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Thomas Adams School

Shropshire Council

Thomas Adams School, Lowe Hill, Wem, Shrewsbury SY4 5UB

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Adams House is a co-educational boarding house for young people between the ages of 11 and 19. There is capacity for 64 young people. It is a state boarding school which provides accommodation for young people from the United Kingdom and across the world. There are currently 1,178 young people on the school roll, and 44 young people board on a termly or weekly basis.

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 September 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Date of last inspection: 7 March 2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Young people enjoy their boarding experience and make good progress in many areas of their life. They have opportunities to develop their social skills, to become increasingly confident, to improve their language skills and to experience a different way of living.

Young people have a good induction to the school and boarding provision. They are well informed about whom they can contact if they are worried about any aspect of their stay. Expectations for behaviour, and the potential consequences, are explained clearly to young people as part of their induction and are included in the boarders' handbook.

Staff promote young people's healthcare arrangements. Close liaison between the staff and young people's families means that young people's health needs are understood.

The school caters well for young people's individual dietary needs. Mealtimes are social occasions, and young people contribute to the menus.

Listening to and respecting young people's views are central to practice within the school community. There is a boarding committee that young people are encouraged to attend. Prefects attend boarding-staff team meetings and governor boarding sub-committees. These varied opportunities enable young people to be actively involved in making key decisions.

Staff ensure, prior to young people's admissions, that information is gathered from their families and their previous school. This initial contact enables staff to gather essential information. This information is then used to ensure that young people's individual needs are met.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

There is a strong safeguarding culture across the whole school community. Staff are knowledgeable about the safeguarding processes that must be followed if they have any concerns about young people's welfare. This approach is underpinned by safeguarding training that reflects national safeguarding priorities, including staff receiving training on 'Prevent' and on the topic of child sexual and criminal exploitation.

Young people's behaviour is consistently positive, and staff encourage them to respect each other. Young people respond positively to two different behaviour management strategies used in the boarding. These are a points- and a status-based system. When behaviours require additional sanctions, these are based on a restorative approach and the withdrawal of privileges. This system helps young

people to understand the effects of their behaviours on others.

Boarders unanimously say that no bullying behaviours are experienced or accepted at the school. This means that young people develop good relationships with each other and demonstrate concern for others.

Young people live in a safe environment, with regular fire and health and safety checks being carried out. Overall, the boarding provision is kept to a good standard. Young people take pride in their bedrooms and have personalised them. There is an ongoing programme of refurbishment at the school site, including new windows and painting and redecorating. However, some liquid chemicals were found to be openly stored in a toilet area of a room that is used by young people. Health and safety systems need to be regularly reviewed to protect young people from being able to access chemicals that could be harmful.

Thorough recruitment and selection procedures help to prevent unsuitable adults from working with young people. Visitors are appropriately checked for identification prior to entering the school grounds. These procedures promote the safety of the young people by preventing unsuitable adults from working with them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A suitably qualified and experienced head of care manages the boarding provision well. A consistent team of staff, many of whom have worked at the school for several years, support her. The head of boarding is part of the extended school senior leadership team and is supported and supervised by the head of school. All staff have high aspirations for young people in their care.

The school is well supported by a strong and dedicated governing body. Governors are enthusiastic and receive a range of training to assist their role. Governors say that they are here to support the school, and they are not afraid to challenge the senior leadership on any proposals that it is considering making. This effective source of challenge helps the school to move forward continually and to look at new ways of supporting young people.

All staff receive supervision and are appraised annually. Staff receive a wide range of training and all have completed the boarding school association's two-year professional development certificate.

Partnership working with parents, carers and professionals is good. A parent told the inspector, 'The school is great, it keeps me up to date with information'.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard for boarding schools:

- The school premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured. (National minimum standard 6.2)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC020780

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mark Cooper

Type of school: Boarding School

Telephone number: 01939 233311

Email address: bjh@thomasadams.net

Inspectors

Dave Carrigan, social care inspector (lead)

Rumbi Mangoma, social care inspector



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