

# Tonbridge School

Inspection report for Boarding School

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<b>Inspection date</b>	10/03/2011
<b>Inspector</b>	Diane Thackrah
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Setting address</b>	Tonbridge School, High Street, TONBRIDGE, Kent, TN9 1JP
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<b>Telephone number</b>	01732 365 555
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	T H P Haynes
<b>Head/Principal</b>	T H P Haynes
<b>Nominated person</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	04/03/2008

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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

Tonbridge School accommodates boys between the ages of 13 and 18 years on either a day or boarding basis. At the time of the inspection there were 783 pupils on roll of whom 448 were boarders. The school admits students from the United Kingdom as well as from many other parts of the world; around 15 per cent of the boarders are from overseas.

Sir Andrew Judde founded Tonbridge School in 1553 and it occupies a large site of about 150 acres on the northern edge of Tonbridge. The main buildings of the school date from the second half of the nineteenth century. The facilities include the Vere Hodge Arts and Technology Centre, the Smythe Library, the E.M. Foster Theatre, the Orchard Centre (a social centre for use by the pupils) and an Edwardian Chapel. The most recent acquisition is a modern, fully equipped sports centre.

Approximately 70 young people were met with and contributed their views to this inspection.

## Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At this key, announced inspection, all key national minimum standards were assessed. The action taken in response to the recommendations set at the last inspection were also assessed. This is an outstanding school in all areas.

There is a strong ethos of respect for others in this school and young people benefit from positive relationships with staff and with each other and this promotes their welfare. Young people are happy and feel fairly treated and safe. Their views are valued and they are treated as individuals and this helps them to develop a sense of security. Young people's emotional and physical health needs are seen as important and healthy living is strongly promoted.

Excellent arrangements are in place for keeping young people safe. These include robust child protection and a zero tolerance approach to bullying. Young people are kept safe through strong arrangements for health and safety and for staff recruitment. Young people benefit from living in homely surroundings that provide them with space to relax. There is excellent communication within the school which helps to ensure that young people benefit from safe and consistent care from staff who understand their individual issues.

Management in the school is strong and staff benefit from excellent line-management support. There is a strong commitment to learning and development

from the staff team which enhances young people's well-being. The school is particularly strong on self assessment and creating opportunities for self reflection and learning. Staff continually strive for further improvement through evaluative and reflective practice. This ensures that there is excellent organisation and outcomes for young people.

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

The school was asked to review the physical social and health education programme so as to ensure the separation of teaching with regards to drugs and alcohol and ensure that sufficient time is allocated to the teaching of the core subjects of smoking, alcohol and drug abuse and sex education. Positive action has been taken in this area and this enhances the health and general well-being of young people.

The school was also asked to; ensure parents' wishes are adhered to with regards medical matters and procedures; ensure a written protocol on the use of homely remedies in all boarding houses; ensure medication is administered by appropriately trained staff; ensure welfare plans are developed for any boy with significant welfare concerns and that staff are aware of these. Positive action has been taken in all of these areas and this goes some way to promoting young people's health needs.

The school was asked to; ensure all incidents of bullying are reported to the anti-bullying coordinator to ensure effective monitoring; ensure the child protection policy guidance requires staff to report all child protection concerns within 24-hours; add the topic of child protection to the whistle-blowing policy; update the boarders' complaint's literature; ensure contact telephone numbers for external agencies such as Ofsted and Childline are added; ensure effective systems for staff to know who is in the houses during the day in the event of a fire. All these areas have been addressed positively by the school and these measures help to keep young people safe.

The school was asked to; further explore comments received from boarders about lower staffing levels during mornings and Sundays; ensure the disciplinary procedure includes guidance and support to staff during any suspension or investigation whilst allegations against them are being investigated. Positive action has been taken in these area and this improves outcomes for young people.

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

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent arrangements for safeguarding and promoting young people's health. There is a whole school approach to the physical, social and health education programme and this helps to promote young people's health and welfare. Young people are provided with a wealth of information regarding their social and physical development and health promotion. The excellent communication that exists between staff helps to ensure that young people have good opportunities to discuss and question the information they receive in this area. Staff and young people are

clear about the school's policies and procedures regarding alcohol, smoking and illegal drugs and this helps to ensure the young people's health and well-being is promoted and protected.

There are excellent arrangements for health care for young people. There is a medical centre that is well equipped and staffed on a 24-hour basis by qualified nurses. All young people are registered with the local General Practitioner. Excellent systems of communication between the school and the local medical practice helps to ensure that young people's health needs are well addressed. As well as this, young people have access to a physiotherapist employed by the school. One parent said 'Having had a few injuries on the rugby pitch we have found the care provided by matron and the staff has been really good and communication between parents and staff is excellent'. Another parent said that the school had 'kept a close eye on their son's recovery, both in terms of his physical recovery and his overall well-being'. Welfare plans are in place for young people with specific welfare needs and these are understood by staff. Boys with active welfare plans are discussed every fortnight at the welfare group meeting and this helps to ensure that needs are well monitored.

