

Trinity School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Christina Maddison
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Date of last inspection	20 November 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 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

Trinity school is an independent school providing full or weekly boarding for male and female pupils. The school is situated in the small seaside town of Teignmouth. At the time of the inspection, there were 306 pupils on roll, of which 96 were boarding on a full or weekly basis.

The boarding provision is provided in three separately staffed houses, according to age and gender. The school has extensive grounds which provide excellent sporting facilities.

Summary

This announced inspection focused on the key national minimum standards for boarding schools. It was an extremely positive inspection that found five outcome areas to be outstanding and one to be good.

The boarding aspect of the school has recently been restructured and systems reorganised. This has meant an exceptional amount of work has been undertaken in a short period of time and it has produced a huge improvement in the quality of the boarding provision. There is much evidence that the management team and staff have an impressive commitment, and innovative ideas, that will continue to improve and achieve extremely high standards at the school. The school is committed to obtaining feedback and ideas from boarders, staff and parents and including these in future planning.

Many boarders across the age range openly shared their views with the inspectors in person and on questionnaires. Typical comments from boarders included:

'This is the best school I have been to, the rooms aren't the biggest, but the care is the best and that is what is important.'

'I am from Germany and I really have enjoyed my time here and I would really recommend Trinity school.'

Typical comments from parents of the boarders included:

'The staff make me feel that they are excellent 'substitute' parents.'

'The care of my son and myself has been amazing, both in boarding and the school.'

'The support both emotionally and practically cannot be faulted, and the staff and pupils should be commended for this.'

There is one recommendation as a result of this inspection which does not impact on the boarders' safety.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were fourteen recommendations made at the previous inspection, all of which have been successfully addressed. The first of these was that a health plan should be in place for boarders,

and any administration of controlled medication should receive two signatures. This is now in place.

Counter bullying is taken seriously, and anti bullying strategies are now in place. Staff are now aware of whistleblowing procedures and feel confident to use them. Staff have fire prevention training, and a record of fire drills is completed that evidences that fire drills take place at different times of day and night. All staff checks are now kept on file and there is a comprehensive system to evidence that the checks are in place.

Three separate boarding houses have been created to take account of boarders ages and gender. The girls' accommodation has been redecorated. New lighting has been installed in the bedrooms, and lighting in all bedrooms is now adequate for study periods. Water in the showers is not discharged at unsafe temperatures and pupils now have adequate storage facilities in their bedrooms. In addition all windows above ground floor level have been fitted with restrictors.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school has an excellent programme of personal, health and social education (PSHE) provision. The innovative programme includes many outside speakers on topics designed to interest and educate the children and young people. Some young people commented that they had been assisted to give up smoking by staff at the school, which they felt was a great benefit for their health.

There is a robust system in place for recording welfare and health issues. The staff are extremely aware and are proactive at recognising any emotional or health issues and acting to resolve these. Boarders spoken with said that staff ensure that they have undertaken personal care tasks such as teeth cleaning and hair brushing. Parents complete a detailed medical questionnaire that is sent to them and this includes consent to take part in activities, for medical treatment and any information about current health issues. This information ensures that staff have all of the information that they need to assist them in meeting boarders' health needs in all situations.

There is a fully equipped medical room that is staffed by two qualified nurses. There is also a small, quiet lounge where emotional issues can be addressed by the use of counselling, or discussion with staff. Medical staff are on duty throughout the day and can be contacted at night. The school receives regular visits from the male and female nominated doctors, and can refer boarders for specialist medical intervention if necessary. All boarding staff have received training in first aid.

Medication is very well managed to enable the nurses to monitor any treatment and to ensure that medication is appropriately and safely administered. Medicines are securely kept and there is an audit trail of medication into and out of the school.

Boarders say that they are extremely well looked after when they are ill. If they remain in their rooms through the day they are checked hourly by the nurse and can summon assistance using the school mobile telephone that is left with them. There is also a provision in the medical room for boarders to remain in there throughout the day if necessary.

Many parents and children commented that the school is extremely good at supporting children and their families who are experiencing emotional or social difficulties. It is also clear that the school demonstrates sensitivity and great awareness in picking up potential academic and personal difficulties. Students with specific welfare needs are identified very quickly due to the excellent relationships between the boarders and the staff who know each individual very well.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school provides a safe environment for the children and young people. All boarders spoken with, and who completed a survey form, said that they feel safe at the school. Boarders are very well protected from potential hazards to their safety through extremely good risk assessments, vigilance of staff and an ongoing programme of maintenance to the premises. Regular fire drills take place and boarders are confident about what to do in the event of a fire.

The school has a pro active approach to counter bullying. Staff follow clearly defined procedures and swiftly respond to any incidents to keep the children and young people safe. Boarders said that staff are 'hot on sorting out any bullying.' Staff are aware of any potentially difficult relationships between boarders and act to resolve any issues before anything escalates. Teams of children and young people in the school are taught strategies to help them become resilient to any potential bullying. Children are encouraged by staff to support any other child who is experiencing problems.

The school has an excellent child safeguarding policy and procedure which is well embedded in practice. Staff are trained in child protection and receive regular updates through meetings and training. The headmaster is currently the designated child safeguarding officer, and he is trained to a high level, and there is evidence that he is most capable in this role. Advice is sought from relevant child safeguarding authorities when necessary.

