

# Terra Nova School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	1 March 2005

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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

Terra Nova School is sited in the Cheshire countryside, between Holmes Chapel and Alderley Edge. The school caters for up to 300 pupils between the ages of three to 13 years of age. It is a mixed school offering weekly or flexible boarding provision, during term time only, for up to 40 young people. The number of boarders currently varies between four to 38 on any night throughout the week. The residential accommodation is located in the main school building. On the first floor there is a medical room and linen room, where the matrons are sited throughout the day. The second and third floors contain dormitories, ranging in size from three to seven bedded, for boys and girls respectively. There is also a small sitting area plus shower, bath and toilet facilities on both upper floors. Some residential staff have accommodation sited alongside or close to the young people's provision. The dining room is based on the ground floor. The grounds are extensive, offering a range of soft and hard play areas including a tennis court and adventure playground.

### Summary

The purpose of this visit was to conduct a full inspection of all of the key National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Four additional standards were included. Recommendations made following the previous inspection were followed up. The school is well organised and managed. Young people who board are looked after by staff who are child centred in their practice. Relationships between staff and young people are positive and there is a happy relaxed atmosphere in the boarding provision. The standard of care offered to young people boarding at the school is good. Young people say they enjoy boarding and think it is a lot of fun. Communication systems within the school are effective; all relevant staff are kept informed about important matters relating to young peoples' health and welfare. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities in regards to keeping young people safe. Young people say bullying is not an issue within the school and that reports of minor incidents are dealt with promptly by staff. There is a clear expectation of what behaviour is acceptable in the school and an emphasis on staff acknowledging and praising good behaviour. Discipline is perceived by young people as being fair and proportionate. Fire and health and safety checks are given good attention.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

Five recommendations were made following the last inspection. These related to staffs' knowledge of local child protection procedures and accommodation issues. The school has taken action to satisfactorily address all the recommendations. Staff with boarding responsibilities receive annual child protection training, and gap students are fully briefed about child protection matters as part of their Induction process. This ensures young people welfare and safety is promoted. The pay phone for use by young people is in good working order. This ensures young people are able to maintain contact with their parents. The common room has been redecorated and refurbished to offer a comfortable recreational area for the young people and a separate room has been designated as a sick bay, should it be required. This ensures the accommodation is suitable to meet the needs of the young people.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's health needs are identified and action is taken to ensure they receive appropriate treatment. The school carries out a good assessment of boarders' needs prior to their admission and obtains appropriate parental consent for emergency treatment and first aid. Young people board either weekly or on a flexible arrangement from one to four nights a week. Consequently, parents retain primary responsibility for their child's health. However, the school doctor holds a 'surgery' for young people at the school once a week to address routine health matters. The doctor is available to advise staff at any time and had formed good links with parents. Health education is provided to young people as part of the school curriculum in Personal, Social, Citizenship, and Health Education (PSCHE) lessons. This is supported by informal advice provided by boarding staff. However, access to health education literature is limited in the boarding provision. Young people say they are helped to stay healthy and they are cared for when they are not feeling well. Parents bring in all prescribed and non-prescribed medication. They sign a consent form for staff to administer the medication each time their child boards. A small stock of approved non-prescribed medication is also kept in the school. Medications are stored securely and the school doctor undertakes a regular check of stock. The administration of medication is solely the responsibility of the three matrons, and the weekly roster ensures that at least one of them is on duty at all times. There is a written medication policy and procedure and all prescribed medication is appropriately recorded. However, formal records are not maintained of the administration of homely remedies. Staff have not received training in the administration of medication or undertaken a test of competency in this area. Therefore there is an increased risk of errors in administration. Sufficient staff are trained in first aid and there is easy access to first aid equipment throughout the school. Checks are regularly conducted to ensure first aid boxes are in good order. School meals are healthy and nutritious. The catering staff have a good awareness of boarders' special dietary requirements. Young people describe the meals as generally good or okay; they particularly like breakfasts which include items such as, boiled eggs or bacon sandwiches. There is a choice of a hot or cold dish at lunchtime and in the evening. Also, a choice of desserts including fresh fruit. Cold drinks are available at all times. The young people say they enjoy the occasional treats served by the kitchen, but they would like to be able to have the vegetarian option at times even though they are not vegetarian. Sufficient food is available for young people to have second helpings. Young people have a very good understanding about the need for a balanced diet and the contribution this makes to a healthy lifestyle.

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

The provision is good.

