

Leaden Hall School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Clare Davies
Type of Inspection	Key

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Nominated person	
Date of last inspection	2 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

Leaden Hall is an independent preparatory school for girls aged three to eleven years with an option for day boys, usually siblings, to attend the nursery. There are approximately 190 pupils, 22 are full boarders with a small number of flexi boarders. The school is situated within Salisbury Cathedral Close, central to the town yet within its own grounds that back onto the river. There are two boarding areas, one situated centrally to the main school building and for the older girls, a separate building to the school within the Cathedral Close that can accommodate approximately 12 boarders. Boarders can access the school grounds and facilities for activities after school and at weekends.

Summary

This was an announced inspection to assess Leaden Hall School against the national minimum standards for boarding schools. All the standards have been met, many exceeded with outstanding outcomes for boarders, there are no recommendations made from this inspection. Pastoral care is exceptional and threaded throughout the school, delivered by a dedicated staff team who consider themselves part of the family that is referred to within Leaden Hall. Boarders are cared for in a safe environment in which they have opportunities to develop, try new things and are encouraged to aim high in their achievements. The headteacher embraces new initiatives for the school to take part in, leading the school to success in their work on sustainability, links with European schools and the healthy schools award.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the school has made improvements in relation to fire safety ensuring that doors are not propped open. Fire doors have magnetic and sound activated closures fitted to keep children, staff and visitors safe. The fire plan details storage of flammable products, these are securely stored away from boarders. Bathrooms and toilets have suitable locks in working order.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The commitment to the health and welfare of boarders is outstanding. The personal, social and health education programme is completely integrated into school life through the classroom, assemblies, catering, the school nurses, boarding, activities and a lunchtime health club. A school nurse talks to children individually and in groups on issues such as self-esteem, personal hygiene, anger management, bereavement and illnesses. The school nurses are located centrally within the school and pupils can visit during break times. The emphasis is on good health and wellbeing and the nurses do not wish their office to be referred to as a sick bay. There are clear policies for the safe storage and administration of medication in the school and boarding areas. Parental consent is obtained to ensure medical matters are dealt with according to their wishes. All staff are trained in first aid and this training is regularly updated. When required the school receives good support from the local surgery.

Good quality, freshly prepared food is provided from local suppliers where possible. The children eat well and without fuss over the healthy food provided, tucking into a variety of vegetables. Many children have been involved in growing vegetables and preparing them for school meals with the catering staff, this has encouraged the children to enjoy eating them. The menu offers a limited choice with one main meal and a vegetarian option but this appears to work well with all children eating the same meal and often enjoying second helpings. The views of the children are gathered at food forums and informally through chatting with kitchen staff; boarders can select a special menu for their birthday evening meal. Boarders report that they like the school food and the school kitchen has achieved a five star award from the environmental health authority. The catering staff have contributed to the school's eco plan using vegetables from the garden, fruit from the orchard and sourcing fair trade products where possible. Compost bins are used for all pupils' fruit waste and peelings from the kitchen. Leaden Hall has also achieved the Healthy School Award valid until 2010.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The safeguarding of pupils is paramount at this school and there are sound systems in place to identify any concerns and to support those in need. The pastoral care is outstanding and provides a safe place for children to be cared for away from home. Boarders and day pupils are encouraged to be kind to one another and consider the impact their behaviour may have on someone else, this ensures that bullying is not a feature at this school. Staff are trained in how to respond if they are concerned about a child's safety or welfare and sound policies and procedures underpin this practice. The school has a strong working relationship with the local authority who provide advice and guidance on any child protection matters. Designated staff take responsibility to promote safeguarding within the school and this includes teaching children about internet safety. The school has a complaints procedure known to boarders and their parents, it provides contact details for the school governors and Ofsted.

The school promotes positive behaviour with lots of different ways to praise and reward pupils. The school ethos is not to punish, but to focus on good behaviour and show examples to others who may need guidance. The effectiveness of this system is outstanding and children strive to do their best and seek the praise and rewards from the school staff. Children can be rewarded with merits, house points and leadership points for consistently doing the 'right thing' without a fuss and act as a good role model for the rest of the school. Boarders work towards a tidy dormitory competition and good manners are noted during meal times to be rewarded with the privilege of sitting on the 'top table' with special attention and service. The whole school celebrates these achievements in a weekly assembly as each nominated child receives a sticker and announces why they have received their award.

Matters of health and safety across the school site are managed very well with sound policies and commitment from staff to report and respond to any possible hazard. The site is very well maintained and systems are in place for the prevention and detection of fire. Boarders have experienced evacuations from their dormitories and know what to do if the alarm should sound. The school has a very good system of risk assessment covering the school premises, activities and off site trips. These documents are regularly reviewed to consider any changes that may need to be made. Boarding staff take ownership of the risk assessments relating to boarding accommodation ensuring that every aspect of safety is identified and risks minimised. Great attention is given to safety but not at the expense of denying children opportunities such as

climbing trees, learning about the wildlife on the river bank, playing on playground equipment and cycling to school.

