

# Stover School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspection date</b>	25/05/2011
<b>Inspector</b>	Michelle Oxley
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<b>Setting address</b>	Stover School, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 6QG
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<b>Telephone number</b>	01626 354505
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Stover School
<b>Head/Principal</b>	Sue Bradley
<b>Nominated person</b>	Sue Bradley
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	11/10/2007

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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

Stover Senior School is an independent day and boarding school for girls and boys aged 10 to 18 years. There is a co-educational nursery and a preparatory school which together with the senior school follows the 'diamond' model of education. Stover is an ecumenical school where all faiths are welcome.

Boarding provision is divided into two houses. Mansion House provides accommodation for pupils up to year 10 and Park House provides accommodation for pupils in year 11 and above. Each house is staffed and managed separately with the head of boarding having overall responsibility. The more junior boarders are accommodated in dormitories of six to seven girls. Senior boarders usually share larger rooms with four girls in a room and sixth form pupils have single or double rooms. Both boarding houses are within the main school building, with boarders having full use of facilities.

### Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The boarding provision at Stover School is well organised and managed through strong leadership, by a professional and caring team of staff. Accommodation for boarders is of a good standard, clean, comfortable and homely throughout. The quality of food provided is excellent and the catering team work with boarders to provide for a wide range of tastes. The boarding provision caters well for overseas students, supporting the development of English language skills and catering for cultural needs. The health, safety and security of the premises is given high priority; careful attention is paid to carrying out safety checks and risk assessments. Good systems are in place to ensure that concerns for child welfare are dealt with promptly and efficiently, although some records do not comprehensively record the schools involvement. The complaints procedure is available to parents in writing, in addition boarders are given information about how to complain verbally. Risk assessments are generally completed to a very high standard, however some risk assessments related to off-site trips use a generic format in one case examined associated risks were not identified. The arrangements for the supervision of boarders within the school grounds and off site may limit opportunities for boarders to access age appropriate facilities and services. Some positive strategies are being implemented in order to counter bullying in response to reports from boarders.

### Improvements since the last inspection

The recommendations from the previous inspection have been met, with the exception of one. The disciplinary procedure has been amended to include clear

procedures for staff who are suspended. Rigorous vetting procedures are now in place as part of the recruitment process for all staff including gap-year students. Induction procedures for all staff now include child protection training including those for gap-year students. All staff now receive multi-agency child protection training at a level consistent with their role. Written welfare plans for boarders with significant needs now have a section for parental agreement. Staffing levels remain satisfactory; evening and weekend activities have increased but the range of these remains limited. Satisfactory endeavours have been made to ensure that heating and ventilation in the boarding houses is adequate; one boiler has been replaced and there are future plans to replace others and to provide improvements to ventilation.

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

The provision is good.

Health care is well managed at the school. Twenty-four hour nursing care is provided and boarders can access the nurse via a drop in system. Effective communication systems are in place between boarding and medical staff which ensure that information about ongoing or newly identified health matters are passed to relevant staff in order to deal with health needs promptly. A local General Practitioner visits the school on a weekly basis and the school nurse has links with local dentists and opticians should these be required during term time.

The nurse is located in the well-equipped medical centre which provides a surgery and waiting area, in addition three rooms are provided for the care of boarders who are ill. The rooms provide suitable and comfortable accommodation with dedicated showers and toilets for the isolation of sick boarders. These are separate from the main boarding houses. Medication systems across boarding and in the medical centre are robust and well managed. Staff receive training in first aid. Boarders say that they are well cared for when ill and confirm that a call system is in place to alert the nurse should they require her attention.

The school follows an appropriate policy on countering health risks. The personal health and social education (PHSE) teaching programme is operated by the head of boarding and provides relevant age appropriate information which promotes good health around issues such as sexual health, diet, exercise and illegal substances. Information about healthy lifestyles is also available through the nurse and the school counsellor. Boarders who were spoken with demonstrated a good understanding of health care matters and healthy lifestyles.

Boarders receive good quality catering provision. The kitchen is well managed using a systematic approach in order to maintain high standards relating to food safety. Meal times are well order, unhurried occasions. Kitchen staff are efficient and approachable helping to create a sociable atmosphere. Menus demonstrate a good variety of meals including vegetarian and world foods, there is also a salad bar offering a wide choice. Meals sampled were of very good quality, plentiful and well presented. Boarders enjoyed the food provided and confirmed that they are able to prepare snacks in the boarding houses during the evening. Each boarding house has

a small kitchen where snack such as noodles and toast can be prepared; older boarders are able to bring in their own rice cookers. Fresh water, tea and coffee are freely available in the boarding houses.

