

# Taverham Hall School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Dorrit Andrews
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<b>Head/Principal</b>	
<b>Nominated person</b>	Michael Crossley
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	26/02/2008

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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

Taverham Hall School is a co-educational preparatory school set in 100 acres of parkland situated seven miles to the north-west of Norwich. The main house dates from 1850 and the school was established on the site in 1921. Fully co-educational with Preparatory, Pre-preparatory and Nursery Departments, the school offers weekly and flexi boarding for pupils in Years 3 to 8.

Boarding accommodation is provided in the main house and comprises separate dormitories for boys and girls in different wings. Communal recreational facilities are provided within the main house in addition to designated spaces in each of the boarding areas. Boarders are cared for by experienced matrons who are supported each evening by a team of duty staff and gap-year students in providing a programme of activities.

Boarders generally live in close proximity to the school and often choose to board as part of their experience and preparation for senior school. A total of 42 pupils, both weekly and flexi boarders, contributed to the inspection.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an announced inspection during which all key standards were inspected. Outcome areas for being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and organisation are all judged as outstanding. Economic wellbeing is judged as good.

Leadership and management are excellent and there is an emphasis on further development and improvement throughout the school community. Staff are highly committed to their roles and pupils benefit greatly from motivated and experienced staff.

Pupils are provided with an excellent level of care and pastoral support. They are cared for by staff who know them well; their views are sought and they feel listened to. The school provides pupils with a safe and nurturing environment and an extensive programme of activities that contributes to their social and self-help skills.

Since the last inspection, improvements have been made to aspects of the boarding provision and this work is ongoing. Pupils are pleased with the changes made to date and are enjoying being able to make suggestions and contribute ideas.

The two recommendations raised at the last inspection have been fully addressed.

## Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the school was asked to date health care plans and risk assessments used to support the health needs of pupils and to ensure the school's child protection policy included all of the required information for staff. These matters have been attended to.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health care needs of pupils are promoted and supported extremely well. The school provides 24 hour cover five days a week from suitably qualified and experienced matrons who undertake regular training to support their role. Matrons also provide support on sports match days and, where appropriate, accompany teaching staff on trips and outings to support pupils' individual needs. Effective policies and robust recording systems support the safe management of medication which is securely stored and administered by designated staff.

Medical details of each pupil are held and parental consent to medical treatment and first aid is obtained upon admission to the school. Parental contact details together with health care information are regularly updated to ensure staff have access to the most current information. First aid training is provided to staff across the school community to ensure qualified first aiders are always available on duty. Comprehensive records are kept of accidents, injuries and treatment and parents are kept informed.

Considerable care is taken to meet the health needs of individual pupils, who were unanimous in their views that they are well looked after. Examples of the care provided include, briefing pupils, their peers and staff of the necessary action to be taken in an emergency, meeting with health professionals to ensure the school is fully conversant with particular needs, and empowering children to self-manage their health care with support.

Significant emphasis is placed on helping pupils to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. This message is reinforced through the school's personal, social and health education curriculum, visiting speakers and a wide range of activities. For example, the introduction of a boarders' garden for growing fruit, vegetables and herbs, and the school's acquisition of a small number of rescued hens has increased some children's curiosity around the production of food.

Boarders are provided with a balanced, healthy and varied diet and all catering staff receive appropriate training for their role. Boarders voice extremely high praise towards catering staff for the quality and choice of food available and are unanimous that they have enough to eat. Meals are described as 'really good', 'yummy' and 'delicious' with a particular mention that teas have improved over recent months. Fresh fruit is available at every meal and pupils have ready access to drinking water.

Special diets are catered for and boarders report they can make menu suggestions direct to the chef or through forum meetings. Themed nights, barbecues and the opportunity to cook weekly with boarding staff and a member of the catering team are all highly valued by boarders. Meal times are well organised social events, pupils are familiar with routines and sufficient time is allowed to finish meals properly. Staff sit with pupils, engage them in conversation about events and sensitively monitor food intake.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The welfare and safety of pupils is taken extremely seriously and strongly promoted. All boarders surveyed are unanimous they feel safe at the school and agreed that bullying is not a problem. Parents also report that the school keeps their child safe. Staff have access to a comprehensive set of policies, procedures and guidance to support them in promoting and safeguarding pupils' welfare both at school and in the community. All staff receive safeguarding training relevant to their role and refresher training is provided at regular intervals. The designated child protection officer has strong links with other professionals concerned with safeguarding children ensuring practice at the school remains current.

