

The Yehudi Menuhin School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Paul Taylor
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Nominated person	Dr Richard Hillier
Date of last inspection	1 October 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 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

The Yehudi Menuhin school, which is situated in a rural site on the outskirts of the village of Stoke d'Abernon in Surrey, was founded by the world famous musician in 1963 to provide education for musically gifted children from all over the world. The school aims to 'develop the musical potential of gifted young people regardless of race, creed or financial background both for their own fulfilment and for the benefit and enrichment of others, within an academic environment which supports and develops their social, emotional, aesthetic and physical needs'.

At the time of the inspection the school was providing specialist musical education to 58 boarders, of both sexes, between the ages of eight and 19 years. The majority of boarders board on a weekly basis, returning either to home, friends or guardians at weekends. The school operates with a staff of approximately 50, many of whom provide specific musical expertise. Selection of boarders is by a stringent series of auditions which seek to assess musical ability and identify outstanding potential. All United Kingdom boarders qualify for an 'aided place' under the Music and Dance Scheme. There is an expectation that boarders at the school will undertake GCSE and A level examinations in tandem with their musical education. On leaving school most will continue their musical development in both the United Kingdom and abroad. The school reports that 97% of all its former pupils are now professional musicians.

Summary

At this announced inspection all the key standards were assessed. During the inspection, boarders from each of the three boarding areas met the inspector for discussions about life in the school. The inspector also ate meals with the boarders, observed them during evening activities and met other boarders while touring the school.

The school provides an outstanding level of care for the boarders. Each boarder's individuality is valued and respected and the ethos in the school ensures that those who board have their talents developed while being able to socialise and improve academically. The strong leadership of the school ensures that all the boarders have their welfare promoted and protected by robust systems which are underpinned by a committed group of staff. Boarders have numerous adults whom they can approach for support, and the embedded culture of the school ensures that they will also look out for one another. Boarders have a strong sense of loyalty and commitment to their peers and school. The size of the school ensures that all the boarders can be monitored and supported closely and that there is 'always someone to talk to'. The boarding in the school is relaxed, open and homely and there is an emphasis placed on the whole community respecting each other and showing courtesy and manners to everyone.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Four recommendations were made at the previous inspection carried out in 2007. These have been addressed.

A visit by the fire officer in 2008 found that the arrangements for evacuation and escape are satisfactory. Updated fire risk assessments have identified that fire exits are available and that the methods of securing windows do not impede egress in an emergency.

The boarders have a variety of activities made available to them and the refurbished swimming pool has also meant that the opportunity for physical activity has been significantly increased. A new lounge and kitchen have been built as part of the refurbishment programme. This means that boarders have access to another common room and area in which to make snacks. A policy is in place which makes it clear that all visitors, including the parents of boarders, must sign in to the houses and make the staff know that they are on site. This message has been reiterated in a letter to the parents from the headteacher.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The school offers excellent guidance on the promotion of healthy living and lifestyles. Other health issues are discussed in personal, social, citizenship and health education within the school day and the boarders can approach members of staff, particularly the matron, to discuss any personal issues or problems. Appropriate information is provided to the boarders on issues such as illegal substances, sexual health, and other social issues. This information is shared sensitively and commensurate with their development and understanding.

Thorough health records are developed for the boarders. These contain information such as health histories, allergies and specific health needs, vaccination records as well as any issues which may affect a boarder's emotional well-being such as bereavement or divorce. Specific health plans are kept for boarders who have identified health needs such as allergies or asthma. Sensitive information is shared with members of staff on a 'need to know' basis and all records are kept securely stored.

There are clear policies and guidance with regards to the monitoring and promoting of the boarders' health.

The administration and storage of medication are closely and robustly audited and monitored. Records are thorough and up to date. Clear records are kept of medication coming to the school and a stock-take is maintained to ensure that all the records tally. Medication is securely stored. Written consent is in place for each pupil with regards to administration of first aid and medical treatment.

Medical appointments to doctors, dentists or opticians are made for the boarders if they are needed. The school is also able to access specialist medical appointments for boarders if this is required, for example with counsellors, psychotherapists or for the boarders who may require psychological or psychiatric support.

The matron and her assistant provide caring and sensitive attention to boarders who present themselves during surgeries. They are very aware that some children may at times require reassurance and a kind word rather than medical attention. Support offered is nurturing and attentive. The matron notifies parents or guardians of any illnesses or injuries and clear records are kept of any accidents.

The sick bay is situated next to the matron's room. It is comfortable and has a bell which children can use to summon help. If boarders are ill for more than a couple of days they will return home or to guardians to recuperate.

There is a rolling programme of first aid training and this ensures that there is always a qualified 'first aider' on the premises.

Health care is of a very high standard and particular emphasis and attention are placed on promoting the boarders' emotional well-being.

The standard of catering in the school is very good. The catering is managed by a company which employs the staff to work in the school. The kitchen is clean and hygienic and a visit by the environmental health officer made no recommendations. The menu is prepared on a four-weekly basis and offers three choices for each main meal including a vegetarian option. Feedback from the boarders is positive overall. Additionally, the catering staff are very aware of specific dietary needs for any particular children and ensure that these are met. Catering staff are also observant as to individuals' eating habits and will inform members of staff if they have concerns, such as boarders missing meals regularly. Mealtimes are well ordered and pleasant social occasions.

The approach by the school ensures that boarders' emotional and physical well-being is promoted to an excellent standard.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Within the school there are always adults around to support the boarders and to address any incidents or issues. The school has a clear policy and guidance in place with regards to managing bullying. Boarders do not feel there are bullying problems at the school. All boarders are encouraged to live as part of a close community and to look out for each other. The school approach ensures that there is an embedded culture in which bullying is regarded as unacceptable.

