

# Bedstone College

Inspection report for boarding school

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC020768
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 September 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Julian Parker
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Address</b>	Bedstone College BUCKNELL Shropshire SY7 0BG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01547 530 303
<b>Email</b>	headmaster@bedstone.org
<b>Registered person</b>	Bedstone Educational Trust Ltd
<b>Head / Principal</b>	Michael Shapland Symonds
<b>Nominated person</b>	Michael Shapland Symonds
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	12 June 2006

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

## 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

Bedstone College is a well-established co-educational independent school for pupils aged from three to 18.

Occupying some 40 acres, located in a very rural setting some 30 miles south of Shrewsbury, the college is easily accessible by road and rail. Set in beautiful countryside, the listed main building was built in the 19th century and converted into a boarding school over the past 60 years.

Boarding accommodation is provided in five separate areas of the college. Two boarding houses for boys are situated in the main building and three, one for boys and two for girls, are situated in detached houses in the extensive landscaped school grounds.

Pastoral care and support are provided to boarders by their house staff, teaching staff who have boarding responsibilities and by nursing staff. Other staff, who do not have direct care responsibilities, contribute to the welfare provision for boarders. The headmaster is directly responsible for pastoral care, monitoring the boarding provision and overseeing child protection. The second master and the head of the preparatory school assist him.

Boarders are provided with extensive 'out of school' activities fully utilising the schools many assets.

### Summary

This report is of an announced full inspection undertaken as part of the three-year inspection cycle for boarding schools. This inspection was undertaken in conjunction with one of education provided at the college conducted by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. The overall judgement of boarding practice for Bedstone College is good. Measures to help boarders be healthy, stay safe, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing are good. Enjoying and achieving is judged as satisfactory. Management of the college is good with ample evidence supporting positive practice taking place to improve and promote the welfare of scholars and boarders.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

A wide variety of improvements have been made to the college since its last inspection in 2006, reflecting the Senior Management Team (SMT) and governors' commitment to progressing overall the service's development and performance. Responding to the last inspection report, improvement has been made by ensuring all staff receive training to understand their responsibilities for child protection. Improvements in the effectiveness of responding to scholars' views, particularly those of the food committee, have positively influenced changes to the college's catering arrangements and food quality. Public telephones in named boarding houses have been effectively enclosed to promote privacy of calls.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Scholars and boarders have their medical and health needs promoted through the provision of on-site nursing and support services. The college provides a very good medical response, treatment and first aid at all times of day. Qualified nursing staff are always available in the school's sick bay for the treatment of minor ailments and illnesses. The college have forged supportive links with local community health services and have direct access to the local General Practitioner if needed. The college operates a comprehensive medication policy incorporating practice guidance that specifically addresses the use of non-prescribed medication.

Medical and support staff are trained in the administration of medication by the school nurses and are proactive in promoting health education policies by integrating them into their daily contact with young people. Formal consent for medication and first aid is sought from parents and guardians prior to a scholar's admission to the college. School generated records are compiled for all students requiring treatment including those students from abroad, thereby confirming that the medical welfare of students is very well provided for. Parents are notified about any changes to their child's health by the school nurses. The college's dedicated accommodation for sick pupils is of a good standard for providing short periods of isolation, privacy and convalescence for those students who cannot go home when ill.

Scholars and boarders are provided with access to age-appropriate guidance and information about health and social issues. These are comprehensively addressed through the education curriculum and by notice boards around the campus. Boarders are well informed and readily identify who they may approach to discuss personal, health and social matters. The college provides an independent listening service that can be readily accessed through the sick bay and by direct phone call.

Bedstone College has made substantial recent improvement both with the catering facilities and décor of the dining environment. This has increased student and staff satisfaction with the quality, production and delivery of meals. The nutritional, religious and health-related dietary needs of students are well met by a team of catering staff responsible for the selection, preparation and provision of a broad variety of meals that address the diverse range of preferences. The enthusiastic catering manager demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes a good balanced and varied diet thereby promoting student satisfaction. She is receptive to students' comments about the quality of the catering provision through the Student Committee food group and by judging reactions at mealtimes. Catering staff receive training about food hygiene and nutrition that effectively enables them to put their skills into practice.