Positive behaviour is promoted and standards of behaviour are very high. Substantial emphasis is placed on recognising and praising positive behaviour and kindness. The school's award system is liked by pupils and the recently introduced additional awards for boarders are valued. Boarders benefit from clear routines and expectations and all boarders surveyed agreed they are dealt with fairly. Sanctions are used for more serious matters or when warnings have not been heeded; very few sanctions are used.

Boarders report that their privacy is respected by boarding house staff. For example, staff knock on doors and wait for a reply before entering and make themselves available without intruding unnecessarily at sensitive times.

Comprehensive procedures are in place for the recruitment and checking of staff and the monitoring of visitors and contractors. Key senior staff and members of the governing body have completed safer recruitment training. These practices reduce the potential risks to the welfare of pupils.

Fire evacuation drills take place regularly and at different times. Staff and boarders are familiar with evacuation procedures and provision is made to appraise new and flexi boarders of these. Records demonstrate that regular safety and servicing checks are conducted of fire, electrical and water installations. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and pupils demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety matters affecting them. For example, they are able to explain why they have to keep within designated areas of the school's grounds and why roll calls frequently take place during boarding time.

Strong emphasis is placed on security matters and restricting unauthorised access. Boarders have their own accommodation, secure from public intrusion. Boarding accommodation and associated facilities are for the exclusive use of boarders and this is reinforced by restricted entry and security measures.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders receive an outstanding level of pastoral care across the school community. They benefit from staff who know them well and identify a range of adults within school and boarding to whom they feel able to go to with any problems they may have. Each pupil has a designated tutor who takes a key role in monitoring individual progress. However, there is a clear policy operated in practice that any pupil may take a worry or concern to any member of staff of their choice. Peer support systems also contribute effectively to supporting others and include dorm captains, buddies, prefects and recently introduced mentors for Year 3 pupils. Individuals assigned to these positions have clearly defined roles, are briefed regarding their responsibilities and are supported by staff.

There are sound relationships between staff and boarders and their interactions were observed to be genuinely caring and warm. Effective communication across the school contributes highly to the monitoring of boarders' well-being and staff are highly committed to providing a supportive and nurturing environment. The school positively promotes the integration of all pupils and demonstrates a strong commitment to equal opportunities. Systems are in place to support and assist pupils who have specific learning, health or cultural needs.

Boarders benefit from a wide range of extra-curricula activities and they extend high praise to the range of activities on offer. The overall programme contributes highly to the boarding experience and the development of children's interests, social and self-help skills. Activities currently include gardening club, cooking, nature club, sports and outings. Parents with specific interests and skills also support the activity programme and work alongside designated staff. Opportunities to spend some quiet time with friends upstairs prior to bed time continues to be favourably viewed by boarders.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders' views are actively sought and valued in relation to the operation and development of the boarding provision. A variety of formal and informal opportunities are used to seek their views. These include the recently created boarders' forum for all boarders which is held on different nights throughout the term in order to involve as many flexi boarders as possible, discussions with house staff and the use of surveys. Boarders say they feel their views are listened to, taken seriously and considered, and they receive feedback. Changes made as a result of listening to

boarders include bedtimes, tea menus, provision of additional toys and games in the boarding areas and the introduction of two house pets.

Boarders are able to maintain contact with their parents and families. Boarding arrangements are flexible with weekly boarders staying a maximum of four nights and flexi boarders either staying occasionally or for a few nights each week. Therefore regular family contact is maintained. A pay phone is provided for boarders' private use although a number of boarders have their own mobile phone. The office telephone is also made available if necessary and details of telephone helpline numbers are displayed on notice boards.

Parents are welcome to visit their child at school and are encouraged to attend sports matches, concerts and other events. End of term reports now include a separate report on boarding to inform parents of their child's progress and achievements. In addition, drop-in clinics and regular tea and coffee gatherings provide parents with opportunities to be kept informed. The establishment of a parents' forum since the last inspection has also increased parental involvement and contribution to the development of the school.