There are mixed reports about young people's enjoyment of food provided, however, on the whole young people agree that meals are healthy, varied, nutritious and of good quality. They confirm that a choice of meal is always available and that their views are taken into consideration in menu planning. Boys say that there is an effective council where they can discuss their preferences about food. They also report that the cooks and staff members are also very open to their opinions and ideas about food. Young people who have specific dietary needs in relation to their culture or health are well catered for. Young people benefit from eating in pleasant and comfortable surroundings and mealtimes are calm and orderly. Young people eat all meals in their own houses and are not rushed and this promotes very good community spirit.

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

The provision is outstanding.

There are excellent arrangements in the school for dealing with bullying and young people are confident that bullying will not be tolerated and firmly stamped out. Staff also feel confident that young people will not be victims of bullying as there is a culture of information sharing between staff, parents and young people. There are dedicated anti-bullying coordinators amongst the staff team and young people who are bullying representatives, chosen by the young people are identifiable by their own 'anti-bullying' school tie. Cyber bullying is taken seriously and any incidents are closely tracked in order to assess and tackle any trends. The strong arrangements in place regarding child protection also help to ensure young people's safety. All staff, in every department, receive training in child protection and are clear about their roles for responding to allegations of potential abuse. Policies and procedures regarding child protection are reviewed regularly which helps to ensure that they are effective.

There are good arrangements in place for behaviour management that promote young people's well-being. Young people are happy, feel safe and say that they are treated fairly. One parent said 'The school and his boarding house have always dealt with him fairly and appropriately'. Young people clearly understand what is expected of them and the good communication between staff helps to ensure that young people receive consistency in their care. Positive behaviour is strongly encouraged as it is celebrated and rewarded.

There are excellent arrangements for fire safety in the school including clear and comprehensive policies and procedures. Fire risk assessments and consultations with the local fire service and fire safety experts help to ensure that any fire related risks have been greatly reduced. Fire training and regular fire drills help to ensure that staff and young people are protected. Young people have their personal privacy respected and confirm that staff are respectful regarding this. There is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working at the school. This includes ensuring that all adults living and working within the school campus, including taxi drivers used by the school and gap students have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. Young people's safety is further promoted as there is a system in place for ensuring the CRB checks are renewed. Strong arrangements are in place for ensuring that young people are protected from visitors to the school and young people say that these help them to feel safe. All grounds workers employed by the school wear clothing that is clearly identifiable. There is a visitor badge system whereby unescorted visitors will have a coloured badge.

Young people's safety is promoted and protected by the excellent arrangements that are in place regarding health and safety in the school. There is a robust system for risk assessment of indoor and outdoor areas which helps to keep young people free from reasonably avoidable hazards. Excellent arrangements for staff training in health and safety practices help to ensure young people's safety. The school has been proactive regarding road safety by commissioning a road safety report and taking preventative action as a result of this. Preventative action is also taken following the review of accidents and incidents to help promote young people's safety. The school's health and safety committee meets regularly to monitor the school's health and safety arrangements.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Outstanding arrangements exist in this school for ensuring that young people receive good personal support from staff. A great strength of the school is the strong and respectful relationships that exist between young people and staff. One parent said 'We cannot commend the school highly enough'. Another said 'Our son is very happy there'. A young person said 'Adults are easy to talk to here'. Another said 'There is more than enough support when needed. I thoroughly enjoy boarding'. Young people say there are many adults who they can turn to for support and they know they will be listened to. There is a counselling psychologist who spends three days at

the school each week and is freely available in that time for consultation, in confidence, by young people who are experiencing any form of problem or difficulty. The counsellor is available to meet parents also where this may be helpful. The respect that young people are shown helps to ensure positive relationships with adults. A staff member said 'I think that there is a fantastic relationship between boys and staff'. The excellent systems for staff communication such as regular meetings and the school intranet system helps to ensure consistency in the support that young people receive. Fortnightly meetings are held between the Second Master and other pastoral staff to monitor the needs of young people who have, or may require a welfare plan and this helps to ensure that young people's individual needs are well met.