Scholars and boarders eat their main meals in a central dining area. Select special occasions, such as birthdays or awards ceremonies are celebrated using a compact and ornate small dining room away from the main refectory area thereby allowing students to appreciate the importance and social aspects of mealtimes.

Students can also buy food from the tuck shop and have access to drinking water fountains and a potable tap water supply around the college site. Boarders are provided with additional weekly provisions from the college kitchen to make evening and weekend snacks in the boarding houses. School menu planning effectively includes culturally appropriate meals, particularly recognising the integration of overseas students and encourages all students to try a cosmopolitan range of dishes. Senior students have a recreation area of their own and can, usually at weekends, order take away food.

Boarders have access to excellent laundry facilities that return personal belonging promptly, repaired where necessary and in good condition.

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

The provision is good.

The college effectively protects its scholars and boarders from bullying by promoting a tolerant and accepting school culture where any form of unkindness is addressed. There is rigid enforcement of the school's anti-bullying policy and procedures. Boarders know about what constitutes bullying behaviour and confirm that it is not acceptable. Staff and prefects are vigilant and act quickly and decisively to prevent such behaviour developing and in doing so, protect all students from any potential emotional harm.

The college has well grounded and established safeguarding procedures for responding to any child protection concerns. Scholars and boarders are aware of who they can approach to share any matters that may concern them. All tutors, boarding staff, ancillary staff, support staff and prefects are briefed annually about the school's responsibility for safeguarding children, including how to practically identify child protection concerns. There are professionally developed links with the area Children and Families Department and Local Safeguarding Children Board. The designated child protection officers, who are the headmaster, the head of the preparatory department, together with other key staff attend external training to improve their knowledge of national and local child protection procedures and thereby ensure that the 'whole school' child protection policy reflects local practice.

The policies developed by the college concerning the management of behaviour are made explicit to all scholars, boarders and their parents by a well publicised code of conduct including discipline, punishments and rewards. The management of behaviour is extremely effective with students imposing high levels of expectation and self-control with the need for few reminders. Prefects act as effective role models who do not impose sanctions without consultation with tutors. Prefects are fully aware of their responsibility in assisting with the maintenance of order and the high standards to be complied with by scholars and boarders. Standards of behaviour are very good, negating the need for the use of any physical restraint.

The college has an effective complaints procedure with information being available to all scholars, boarders and parents. Although known about and promulgated on the school web site, the procedure is not widely publicised in day to day documentation. Boarders confirmed that they know how to complain and to whom they would make any concerns known. House masters and staff are proactive in addressing boarders' concerns well before they become serious enough to become a recordable formal complaint. The regulator has received no complaints about Bedstone College.

Bedstone College has comprehensive and effective fire prevention and detection equipment and procedures. Scholars and boarders are protected through the regular testing and maintenance of all detection equipment, extinguishers, fire alarms and other electrical equipment. Boarders have routinely scheduled opportunities to practise the evacuation of their houses. They expressed confidence in the safety and security of the college.

The college operates a rigorous risk assessment approach for all aspects of safety of the premises, grounds and all sporting and recreational activities to ensure that any areas used by students and boarding houses are free from avoidable or potential safety hazards. The school has effective

strategies and discrete security in place to address any external risk to students. Identifiably high risk activities, both on and off campus, are well supervised and supported by proven, appropriate safety measures that remain under constant review. The college uses a systematic recording procedure underwriting its wide ranging risk assessment approach to assure its commitment to keeping all students as safe as is reasonably possible. Although comprehensive in its scope, the written risk assessments in some boarding houses require some further development to encompass potential risks such as portable heating, absence of window restrictors in one house and periodic review.

The college has excellent contingency plans in place to address any foreseeable crises that may adversely affect any scholars or boarders. All staff are made aware of the arrangements for action to be taken in such circumstances. There is a well-developed system of risk assessment that includes any particular risks to students who go on residential trips away from the school.

Boarders across all houses confirmed that all boarding staff are respectful towards their needs for privacy while being responsibly concerned for their supervision, welfare and safety. Boarders do not feel intruded upon by staff, confirming that the college campus affords places within the houses and grounds where they can enjoy quiet time.

