

Tonbridge School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Address	Tonbridge School High Street TONBRIDGE Kent TN9 1JP
Telephone number	01732 365 555
Email	
Registered person	T H P Haynes
Head of care	T H P Haynes
Head / Principal	
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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 766 pupils on roll of whom 437 were boarders. The school admits students from the United Kingdom as well as from many other parts of the world; around 20% 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 educational facilities available to all pupils are of a very high standard throughout and all subject areas taught within the school are very well staffed and resourced. Particular areas of note 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 a magnificent Edwardian Chapel which was fully restored in 1995 following severe damage caused by a fire in 1988. The most recent acquisition is a modern, fully equipped sports centre. There are seven boarding Houses each with a complement of around sixty boys. The Houses are all situated off site but all are within easy walking distance of the school. In addition there are six Senior Student Houses, which house a total of 48 boarders in units of between four and 13 boys opting to live in this type of provision for all or part of their final year. A senior student remains a member of his house in all other respects but senior student status is aimed to give such students a greater degree of independence and to offer them the opportunity for long periods of uninterrupted study. Given that the majority of pupils at the school are boarders it is stated in the school prospectus 'Tonbridge is therefore predominantly a boarding school, and the general pattern and philosophy of school organisation and practice – the arrangements of the school day and the school week, the ranges of extra-curricular activities, the high teacher/pupil ratio (about 1:8), the extent of pastoral care – are those of a full boarding school, enjoyed, of course, by boarders and day boys alike.'

Summary

This announced key inspection was conducted over three days by three inspectors. All of the key standards for Boarding Schools were inspected, as well as a number of others and the recommendations made from the previous visit were followed up. Key personnel from all departments were interviewed and every boarding house was visited. Records were scrutinised and the boys were joined for all meals. The medical centre was inspected and evening and morning routines were observed. Groups of boys from all year groups were interviewed and the school's recruitment practice was scrutinised. The school is judged to be an outstanding service. The Head Teacher and Second Master, both appointed after the previous inspection, demonstrate an open and inclusive style of leadership. The governing body is more actively involved and there has been a systematic drive to promote pastoral roles and place the welfare needs of boarders at the very heart of the school's philosophy. Boarders are thriving in this environment and parents are assured that their sons are being well looked after.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

A total of 19 recommendations were made from the previous inspection and these have all been implemented. A number of these were concerned with developing robust monitoring

systems within the boarding houses. Routine records are now being routinely scrutinised and monitored in an attempt to gain consistency across the boarding provision. Such monitoring is being completed by the Second Master, and Governors now also conduct routine monitoring visits. A continued rolling programme of refurbishment is having a very positive effect. Those boarding houses recently completed offer accommodation of an excellent standard and the school's development plan includes every house. Catering provision has been reviewed and boarders are regularly consulted about the quality of the food. Staffing levels within the boarding provision have significantly increased and all staff have clear job descriptions and training opportunities. Risk assessment training has been provided and these documents contain good details. The boarding staff handbook has been updated to include clear and specific policy and procedural guidance and improved consultation forums for boarders ensures their views are being expressed and responded to. The school has demonstrated a very clear desire to continue to improve upon the services it offers to its boarders. In addition to improvements concerning policies, procedures and systems, the school has been particularly concerned with implementing real cultural change within its boarding provision. The effects are overwhelmingly positive; House Masters feel better supported and boarders enjoy greater levels of freedom that are appropriate to their age. Boarding provision is now a particular strength of the school.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Boarders' health is promoted and protected through the implementation of policies and procedures. There is a personal, social, health education (PSHE) coordinator who delivers a varied and interesting programme; however, insufficient time is allocated to the core subjects of smoking, alcohol, drugs and sex education. The course is taught through subject departments, tutors, matrons and external speakers. There is also an emotional literacy course which is highly valued by the staff and the boys. Boarders have access to first aid and minor illness treatment as well as medical, dental and optical services. All the matrons are qualified in medicine handling and administration, and in first aid. There are occasions when medicines are prepared for other staff to dispense and these individuals have not received medication administration training. One member of the catering staff in each house is trained in first aid, as are all teaching staff. The purpose built medical centre is staffed 24 hours a day during term time by qualified nurses. This building is clean, spacious and well maintained. Medication and equipment is safely stored and the separate rooms used for accommodating boarders when they are ill are clean and well furnished. Boarders are extremely positive about the care they receive from the nurses. The school doctor is in school six mornings a week and two physiotherapists attend twice weekly. The written protocol for the provision on non-prescription 'household' medicines is not available within the boarding houses. The medical centre holds written parental consent for medical treatment and first aid for all of the boys. A draft welfare protocol for a boy was sent by the House Master for review by the medical centre; however, this was not followed through and the draft is still in the file and one boy was given a flu jab against his parents' wishes. Great efforts have been made by House Masters to write and develop individual guidelines for boarders with additional health and/or welfare needs. The detail in a number of cases is outstanding; however, there are instances of information being held in more than place and not all staff members being aware of this. Boys who are ill can be cared for in the boarding house but can go to the medical centre if they require nursing care. Boys who are suffering from homesickness or are undergoing times of personal stress are well supported by boarding house staff, prefects and their peers. The emotional literacy course has helped to increase sensitivity towards those in need. Boys can also refer themselves or be referred to the school counsellor. The complaints