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

The provision is good.

The welfare of boarders is promoted and protected by the schools child protection procedures. A designated member of senior staff is responsible for safeguarding matters across the school. The designated person has created good system to ensure that all concerns for safety and welfare are followed up and referred to the appropriate agencies. Sound policies and procedures are in place regarding safeguarding young people; all staff across the school have received training in safeguarding, provided by the Local Authority. The designated person has established effective links with local multi-agency teams of professionals for the purpose of considering concerns for welfare. Cooperative working relations have been established and the school has completed a safeguarding audit carried out by the Local Authority in order to strengthen its systems. Recent cases that have arisen have been dealt with efficiently and inline with local area procedures. However, whilst the written audit trail provides good evidence of the actions taken regarding the monitoring and referral process, some records fail to state the concluding actions taken by the school. In its practice the school has acted appropriately.

Boarders are protected by the schools rigorous vetting procedures. A central record of all staff working within the school and across boarding is held, this includes, ancillary staff, peripatetic staff and gap-year students. The vetting systems are well managed and careful attention is paid to ensuring that all the required information is sought for each member of staff including Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks and references. The school uses a limited number of approved taxi drivers to transport pupils.

Policies and procedures are in place to counter bullying including cyber bullying. The staff team have worked hard to ensure that they raise awareness among pupils and have endeavoured to create a no-bullying culture. Boarders have received information through lessons about the safe use of the internet and other electronic devises and the negative impact of cyber bullying. The PHSE programme also addresses bullying and the boarding house's display anti-bullying posters. Where bullying is detected, staff have acted swiftly and effectively to resolve the issue. Despite this boarders do report that some bullying does occur and that this is not always brought to the attention of boarding staff. Following the schools own survey of pupils links were made with voluntary organisations. Pastoral staff have received additional training in counter-bullying and a process of developing a peer mentoring scheme is underway and will be established in September.

A comprehensive policy regarding complaints is in place. Parents receive the policy as part of their information pack. The log of recorded complaints shows no complaints from pupils who board. Information leaflets for boarders provide

information about how to make a complaint, boarders are advised verbally of the process for making formal complaints at the beginning of term or as soon as they begin boarding. There is no evidence that parents and boarders have been provided with information about how to contact Ofsted or the Local Authority Designated Officer, if they are concerned, as set out in the national minimum standards.

Careful attention is paid to health and safety and security. The school has a comprehensive fire risk assessment produced by an outside agency. They have an up-to-date record of drills and equipment checks and services. Boarders report that they had regular fire drill practices and are aware of what to do on hearing the alarm. Fire escapes were well marked and accessible. All fire doors were closed on our tour of the boarding houses. There is a very comprehensive file of risk assessments related to the premises that are regularly reviewed with evidence of problems being addressed. Boarding staff have individual responsibilities regarding the security of the building; this involves ensuring that all external doors are locked at night. The property is covered by closed-circuit television. A key pad code entry system operates on entry door systems into boarders accommodation and a signing in book is used. The main entrance to the school is kept locked and is accessible on verification of identity.

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

The provision is good.

Boarders are able to receive personal support from staff across the school. The staff team in boarding provide good day-to-day support. Boarders are aware of the support they can obtain from others such as the visiting Chaplain, the school counsellor and their tutors.

The boarding provision accommodates oversees students of many nationalities. Minority groups within the school receive support to integrate through the provision of English language teaching and additional support groups which they can access at the end of the school day. Oversees students are fully and equally involved all aspects of school life and have equal opportunities to access all that the school has to offer. Racial and cultural needs are supported through the provision of world foods and the celebration of relevant festivals.

Boarders are able to participate in activities and clubs arranged for the whole school between 4.00 and 5.00pm. Following the evening meal an activity is arranged by boarding house staff these are varied across the week and include creative pursuits such as arts and crafts, sports and jewellery making, although only one activity is available each evening. A trip out is arranged every Saturday to a local place of interest; these have included shopping trips, visits to the zoo and a recent visit to the local county show. A generic risk assessment is in place for trips out but this does not capture potential risk associated with the outing in every case.

## Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders are able to contribute to the operation of boarding. House meetings take place every week and a record is held of the matters raised by boarders. A number of suggestion boxes are placed in and around boarding houses, these are occasionally used by boarders who may wish to raise issues anonymously. Housemistresses discuss matters arising with the head of boarding, who in turn will make reasonable steps to accommodate any requests or address any issues. Where matters cannot be reasonably accommodated, boarders are given a rationale for decisions made. A food committee is in place which aims to seek boarders' views about the food provided; good links with catering staff ensures that requests are acted upon.

The school makes provision for boarders to contact families through its internet facility. Boarders are able to use a free connection service and email to keep in touch with their family and carers, although some boarders did feel that the connection time could be slow, particularly at times of peak demand. Mobile phones are permitted until bedtime and boarders can use the boarding house phone in privacy to make and receive calls if they wish. A system is in place to facilitate safe use of the internet whilst allowing boarders reasonable access to it.

A suitable induction process is in place for new boarders. This involves a meeting with the head of boarding to cover school procedures. This is followed by a meeting with the housemistress to discuss house procedures. A buddy system operates and new boarders are given an induction booklet.

The school gives high priority to the health and safety of boarders and has a set of policies in place which limits how boarders are to spend free time off site and within the grounds. These policies and practices give some limited opportunities for groups of senior boarders to visit the local town in groups of three. Girls are also permitted to move about the school site in groups of three. Such concerns for safety inhibit freedom of movement within the school grounds and opportunities to access local age-appropriate activities and facilities. They may impede preparation for life after boarding school particularly for senior boarders. Boarders consistently express dissatisfaction with the current practice.

## Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The school is a large period property set in a 60 acre site adjoining a local country park. Although situated rurally, the site is set within close access to the main routes in to local towns. The extensive site offers a range of sports fields and pitches which boarders can use outside of school hours.

The boarding accommodation is set across two parts of the property. Mansion House



and Park House provide boarders with a good standard of accommodation. Sleeping accommodation is in shared large rooms of up to seven younger boarders. Sixth form pupils have double or single room accommodation with a study area. Each boarder has their own storage space and a lockable wardrobe where they can store their valuables and personal possessions. Boarders are able to personalise their rooms and display posters and photographs.

Each boarding area has a common room with a kitchen area where boarders can prepare snacks and drinks. Boarders can relax, watch television, DVD's or play music. Park House has its own laundry area within the kitchen which boarders can use independently should they choose to do so. After school, boarders have access to the music room and IT suite which they make good use of. Toilet and bathroom facilities are sufficient in numbers to meet the requirements of nation minimum standards. Boarders report that the temperature of the showers in one block tends to fluctuate, however work is in progress to rectify this matter. Overall the boarding accommodation is clean, well decorated and homely throughout.

Some 20 pupil live off site in lodgings: these are primarily arranged through agents, however the school employs vigilance in checking these arrangements. The system for monitoring includes checks of the accommodation and the welfare of pupils.

## Organisation

The organisation is good.

A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available to boarders, parents and staff. The document is comprehensive and provides good guidance and information about facilities, boarding house procedures and care of boarders. The document accurately reflects current boarding practice at the school.

The organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare. There are two separate boarding houses and boarders are admitted on the basis of age. Senior boarding staff regularly monitor and sign off records and logs related to boarding. Good communication and effective cross-team working supports efficient care practice. There is a good system of meetings in place to consider and monitor boarders' welfare. Matters raised by boarding staff and boarders are discussed at weekly senior leadership meetings and the governor responsible for boarding attends welfare meetings each term. Quality monitoring systems are effective and senior staff demonstrate an approach based on continuous development and improvement of the service.

Staff cover is satisfactory: each boarding house is staffed by a resident house parent and a gap-year student. In addition an assistant house parent provides activities in the evenings for junior boarders. Arrangements for covering house parents' nights off and staff sickness are in place, these are covered by assistant house parents. Staff receive good training opportunities, for example staff who are new to boarding undertake a full induction programme and all staff across the school undertake safeguarding children training at a level consistent with their role. Boarders and staff

report a sufficient level of staff supervision in the evenings or at weekends. Clear job descriptions and comprehensive written guidance ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

## **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...

- continue to devise creative strategies in order to counter bullying (NMS 2)
- ensure that the complaints policy includes the details of the Local Authority Designated Officer and Ofsted (NMS 5.4)
- ensure that a comprehensive record of all the actions taken by the school is maintained in every case where there is a child protection concern (NMS 3.7)
- ensure that boarders off-site trips are comprehensively risk assessed (NMS 11)
- review and amend arrangements for boarders free time to allow safe but increased age-appropriate activities, increased personal freedom and improved access to local facilities and services. (NMS 30)