Staff recruitment procedures and checks on other adults who have access to students comply with national minimum standards and requirements. Recording processes evidence ongoing improvement to confirm best practice in recruitment and selection.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Bedstone College provides a broad range of academic support services and recreational opportunities that allow students to achieve both educationally and socially. The college attracts students from a range of cultures and religious beliefs and promotes the equality of all. Within a Christian faith framework the college provides pastoral support and spiritual guidance that facilitates the attendance of students from other faiths and denominations. The positive social contribution of overseas boarding students to the academic community is a significant feature of the higher year groups.

The college provides an impressive range of recreational activities as a fundamental part of its curriculum and sporting credentials. While celebrating its sporting triumphs, the college importantly recognises the importance of individual efforts and achievement including kindness to others. The college sporting activities are combined with community, cultural and environmental projects outside of class time that assist scholars to broaden their academic knowledge, personal interests, community awareness and sporting prowess. There are no evident onerous demands made upon boarders other than those which are self-imposed to improve personal standards by taking full advantage of the broad range of facilities the college provides.

Boarders requiring individual personal support are clear about those tutorial, boarding or support staff from whom they can receive advice and guidance. Established boarders are keen to take on responsibility for providing support to their peers. Helping others is encouraged as a notable feature of the college ethos. Boarders are provided with access to a professionally qualified counsellor as an independent listener who regularly visits to offer, where necessary, confidential guidance. The college is proactive in assessing and addressing the needs of students with minor disabilities and learning difficulties, by including into the curriculum additional levels of learning

support as required. Scholars for whom English is not their first language receive considerable support to integrate fully into college life from enthusiastic teaching staff. Equality and diversity training will further develop staff understanding of the needs of this growing cohort of scholars.

The quality of the facilities for boarders' private study, including furnishings, lighting, space and access to IT systems is of a generally good standard across the various college boarding houses.

The college provides a wide range of indoor and outdoor recreational areas for the use of boarders at different times of the day. There are segregated boarding houses and recreational areas within the college that help promote gender privacy when appropriate during leisure time. Boarders can involve themselves in a range of activities individually, in small groups or as competitive houses with support from staff whenever necessary. Supervised weekend activities both on- and off-site are regularly timetabled for boarders.

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

The provision is good.

Within the college each boarding house demonstrates a strong commitment to securing the views of its residents. Boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of their houses by having daily contact and discussion with their house masters, house mothers, house tutors and matron. Boarders say they can influence their individual facilities, activities and house decoration. Representatives from each boarding house are elected to contribute to the running of the college by making representations through the house masters' meeting. Scholars and boarders have influenced a variety of issues such as catering arrangements and internet access.

Boarders have access to facilities that enable them to maintain private contact with their parents and families. Boarders have access to school phones and a liberal level of use of their own mobile phones outside of school hours. Because of the college's rural location, internet systems have not been of a consistently high quality to facilitate on-line telephonic overseas communications for some international students.

There are effective, individually sensitive and well-established procedures for introducing students to the college. Scholars and boarders new to Bedstone College report that the joining process had been informative and had helped them settle in quickly and become aware of rules and routines. Younger boarders are supported by their individual house staff and a house 'buddy system' that offers practical guidance and friendship for the all important first few weeks.

The college nurtures excellent relationships between its boarders and their particular house staff. Young people are respectful towards their house staff and staff express considerable commitment to their boarders.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The college provides a range of boarding accommodation varying in condition from satisfactory to excellent, much of which is located in the historic and architecturally interesting, listed main building. The accommodation provided by the college is generally comfortable, functional and individualised wherever possible to reflect boarders' own interests. The contemporary buildings

on campus reflect the trend towards individual or double occupancy boarders' rooms with bespoke furnishings. Toilets and bathing facilities across most houses are communal. Traditional dormitories in the main boarding houses are predominantly multi-occupancy but offer ample individual space and lockable separate storage space for boarders.