New boarders are introduced to boarding house routines and are helped to settle in through an established system of induction. Comprehensive information is provided to parents and boarders and details of routines and expectations are also displayed on notice boards as reminders. Pupils considering boarding for the first time receive a personal invitation to take up a taster boarding night and this has proved popular. The school's approach to induction is greatly valued by boarders. They benefit from the support and guidance of experienced matrons and the support of established boarders assigned as guides. Boarders report 'everyone helps you' and they have been able to 'get to know other children better' since boarding. Parents comments include 'flexi boarding works well for the family and my child feels cared for, safe and valued' and 'the matrons make a huge effort to give them a variety of fun events to take part in. I can rest easy knowing they are in a safe, nurturing environment in which they feel confident, comfortable and above all, happy'.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Boarders' possessions and money are protected. Boarders are provided with personal storage facilities in their dormitories and may also bring in a lockable tuck box. Additional safe storage is available and boarders must hand mobile phones to matrons for safekeeping overnight. A boarders' bank has been introduced since the last inspection for pocket money and is valued by boarders, especially for evening trips and outings. There are no reports of items going missing and boarders report that they feel their possessions are safe.

Boarding accommodation is provided in the main house and comprises separate dormitories for boys and girls in different wings. The accommodation is secure, well lit and well maintained. Boarders do not report any problems with ventilation and

state they have bed throws for added warmth in the winter if required. There is a good standard of cleanliness and decoration and boarders are encouraged to personalise sleeping areas with pictures, posters and photographs. Staff work hard to provide a colourful and welcoming environment and have developed additional soft seating areas in and around the boarding areas since the last inspection. These are greatly appreciated by boarders and are particularly enjoyed during winter months on film evenings.

Sufficient toilet and washing facilities are readily accessible to boarders in the sleeping areas and different ages shower at different times. Separate facilities are provided for staff. A very high proportion of boarders state their boarding house provides good accommodation and refer to boarding as 'fun', 'exciting' and 'like a big sleepover'. However, a number of boarders have requested that towel hooks be positioned on shower cubicles for ease of use. Comments from parents refer to the 'great improvements made over the last two years'.

The school's extensive grounds provide a range of opportunities for outdoor pursuits including playing in supervised areas of the woods, canoeing and nature rambles. Additional areas are provided in the main house for indoor activities such as table tennis and quieter pursuits prior to bedtime such as reading, board games and chatting quietly with friends. Staff listen to boarders' suggestions for further improvements to the boarding provision and actively seek their views. Recent changes made as a result include new mattresses, patterned toilet seats and separate film nights for juniors and seniors.

## Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

There is excellent leadership and management. The school has a clear view of the benefits of boarding to individuals and a strong commitment to the continuing improvement of the boarding experience for all boarders. Established systems are in place for the effective monitoring of records by the headteacher and designated members of the senior management team. Subsequent action is taken in response to support the maintenance of a safe environment for pupils, staff and visitors. Consistent self evaluation through the use of surveys, discussions with pupils and reflective practice also support the development of the school.

Clear and comprehensive documentation, including a pupil and parent handbook and statement of boarding principles and practice, is made available to all interested parties. Information is easily accessed direct through the school and via the school's website and is regularly updated.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school positively promotes the integration of all pupils and values their individuality. Pupils report that staff know them well and care about how they are doing. Staff work hard to promote the value of care and consideration for others within the school community and beyond. Very positive links with a local special school and active involvement in fund

raising events encourage pupils' awareness and understanding of the needs and differences of others.

Very good levels of staffing support boarders and the school's wide ranging evening activity programme, including trips out. Boarders know who is on duty, who is responsible for them at specific times and report that staff are always available. Boarders are also confident in what they should do if they need the assistance of staff during the night. A boarding duty rota is followed in practice and includes matrons, teaching staff and gap-year students. This practice contributes highly to continuity and consistency of care for boarders by adults who know them well. Adjustments to staffing are made in response to flexi-boarding numbers and suitable arrangements are in place for covering duties at times of staff sickness and absence.

Staff are competent, highly committed and fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Good communication systems across the school community contribute effectively to the care of boarders, their well-being and overall experience of boarding. All staff, including gap-year students, have access to good support, guidance and training to assist them in their role. Job descriptions are in place and are regularly reviewed. There are clear lines of management accountability and systems are in place for the annual appraisal of staff.