about food provision in the boarders' surveys were not substantiated by the meals provided during the inspection, neither were they confirmed in boarders' discussions. All meals offer good quality, variety and amount. Boarders can have meals cooked specially for them if there is something they do not like: they only have to ask. Special provision is made for those with specific dietary needs, whether medical or religious, and individual meals are cooked for them. Food is provided for those observing Ramadan. The school goes to great lengths to provide non-contaminated food for a boarder with a serious allergy. There is ample provision for snacks, drinking water and fruit juices during the day and in the evenings in the boarding houses. There are some issues of crowding and queue-barging in the Orchard Centre during breaks and staff are aware of this. Boarders' washing is adequately laundered but there are health and safety issues regarding the carrying of crates by ancillary staff.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Boarders are protected against potential forms of abuse due to the robust implementation of sound policies and procedures. The school anti-bullying policy and procedure is prescriptive and clear. There is an anti-bullying coordinator, who undertakes a monitoring role; however, not all incidents occurring within the boarding houses are being reported to her. There is also an anti-bullying council and boarders report occasional low level instances, which they say are immediately and satisfactorily dealt with. The child protection policy remains subject to ongoing review and amendment. Staff understand its contents; however, the need to report all child protection concerns within 24 hours is not made clear. There is a designated governor for child protection and she is a very active and productive member of this team. All staff, including ancillary workers and prefects receive child protection training. The school has produced an excellent child protection card which summarizes the procedure and all staff and prefects are expected to have it on their person. The Missing boy policy is clear; however, it does not currently include prescribed timetables for actions to be taken. There is a behaviour, discipline and exclusions policy and a system of rewards for achievement, effort and exemplary conduct. Punishments vary between houses but within a specified framework. Prefects cannot give punishments. All punishments are monitored. There is a complaint's policy which is available to everyone. The parents' version does not include the right to contact Ofsted. The procedure in the memoranda does refer to Ofsted but only to the website, not the telephone number. There is no mention of outside help-lines, such as Childline, or any reference to an independent listener. Other than school staff, only the school doctor and counsellor are suggested. Complaints are monitored by the Second Master. Boys' responses vary as to whether they know the policy but they all say they would be comfortable about making a complaint. Prefects benefit from receiving clear guidance and ongoing support to fulfil their roles. They are supplied with a handbook and job descriptions and a detailed induction process begins in the lower sixth with the emotional literacy course. It includes child protection. School and house prefects fulfil a number of roles and have considerable responsibility. Younger boarders speak very positively about prefects and view them as a valuable means of support. Fire drills occur regularly; alarms are tested and the boys have been taught how to use the fire extinguishers. They often have safety talks. However, some staff say they would not always know which boarders are in the house during free time, should a fire break out. There are clear procedures in place to protect boarders' privacy. The staff recruitment policy serves to protect boarders. Enhanced criminal records bureau checks (CRB's) are conducted on all staff and local taxi firms have agreed to ensure that their drivers are all CRB checked. Personnel files show details of robust recruitment, which includes records of interviews, employment history checks and the verbal verification of