Communal areas are very well maintained and provide sufficient space for all boarders to convene and relax in comfortable surroundings. The college has invested in the facilities that may be enjoyed by the significant boarding population. Most boarding houses provide discrete individual bed space areas for preparatory work. Older scholars have IT connectivity and computer terminals in their rooms.

Standards of maintenance and cleanliness throughout the boarding accommodation are high and boarding scholars are encouraged to look after their rooms and the general condition of the boarding house. All boarding houses are equipped with galley style kitchens for the preparation of snacks or supper.

Apart from one boarding house which is scheduled for renovation, the communal toilets and washing provision in all boarding houses is adequate in number and condition, providing boarders with appropriate levels of privacy. The college has introduced a phased process of renovation geared to initially refurbish the most tired facilities. Much of this work has been completed.

The college provides a tuck shop and a general school shop where boarders may purchase items of stationery, uniform and provisions. Supervised weekly trips to the nearby market town are arranged for younger boarders outside of school hours or at weekends by staff.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The college has produced a Statement of Boarding Practice and Principles that clearly states its values and aims. The Parents' Guide and Boarders' Handbooks contain all required information for scholars and their families about the broad range of the services provided. This includes details specific to boarders, the philosophy of care and the expectations of the college.

The management of boarding provision is overseen by the headmaster and as such assumes an important role within the school's senior management team's priorities. There is an important commitment to the development of boarding as an intrinsic component of the developing provision portfolio. Boarding house staff are clear about the established lines of communication and accountability. House masters, house mothers, house tutors and matrons are responsible for monitoring the welfare of their respective boarding houses and share concerns and achievements with the headmaster at weekly meetings, thereby demonstrating their commitment to all scholars living away from home.

Staffing arrangements within the houses are set at a level that ensures that the needs of boarders are consistently met at all times either by duty staff or the direct availability of the house master or matron supported by responsible senior boarders. Boarding houses can draw from a complement of both resident and non-resident staff, tutors and house staff to provide enhanced levels of supervision for organised recreation activities or periods of quiet. Boarders know how to contact staff on duty should they need to do so both during the day and at night. The visible supervision of boarders is evident, effective and promotes a sense of self-esteem

and responsibility for senior scholars. Boarders confirm relationships with boarding house staff are very positive.

The college provides induction training for all staff new in post including those undertaking boarding duties. Expectations from full-time staff are outlined by comprehensive job descriptions and reinforced by access to the college policies related to boarding practice. Job descriptions accurately reflect the high expectations made from boarding staff. Recruitment to the position of house master is by a proven interest, competence and on the job experience. Boarding staff receive ongoing access to courses as a component of their in-service training but have not always prioritised further personal development in this area over their day-to-day practical boarding and tutoring responsibilities.

Collective boarding house practice is regularly monitored by the headmaster and good practice is regularly disseminated between boarding staff. Because of the low incidence of notable incidents some statutory monitoring could be better evidenced. Record keeping relating to the everyday needs of boarders is of a good quality for all child related matters. In these ways Bedstone College ensures that boarders are effectively cared for by competent boarding staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is evidenced by inclusive written policies underpinning and advising practice that integrates the range of English and overseas students attending the College.

## 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
----------	--------	----------

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that the school follows an appropriate policy on responding to complaints from boarders and parents which complies fully with all the components of NMS 5 (National Minimum Standard 5.1)
- ensure that indoor areas used by, or accessible to, boarders are free from reasonably avoided safety hazards such as portable heating appliances (National Minimum Standard 47.1)
- ensure that windows accessible to boarders above the ground floor and presenting a risk to safety are fitted with suitable opening restrictors or alternative safety measures (National Minimum Standard 47.3)
- review how training in the promotion of equality and diversity is provided to staff to ensure they are appropriately equipped to understand and meet the needs of all students from different minority backgrounds (National Minimum Standard 18.1)

- review how the existing provision for contact between boarders and their families, particular that of overseas boarders may be improved (National Minimum Standard 19.3)
- introduce recording systems that confirm regular monitoring of the records prescribed by NMS 23 (National Minimum Standard 23.1)
- review the way in which staff with responsibilities for boarding can access related training opportunities. (National Minimum Standard 34.7)