The school has an effective anti-bullying policy which is successfully implemented in practice to protect young people. Bullying is not tolerated in the school and this message is reinforced through the school's PSCHE programme and school assemblies. The boarders' handbook contains information about staff plus the Independent Listener who boarders can discuss concerns with. The details of national helpline numbers are also included. However, some contact details are in need of review. Anti-bullying posters are displayed in and around the school and boarding accommodation. Young people understand the different forms bullying may take, and are aware of the need to report any concerns or incidents to an adult. Young people say bullying is not an issue in the school. They say there are occasions when there is 'name calling' between young people but staff act quickly to stop this. The school is committed to ensuring all young people

are protected from abuse. The Headmaster and Head of Boarding share the role of designated person for child protection. They maintain up to date training and are readily accessible to provide appropriate guidance and support to staff. The safeguarding policy provides clear guidance for staff and promotes consistency in the way concerns are responded to. Staff are knowledgeable regarding the signs and symptoms of abuse and the reporting process. They receive safeguarding training which is updated on an annual basis. Staff joining the school during the academic year, such as Gap students, are given a briefing on safeguarding matters by the Headmaster. Other interested persons such as the school doctor and the Independent Listener are knowledgeable about child protection matters. Young people's behaviour is managed in a positive way, based on praise and encouragement for achievement and effort. Young people are fully aware what standard of behaviour is expected from them and the consequence of breaking school rules or breaches in discipline. The use of sanctions is minimal and young people say they are fair and proportionate. Concerns about young people's behaviour are recorded on the school intranet. The records can be accessed by teaching and care staff and are regularly monitored by members of the senior management team. Some older young people have responsibility for supporting younger children but they do not have any disciplinary powers. The school is very responsive to concerns or complaints raised by parents or young people. However, records do not always demonstrate how well these are managed. For example, issues raised by both parents and young people are mainly resolved on an informal basis but are not usually recorded. Information about the complaints process for young people is displayed around the school. Contact details for external helplines are also readily available to young people. All the young people identified at least one adult in the school who they felt they could talk to about any problems. They say staff listen to them and take action to rectify matters. Older young people are aware of the role and service offered by the Independent Listener though younger children are not. There is a good awareness amongst boarding staff and young people regarding the school's fire safety precautions. Regular fire drills are carried out for both the school and for the boarding house. The drills, along with any false alarms, are recorded in the fire log book. Records show tests are carried out on the emergency lighting and fire alarm system, though the frequency which such tests should occur is not clearly evident. Fire extinguishers are routinely serviced and an annual fire risk assessment is carried out. The boarders living area is for their exclusive use only. Staff show a regard for the privacy of the boarders, particularly at sensitive times such as washing and changing for bed. Supervision by staff is adequate at such times but not intrusive. No concerns were raised by young people in respect of privacy. The school has a consistent system in place for the recruitment and vetting of staff, including gap students. All permanent staff working in the school have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. However, the system is not robust in ensuring written evidence is gained of all required information. For example, verification of references. There is also little written evidence of the selection process. The adoption of a more robust approach in this area would evidence greater protection for young people. A strength of the system is that all staff are required to sign a form, annually, reminding them of their responsibility to report any concerns about young people. This promotes young people's well-being. Arrangements are in place so that, whenever possible, all major building or maintenance work is scheduled to take place during the school holidays. The school's own maintenance team deal with most day to day maintenance repairs and tasks, and this helps to reduce the number of persons working on site whilst young people are resident. All visitors to the school are required to sign in at the reception, wear a visitor's badge and are normally escorted around the school. Parents have access to the first floor, where the matrons are based daily, but they do not go into the boarding provision. The school has risk assessments for aspects of safety of the premises

and grounds and activities. However, the boarding accommodation is not routinely assessed. This means risks to young people are not routinely monitored. All areas used by young people are free from avoidable safety hazards and the young people are aware of which areas are out of bounds.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The school promotes the emotional well-being of young people and ensure they receive adequate support to meet their individual needs. All the young people identified at least one adult within the school they could approach if they had any personal concerns. Young people say staff care about them and are willing to listen and help. One boarder said they felt able to talk to the gap students as they are 'like your favourite big brother or sister'. Another young person said the best things about boarding was that staff 'give you hugs'. Older young people are encouraged to support younger ones who board. The Independent Listener is a frequent visitor to the school though younger children are less certain about her role. Contact details for national helplines and the Independent Listener are included in the boarder's handbook. The school's mission statement is celebrating individuality. This is explicit in staff's practice; all young people's efforts and achievements are celebrated equally. Boys and girls have the same opportunities to engage in various recreational and sporting activities. Only a minority of young people from different ethnic backgrounds attend the school but they are fully integrated into its community. The school's PSCHÉ programme promotes awareness about racial, religious, spiritual and cultural diversity. There is a great emphasis on young people supporting and showing consideration for one another, not only in the school but in the wider world. This is reinforced by various fund-raising projects for overseas schools, which young people participate in.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Young people board either weekly or on a flexible arrangement from one to four nights a week therefore, they see their parents or carers at least every weekend. Nevertheless, the school has a positive attitude to young people maintaining contact with their parents and family. Young people bring in their own mobile phones, and are able to use these up to bedtime when they are handed in to one of the matrons, the phones are then returned to young people the next morning. Young people are satisfied with this arrangement and say they can make and take calls privately. Young people who do not have a mobile phone are able to use a phone located in the medical room or a pay phone located on the ground floor. Parents are able to call their child direct either on their mobile or the school pay phone. Young people also have access to computers though this is supervised by adults. Consulting young people and gaining their suggestions and ideas are firmly integrated into staffs' practice though records do not always reflect this. A number of boarders said the school council was an effective forum to express views and bring about change. A strength of the school is the relationships young people enjoy with staff. Young people feel able to approach staff and are confident they will be listened to and helped. Relationships between staff and young people are positive, based on trust and mutual respect. Interaction is relaxed though staff maintain appropriate boundaries. The young people say they are well cared for. Comments by young people include 'staff give lots of hugs', and 'boarding is like home from home'.

## Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The boarding accommodation is clean and functional. Efforts have been made to make the accommodation more comfortable and child-friendly. However, the standard of decoration, furniture and furnishings in dormitories is variable. Aspects such as central strip lighting in these rooms do not promote a homely environment. Young people are encouraged to personalise their space within the dormitories, but this also varies from room to room.

## Organisation

The organisation is good.

Information on the aims, ethos and organisation of the school is contained in a range of different documents and reflect current practice in the school. The documents are available to parents. All new parents also receive an information booklet which includes a medical information form and details of the school complaints procedures. Young people have their own handbook to help prepare them for boarding. The handbook is child-friendly, produced in an accessible colourful format with a mix of text and symbols. All staff, including gap students, receive a copy of the school handbook which contains all relevant policies and procedures. The arrangements for the deployment of staff with boarding responsibilities ensure there are sufficient numbers for the age, number and needs of young people boarding at any one time. The young people are primarily cared for by a small team of staff led by the Head of Boarding. The boarding team consists of three resident matrons who are supported by a small number of teaching staff and gap students. Young people have access to a matron at all times; notices are prominently displayed on both boarding floors to show which member of staff is on call through the night time. Job descriptions are in place for all staff with boarding responsibilities. Guidance on boarding routines and practice is provided in the staff handbook. Whilst boarding staff and gap students receive informal induction, which includes discussion about significant policies and procedures, there is currently no formal induction programme for them. Records show some boarding staff hold professional qualifications and all have undertaken training in child protection and first aid, though some are due to update their first aid certificate in the near future. There is an annual staff performance review though this is not yet established practice in the school.

## 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 persons responsible for administering medication receive appropriate training (NMS 15)

- ensure a risk assessment of the residential accommodation is undertaken on a regular basis (NMS 47)
- include verification of references and records of staff interviews on their file (NMS 38)
- effect improvements to the boarding accommodation (NMS 42)
- implement a formal Induction process for staff and regular supervision (NMS 34)

## Annex

## Annex A

### National Minimum Standards for boarding school

#### Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders' health is promoted (NMS 6)
- safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records (NMS 7)
- boarders' receive first aid and health care as necessary (NMS 15)
- boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill (NMS 16)
- boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems (NMS 17)
- boarders receive good quality catering provision (NMS 24)
- boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals (NMS 25)
- boarders are suitably accommodated when ill (NMS 48)
- boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered (NMS 49).

**Ofsted considers 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders are protected from bullying (NMS 2)
- boarders are protected from abuse (NMS 3)
- use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate (NMS 4)
- boarders' complaints are responded to appropriately (NMS 5)
- the operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare (NMS 13)
- boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school (NMS 22)
- boarders are protected from the risk of fire (NMS 26)
- the welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school (NMS 28)
- boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities (NMS 29)
- boarders' personal privacy is respected (NMS 37)
- there is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders (NMS 38)
- boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures; all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises are supervised (NMS 39)
- boarders have their own accommodation, which is secure from public intrusion (NMS 41)
- boarders are protected from safety hazards (NMS 47)

**Ofsted considers 2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- boarders have access to a range and choice of activities (NMS 11)
- boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination (NMS 18)
- boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands (NMS 27)
- boarders have satisfactory provision to study (NMS 43)
- boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas (NMS 46)

**Ofsted considers 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.**

**Annex A**

## **Making a positive contribution**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school (NMS 12)
- boarders receive personal support from staff (NMS 14)
- boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families (NMS 19)
- new boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in (NMS 21)
- boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school (NMS 30)
- there are sound relationships between staff and boarders (NMS 36)

**Ofsted considers 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.**

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- boarders' possessions and money are protected (NMS 20)
- boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation (NMS 40)
- boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation (NMS 42)
- boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities (NMS 44)
- boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day (NMS 45)
- boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school (NMS 50)

**Ofsted considers 51 the key standard to be inspected.**

## **Organisation**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- there is clear leadership of boarding in the school (NMS 8)
- crises affecting boarders' welfare are managed effectively (NMS 9)
- the school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare (NMS 10)
- risk assessment and school record-keeping contribute to boarders' welfare (NMS 23)
- boarders are supervised adequately by staff (NMS 31)
- staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site (NMS 32)
- boarders are adequately supervised at night (NMS 33)
- boarders are looked after by staff which have specific boarding duties, and have received adequate induction and continued training (NMS 34)
- boarders are looked after by staff which follow clear boarding policies and practice (NMS 35)
- the welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 51)
- the welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

**Ofsted considers 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.**