written references. The school marshal routinely reports to the health and safety committee on security issues and boarders are safeguarded by CCTV cameras and keypads on external doors. The school is aware of some inadequate lighting. There is regular testing of portable, electrical appliances and clear systems for boarding staff to report maintenance issues swiftly.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are very well supported by school staff and the school counsellor. They can choose any member of staff to turn to for support. The newly appointed school counsellor is very well qualified and experienced. She provides an excellent service. There are policies in place to prevent discrimination and to promote integration. Minority groups and individuals are supported. The school is taking issues of racism very seriously and has appointed an international coordinator for overseas boys. The same approach is to be taken with regards to bullying. Support is given to boys whose first language is not English. Boarders with special dietary or religious needs are catered for and the school is prepared to go to considerable lengths to ensure that boys with special needs are able to join the school. There are many planned activities that the boys can choose to join. They are also able to set up their own activities if they wish. No boarder reports any onerous demands, though it is acknowledged that the prefects have many time-consuming responsibilities. Boys have adequate provision for prep and plenty of time in which to do it. They have access to a wide range of safe recreational areas within the school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are many ways in which boarders say they can contribute to the operation of boarding at the school. There is an upper and lower school council and each house has a representative on both. These meetings are chaired by the Head Boy, without staff presence. Boarders report very positively about these forums. All boarders can contact their parents and friends by telephone, letter and email. The school has made changes to the times of the internet provision to ensure that all boarders can contact their families in private. New boarders visit the school prior to entry and there are procedures and paperwork in place to enable them to settle in effectively. This process is particularly sensitive to the needs of boys joining in the lower sixth from overseas. The boys have also been asked to complete questionnaires, detailing their opinions of their introduction to the school and how this could improve. The school is situated in town so there is easy access to information and outside facilities. Boarders report relationships between staff and boarders as being very good. Younger boys tend to talk about feeling safe and older boys really value being treated as adults.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

All boarders are provided with lockable storage space in order for the safe keeping of personal possessions. A number of boarders who have single bedrooms are able to lock their doors; however, many say they don't bother, because there is no need. There have been instances of theft in one boarding house but satisfactory procedures have been followed. Those boarders spoken with say they are very happy within their particular boarding house. Throughout the school, there are seven full boarding houses and five smaller senior houses. The boys are very loyal to their own particular house and assist their Housemasters in the planning of furnishings

and equipment. Hence, each house is different and reflects the personalities of those within. Junior boys share dormitories of around four to six boys and matrons tend to mix the groups throughout the first year, in order to ensure they all get to know each other well. Boys are able to personalise their own living spaces and older boys share double rooms until they reach the lower sixth, which brings single occupancy bedrooms. The school has a refurbishment programme in place. All accommodation is satisfactory and the houses and bathrooms which have already been refurbished have been completed to an excellent standard. The school development plan demonstrates this level of quality is planned for every house. All of the houses have a sufficient number of bathrooms and toilets. Such areas are cleaned to an excellent standard and there are no privacy issues. There is a school shop but boarders also have easy access to shops in town.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