Young people do not experience discrimination. Young people and staff say that there is an open and respectful culture in the school. Christianity is practiced within the school in regular services in the chapel, however, there is respect for all cultures and religions. Young people who wish to practice their religion are supported to do so. This includes the provision of cultural food and support to attend places of worship. All young people are given good opportunities to learn about other religions and young people say that the school's population of approximately 15 percent of overseas students helps them to learn about other cultures. An overseas student's committee is in operation and this helps to ensure that any issues or problems arising for overseas students are dealt with effectively. Two teachers are employed specifically to monitor the well-being of young people from overseas. The school's physical, social and health education programme provides excellent opportunities for young people explore issues such as discrimination.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent arrangements exist which ensure that young people are enabled to contribute to the operation of the school. Young people feel listened to and say that their views are taken seriously. They give numerous examples of positive changes being made in the school as a result of their requests. Such requests are often dealt with swiftly. There is a food committee, school council, pastoral care group and overseas council. All meet regularly to ensure that young people's views are heard. Anonymous suggestion slips, feedback forms following induction and positive staff/student relationships also help to ensure that young people have a say in the way that the school is run. These steps help to ensure that young people's welfare is promoted and protected.

Young people say that they are able to maintain private contact with their parents. They do this mostly by using their mobile telephones and the internet. Young people are clear about the times when they are able to do this. A parent said 'The staff have always been approachable, friendly and professional. I would not hesitate to raise issues with them. I can contact my son at any time'. Young people are provided with information about how to contact support independently of the school.

Young people are well supported to settle into school life as there are excellent arrangements in place for introducing them to the school's procedures and operation. The clear ethos in the school, understood by staff and young people is that all new young people, known amongst the school community as Novi's, must be taken care of and provided with support and guidance when needed. All new young people are appointed with a buddy to help them get to know the school. The key criterion for buddy selection is that it should be someone who wants to take on this role and will do a good job. There is a full programme of activities to support new boarders over the first term including welcome buffets, counselling workshops, talks about academic expectations and events to encourage bonding. This process ends with a feedback survey which the school use to evaluate the effectiveness of induction with a view to improving it. New boarders are given written information about the school and a film has also been made to help them understand what to expect of the school. Existing young people have been involved in producing a welcome letter which also helps new comers get to know the school. Staff deal with homesickness in a sensitive way.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Young people feel certain that their possessions will be protected. They all have a tuck box in which they can store their possessions securely and all have a lockable study room. The oldest year group have a key to their individual bedrooms. One young person said 'I could leave £10 on my desk and know that no-one would take it'. Young people benefit from living in pleasant surroundings that are well lit, heated and ventilated. All houses are of a good physical standard with excellent facilities. There is a rolling programme of redecoration and excellent arrangements in place for ensuring good hygiene and maintenance. Young people say that things get fixed quickly.

Young people have suitable space and well decorated and furnished dormitories. There is a large range of facilities in each boarding house for recreational use including chess areas, newspaper rooms, table tennis, television rooms, BBQ areas, and well maintained gardens. A parent said 'In all, Tonbridge school is an outstanding school that provides outstanding boarding facilities'. A young person said 'It is a very comfortable and friendly environment'. Young people each have their own study or individual bedrooms which are conducive to studying.

Boarding house windows have security locks and restrictors and there are key-pad entry systems to promote young people's safety. Bathroom facilities are of good quality, sited near to sleeping areas and plentiful in each house. Careful thought has gone into the provision of showers in order to ensure young people's privacy. All of these areas are maintained and cleaned to a high standard. There are private bathing facilities in all houses. There is regular monitoring of the accommodation by school governors and this promotes young people's well-being.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

There is outstanding organisation within the school and this promotes young people's well-being. Information about the school is made easily available to parents, young people and staff both on-line and in a school prospectus and handbooks. This ensures that all stakeholders have the information they need. The school's organisation of boarding contributes to young people's welfare. Excellent arrangements are in place for ensuring that all boarding facilities are maintained in good order and for ensuring that young people benefit from consistency in their care. One young person said the their house is 'Fantastic'.

There are outstanding arrangements in place for monitoring the school's performance and this ensures that young people's needs are well met. There is clear leadership and clear lines of accountability. One parent said 'The leadership and guidance given by the boarding staff has been very substantial and impressive'. There is on-going review of practice and welfare issues by senior management. These systems are robust and involve regular visits to the houses to review practice by both senior management and school governors. Visits include the examination of all records and discussions with pastoral staff and young people. There is also a dedicated pastoral care committee whose purpose is to monitor the quality of the boarding experience.

Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of young people. Seven staff are allocated to each house with a minimum of two on duty overnight. One staff member said 'The depth and strength of personal relationships with young people are enhanced by strong staffing levels and confident staff'. Staff are well supported and are provided with the information, guidance and training which ensures that they are able to provide good care to young people. There is a staff member allocated solely to induction training and this helps to ensure that staff from all departments receive the training necessary to their work. Staff say that the school is excellent at creating opportunities for staff training and development. They say training happens at all staffing levels, and is strongly encouraged in the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people are treated as individuals and specific individual needs are well met. For example, young people are supported to attend places of worship and are provided with culturally specific food. There is a strong ethos of respect for all within this school.