All boarders spoken with commented that they thought that the sanctions imposed by the school for unacceptable behaviour were fair, and discussed with the individual when given. The boarders benefit from very clear and consistent boundaries and expectations of behaviour. Any incidents of unacceptable behaviour are recorded by school staff and the data analysed for any patterns of behaviour that may need to be addressed with the individual to help them in the future. Boarders said that staff spoke constructively with them should this happen. It was observed that staff constantly encourage, praise and model positive behaviour and this results in children and young people who have high levels of self esteem and confidence and display very positive behaviour and manners.

Boarders rarely raise complaints because there is a very good system of resolving concerns before they become a complaint. Staff encourage the boarders to make suggestions and constructive comments. There is a comprehensive complaints system in place that is fully accessible to parents and boarders.

Privacy is respected. The boarders said that staff knock before entering their rooms, and privacy has greatly increased since the boarding house was reorganised into three separate houses according to age and gender.

Staff recruitment is very well managed. There is an excellent and robust system to ensure that all appropriate checks and references have been obtained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The school offers an exceptional range of activities which caters for all boarders' needs. Boarders are able to use a swimming pool, tennis courts, ball court and common rooms that are equipped with games, computers and televisions. Many boarders commented on the 'homely atmosphere' and sense of being 'part of a family' when boarding at the school. Overseas boarders said that they felt very welcome, and it is a policy of the school to encourage the mix of nationalities and encourage the boarders to share rooms and enjoy activities together. It is clear that many of the boarders feel an 'ownership' of the boarding houses, and are encouraged to voice their opinions and ideas. Boarders said that on many occasions the staff have implemented their ideas. Boarders are also able to spend time in a city centre shopping, and trips to football matches and the cinema.

Pastoral care is of a very high standard in the school. Staff are familiar with each individual and any specific care needs that they may have. Boarders have plenty of opportunities to talk to someone who can help with personal difficulties. Boarders say they can approach a range of staff for help, including an independent listener, and also that they receive a lot of support from their friends. All those interviewed knew how to contact Childline should the need arise. New boarders have a 'buddy' assigned to them on arrival and are very well supported. There was no evidence of discrimination at any level in respect of nationality, ethnicity, religion or gender.

Boarders do not suffer onerous demands on their time. Study provision is very good, with facilities in the school buildings for younger boarders, and in their own rooms for the sixth form boarders. Recreational areas are safe and well supervised at all times.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders are able to express their views in discussion with boarding and teaching staff. Survey forms are sent out on a regular basis, and suggestions and any concerns are acted upon. Boarders commented that they now have a say in the planning of menus and the decoration of their rooms. Boarders are also able to be a part of the staff recruitment process.

The boarders are able to access the internet which has strict parental controls in place. The school is currently looking into a new system of communication which will make it convenient for parents overseas to communicate with their children. The school has a system for sending information to parents serving in the armed forces abroad.

Boarders reported that they enjoyed a thorough induction when they joined the school. There is a good relationship between the younger members of the school and the older members. Older members will listen to the younger children reading which has been a success.

Staff and boarders enjoy a positive and caring relationship. This has been enhanced by the formation of three separate boarding houses. Communication between staff and boarders is respectful but informal. Birthdays and cultural days are celebrated in the boarding houses.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders have trusting and open relationships with each other, and report no issues regarding the protection of their personal property.

The boarding accommodation is generally of a good standard, but requires regular maintenance due to its age. All boarders spoken with were happy with their rooms, and had personalised them with pictures and their possessions. No bedroom is shared by more than three boarders. Bedrooms are bright and well ventilated and all boarders spoken with appreciate the reconfiguration of the bedrooms into three separate areas as it gives them privacy, separate common rooms and has also improved communication with staff. There is an improvement plan in place and a commitment to further decorate and refurbish the boarding area, which will further improve the accommodation. Currently a kitchen area is being installed in the sixth form accommodation.

All boarding houses have sufficient functioning showers and toilet facilities, although some showers are not working at sufficient pressure, and boarders commented that often the hot water ran out before they were able to shower, and they showered in cool water.

The school has a tuck shop where small items can be purchased, and boarders often make a weekend trip to the nearby town and city centre to enjoy some shopping. A minority of students from big cities would prefer to be nearer to a city centre, but the local small town can supply most material needs.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Many of the boarders from overseas are from a variety of countries. The school works very hard on an individual level to welcome and support students whose first language is not English, providing help and advice as well as language tuition. Cultural differences are valued through assemblies and other events. The school ensures that both genders are treated equally and students with disabilities are provided with the help that they need.

The school has a clear statement of boarding principles and practice. This is freely available to parents and boarders.

There has been a recent restructuring and recruiting of management roles within the school. This has resulted in a senior management team that has produced a dynamic action plan that is implementing many changes with much energy, foresight and success. Innovative plans to improve the school and boarding facilities are in place and this will further enhance the quality of experience for boarders at the school. Parents commented that there are marked improvements in a number of areas. A typical comment from parents is 'the recent changes in the boarding has meant a great improvement.' The head of boarding is very well supported by the head teacher and the governing body, who offer strong leadership.

Recent changes also mean that there are now excellent administrative systems to support many aspects of school life. Risk assessments, accidents, complaints and sanctions are monitored by the senior management team.

Boarding houses are well staffed day and night. Boarders benefit from effective supervision and support appropriate to their age. Gap year students are not employed at the school. New staff have a thorough induction and have further training and regular briefings as required. All staff confirmed excellent communication throughout the school, that has markedly improved recently due to the changes made at the school.

Any off-site trips are thoroughly risk assessed and staffed accordingly. Boarders have enjoyed surfing trips, Cadet force training, shopping trips, dry slope skiing and laser games.

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):

- ensure that the water pressure in the showers is adequate, and that the water temperature is monitored. (NMS 44.6)