There is a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice which reflects the actual current boarding practice at the school and is available to parents, boarders and staff. There are also separate handbooks for housemasters, staff, parents, boarders, prefects and new pupils. All of the school's policies are on the intranet and all pertaining to boarding are on the website. The school's ethos involves reaching out to the wider community and is seen in the partnership with Marsh Academy, in the Community Action projects and the focus on green issues through the Green Committee. Boarding house records are monitored every term but senior student houses are only monitored annually. There is an annual review of termly monitoring visits. Boarders are adequately supervised by staff and prefects during the evenings and overnight but some boarders say that mornings and Sundays are thin times and staff do not know who is in the boarding houses during free times or at breaks. In one senior student boarding house staff supervision is not guaranteed except for overnight. All staff with boarding duties have job descriptions reflecting their duties and each received induction training in boarding. They continue to have regular appraisal of their boarding practice and ongoing feedback from the boys is used to inform this process. Inset training is ongoing and all staff are able to request specific courses relevant to the roles they perform. There is clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding in the school. Both the Second Master, who is in charge of boarding, and the Head, are fully conversant with every aspect of boarding and are committed to the boarders' welfare. There is a designated governor for boarding. Boarding houses are visited each term; day and senior student houses are visited annually. Visits include checks on documentation, private meetings with boys and with the housemaster. The Strategic Plan 2007-2017 includes provision for a high standard of boarding accommodation and pastoral care. The school's organisation of boarding, with boys living, eating and studying in their own boarding house, with a dedicated staff, ensures a family atmosphere. The Crisis Management Policy is a very comprehensive document covering emergency procedures and fire safety. An appendix details emergency procedures for staff on overseas trips. There is an emergency response team and an emergency warning system. There is a separate policy planning for a human influenza pandemic. There is a programme, not yet completed, to bring all boarding accommodation to a very high standard but there is some variation in accommodation at the moment. Staff do not always know which boarders are in any of the boarding houses during the day time but there is adequate supervision overnight. The pastoral handbook contains all the policies and procedures relevant to boarding and all boarding staff have a copy. In addition they can access them all on the intranet. The staff disciplinary procedure does not detail the provision for guidance and support for staff during suspension or investigation while allegations

against them are being investigated. All staff and volunteers with access to boys on school trips are CRB checked and the school puts adequate measures into place to safeguard boarders' welfare.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- review the PSHE programme so as to ensure the separation of teaching with regards 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 (NMS 6).
- ensure parents' wishes are adhered to with regards medical matters and procedures (NMS 7).
- ensure a written protocol on the use of homely remedies is available within all boarding houses (NMS 15).
- ensure medication is administered by those who have received medication administration training (NMS 15).
- ensure that welfare plans be developed and put into place for any boy with significant welfare concerns. Ensure all staff are aware of these plans (NMS 17).
- ensure that all incidents of bullying are reported to the anti bullying coordinator to ensure effective monitoring (NMS 6).
- ensure the child protection policy guidance requires staff to report all child protection concerns within 24 hours and add the topic of child protection to the whistle blowing policy (NMS 3).
- update the boarders' complaint's literature and ensure contact telephone numbers for external agencies such as Ofsted and Childline are added (NMS 5).
- ensure systems are in place for staff to know who is in the houses during the day in the event of a fire (NMS 26).
- further explore the comments received from boarders about thinner staffing levels during mornings and Sundays (NMS 31).
- ensure the disciplinary procedure includes provision for guidance and support to staff during suspension or investigation whilst allegations against them are being investigated (NMS 35.4).

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for boarding school

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).

Ofsted considers 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.

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 responded to appropriately (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; all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises are supervised (NMS 39)
- boarders have their own accommodation, which is secure from public intrusion (NMS 41)
- boarders are protected from safety hazards (NMS 47)

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

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders have access to a range and choice of activities (NMS 11)
- 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)

Ofsted considers 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.

Annex A

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 receive personal support from staff (NMS 14)
- 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)

Ofsted considers 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

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)

Ofsted considers 51 the key standard to be inspected.

Organisation

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 managed effectively (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 supervised adequately 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 which have specific boarding duties, and have received adequate induction and continued training (NMS 34)
- boarders are looked after by staff which follow clear boarding policies and practice (NMS 35)
- the welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 51)
- the welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

Ofsted considers 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.