manage all maintenance and repairs.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a clear statement of boarding principles within the boarding house handbook. This covers the aims and organisation of boarding at the school. The boarding houses are good and each functions well for the protection and safety of all boarders.

The headteacher ensures that school's records of risk assessments, punishments, complaints and accidents are regularly monitored.

The boarding house staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They are all very experienced and are passionate about working with the children. The pastoral care within the school is well supported by a competent and qualified team, each having a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. There are clear training opportunities for all staff including induction, child protection and fire warden responsibilities.

There is a duty rota in relation to the supervision of boarders. The main aim is to keep boarders safe and secure; there is an adult available to boarders at all times. The fire checklist is updated daily to ensure that those who need to know are aware of the number of boarders accommodated each night. There is a clear timetable of events displayed on the website about what activities are being provided. Boarders spoken to said their main reason for boarding is the many activities on offer. There are robust policies and procedures for boarding staff to follow.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. The ethos of the school promotes a positive understanding towards equality and diversity, which is threaded throughout the school's policies and procedures. Individuals are treated with respect. Boarders say that good attention is paid to their individual needs. An understanding of different cultures is taught as part of the PSHE curriculum. Although the school has a strong Christian ethos there is a respect and understanding of other faiths.

The school does not make any formal guardianship arrangements on behalf of parents. Therefore this standard is not applicable.

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...

- review the boys' bathing facilities (NMS 44)