The school has a robust recruitment procedure and undertakes suitability checks before any member of staff can commence employment. Staff responsible for employing new staff have received training in safer recruitment practices, comprehensive records are maintained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Leaden Hall provides a fantastic range of activities and opportunities that encourage boarders to participate and try new things. Boarders have access to school facilities that offer a variety of sports, music, art, pottery, cooking, computers and craft. In addition to after school clubs a dedicated activities co-ordinator ensures that there is something fun to do each day. Creative play with dressing up clothes, tag in the dark with glow sticks and board games are some of the simple activities enjoyed by boarders. The school is situated in the heart of the city yet surrounded by wildlife within the grounds and the adjacent river. The school site provides safe playing spaces and with supervision, the children can approach the river bank to observe the wildlife. Nesting birds close to the dining room have been observed by pupils due to a camera being set up and sending live pictures for pupils to watch whilst having lunch. Leaden Hall embraces every opportunity for pupils to learn beyond the classroom.

The pastoral care provided is outstanding and a strength of this school. Many parents support this statement with comments such as, 'The pastoral care is excellent. All employees of the school are extremely friendly and aware of the children's needs'. 'Their pastoral care is second to none, a very happy place to be'. It is integrated throughout the school where all members of staff recognise their contribution to the welfare and development of boarders. Many boarders are from military families and the school has been proactive in liaising with a British Forces welfare team. The school has also received guidance from the Ministry of Defence to ensure that they can respond to the additional difficulties that may arise with family members being posted overseas. Good communication ensures that there is a joined up approach to any pastoral concern and the school consider how best to support the boarders and their families.

A school nurse has skills in counselling and offers support to groups and individuals. An independent visitor is introduced to the girls as the 'boarders' friend' if they wish to contact someone with a concern outside of the school. The strength of relationships is so strong amongst boarders and boarding staff that any problem or worry is dealt with in school. One boarder reports, 'in boarding there is always someone to talk to and to take care of you.' The complement of the boarding staff creates a family atmosphere where boarders feel secure and happy.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to equal opportunities and avoidance of inappropriate discrimination of all forms. The school offers boarding places through government initiatives such as the Pathfinder Project and the Joint Educational Trust.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders have many opportunities to contribute to the development of boarding through formal groups and informal discussions with the headteacher and boarding staff. The school has a culture of involving its pupils in all aspects of school life, encouraging them to take responsibility

with decision making. Girls were instrumental in voting for the head girl, prefects and captains. A competition enabled the winning entry to be the colourful design emblazoned on the new school minibus and the whole school is actively involved in contributing to the school's eco plan which has led to receiving the highest award for sustainable schools in the West of England for 2009. The commitment to the school's eco status ensures that the children are making a positive contribution to their environment at home, at school, to the local community and worldwide.

Boarders are able to maintain contact with family and friends through use of a pay phone, the school phone and email. Letter writing is encouraged, particularly for parents who may be posted or living overseas. The school provides a weekly newsletter to parents, by email where possible to support their eco plan. A more comprehensive newsletter is sent at the end of each half term. Each class has a parent representative who meet as a group with the headteacher once every half term, this is a good forum for parents to raise any concerns or suggestions. New boarders are made welcome with a handbook and allocation of a boarding buddy. The buddy has a job description and signs an agreement to say they will honour their role and look after a new boarder. Boarding buddies are awarded with a badge to recognise the important role they are undertaking. Boarders confirmed that they were made to feel very welcome when they first arrived with comments such as; 'you make friends easily', 'it is homely and easy to settle'. Boarders handbooks are available in languages other than English to welcome boarders from other countries.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarding accommodation is provided in two buildings. The main school house has dormitories on the second floor for girls up to and including Year 5. The four dormitories are pleasantly decorated and girls personalise their space with colourful duvet covers, soft toys, posters and photographs. A common room with soft seating, bean bags and television is located on the first floor. A separate building, a short walk away, accommodates Year 6 boarders. This building is equally well decorated and furnished and provides the older girls with a little bit of independence away from the younger ones, in preparation for moving on to senior boarding. Bathroom facilities in both boarding areas are suitable and in good decorative order.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The organisation of the school is underpinned by strong management and leadership from the headteacher. Responsibilities are delegated across the school, empowering staff, which in turn provides a committed and dedicated staff team. The boarding staff are led well by the head of boarding and, with the team working really well together, excellent pastoral care is delivered to the boarders. Policies and procedures are of a very high standard, providing staff with clear guidance. There are sound systems in place to monitor the safety and welfare of boarders with clear record keeping and effective meetings promoting good lines of communication across the school. The headteacher and her husband are very involved with boarding, which enables them to be accessible to boarders and fully aware of any boarding issues.

There is a high regard for the safe supervision of boarders with good staffing levels at all times. One member of staff said the school provided for the children, 'a wrap around feeling of being safe'. The staff handbook and job descriptions ensure that everyone knows what is expected

of them. All staff speak highly of the support and communication they receive and they welcome the training opportunities made available to them. Training has occurred in fire safety, first aid, child protection, food hygiene, boarding issues, children's mental health and child development. The school embraces new initiatives and has succeeded in receiving awards for sustainability, food hygiene and a healthy school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Leaden Hall participates in The Comenius Programme sponsored by the British Council to develop knowledge and understanding among young people and education staff of the diversity of European cultures and languages, and the value of this diversity. This term, the school welcomed teachers and pupils from four European countries for four days, taking part in lessons and activities. To further develop the school's eco status, a sustainability project is being planned with the schools in Europe to share world issues together. The children maintain contact with their European friends, sharing correspondence and classroom projects. In addition Leaden Hall welcomes international students to join them and board for a term or longer. The children make biscuits and gifts to deliver to a local care home for the elderly and support many local, national and international charities. The school choir entertain local groups and have learnt songs in different languages such as; Hebrew and Greek. School assemblies and visiting theatre groups have raised an awareness of issues relating to disability.

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

There are no recommendations.