The school has two senior members of staff responsible for the monitoring of child protection. They also train and disseminate information about child protection to all members of staff. There is a clear child protection policy in place for the staff to follow and this contains clear guidance with regards to reporting issues of concern and how to respond to disclosures by children. All members of staff have child protection training as part of their induction and the senior members of staff ensure that everyone receives refresher training and reminders about their role and obligations. This training includes all adults who work in the school, including maintenance staff, catering staff, domestic staff and teachers. The level of awareness about child protection issues and the clear messages given about adults' responsibilities, ensure that there is an excellent commitment to keep the children safe from abuse.

Boarders are very clear as to what behaviour is expected from them. Sanctions used at the school are outlined in the behaviour management policy. Disciplinary measures are seen as an opportunity for students to discuss and address their behaviour rather than being seen as a punishment. There is a designated record if a sanction is of a more serious nature. Sanctions imposed in the houses are not recorded in the same manner; a separate record is kept in one house while the record of sanctions is kept in the daily log in another. The school celebrates

achievements and good behaviour by acknowledging this in school assemblies, with younger pupils being rewarded with a small gift after a visit to the headteacher. Behaviour is observed to be very good, with boarders showing civility and respect for each other as well as to visitors and members of staff.

Boarders have numerous opportunities to voice their opinions and complaints. It is clear that most of them are confident to express their views. This means that any complaints or issues can be passed on to various members of staff, including the houseparents and the headteacher. Complaints and comments are responded to and feedback from boarders confirms that their views are taken seriously and acknowledged. Complaints from parents are seen to be dealt with appropriately.

Boarders and staff alike are protected from risks to their safety and well-being. A robust and comprehensive programme of risk assessment identifies and addresses any known or perceived dangers. Such risk assessments are regularly reviewed and when necessary, amended. The boarders know which areas of the school are out of bounds. Security is maintained by having external closed circuit cameras and coded locks to boarding houses. Members of staff are also aware of their responsibilities to be aware of security issues such as ensuring doors are kept closed and to be aware of who is visiting each boarding house.

Trips away from the school site are the subject of robust and individualised risk assessments. These risk assessments are not only completed by the member of staff responsible for the trip or activity but are checked and endorsed by the headteacher.

Records confirm that frequent testing of fire equipment and alarms is carried out and that fire drills occur regularly in both daylight and at night. An inspection of the premises was carried out by the fire service in 2008 and this found all the systems in place for fire safety to be satisfactory. A rolling programme of refurbishment has also improved the effectiveness of fire doors. Fire risk assessments are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that all measures to protect boarders and staff and to prevent fire, are appropriate.

Boarders have their privacy respected. They are able to shower, wash and change privately and staff supervision is discreet. Members of staff always knock before entering rooms. Boarders are able to make telephone calls in private and sensitive information is stored securely.

The school operates a rigorous and robust recruitment process which ensures that all adults working in the school in whatever role are subject to references and a Criminal Records Bureau check. The headteacher oversees the compilation of detailed and thorough staff records and telephones referees to ensure their veracity.

Systems in place to protect boarders are detailed, rigorous and subject to regular scrutiny and review. This ensures that their safety and well-being are treated as paramount.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Free time for boarders is seen as a valuable resource. They all work hard during the day, balancing their academic and musical timetables. Boarders are given an opportunity in the evenings and at weekends to participate in a number of activities such as swimming, outings, board games,

playing on computers, television and socialising with each other. 'We don't get bored, there's always something to do or someone to speak to' was a comment made.

While the school is a specialist school and boarders are musically extremely talented, there is an understanding and emphasis embedded in the culture that the boarders are there to be developed musically, academically and socially. An excellent balance is maintained, with close staff oversight, that ensures that the boarders do have time to relax and to balance the pressures that they experience. Excellent multidisciplinary liaison, between teaching staff, music staff, houseparents and medical staff, ensures that everyone is aware of the pressure each pupil is under and whether they need extra support. Each boarder has an individual timetable. These can be adjusted if particular pressures or difficulties are identified.

The small size of the school ensures that those children who for various reasons are struggling to 'fit in' are supported and monitored so that they do not become isolated. Each boarder's well-being is closely monitored. There are various members of staff who monitor them as well as provide an outlet for boarders to speak to. Specialist external support can also be arranged if needed. A great deal of effort is put into the process of ensuring that boarders feel supported and that no issue is too minor to discuss.

The school admits boarders from across the world. This aspect of school life is seen as one of the strengths of the school, especially by the boarders themselves. One boarder commented that 'it's great being with friends from all over the world.' There is no discriminatory practice and boarders feel that their backgrounds and cultures are respected and enjoyed. Children from different religious backgrounds are given the opportunity to attend religious ceremonies and the school facilitates this.

While the school is non denominational, different religious and cultural events are discussed in the school assemblies. An opportunity for reflection and meditation is also included as part of the morning assemblies.

The support offered to the children and opportunities that they have at the school are of an outstanding quality.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders can voice their opinions and feelings about how they are being cared for in a number of different fora. They value the systems operated in the school as they have managed to influence changes in personal study time and personal timetables. Boarders feel listened to and they feel their opinions are respected.

Boarders are also able to approach a number of individuals about any issues in less formal settings, such as informal chats with houseparents, tutors, teachers (both musical and academic), the matron and the headteacher

Boarders are able to contact parents and loved ones via their own mobile telephones, by using the school's landline and by email. Boarders whose families live abroad and in different time zones are allowed to telephone their parents at times that are convenient to them and their families. One of the houses has a selection of wall clocks which show what the time differences

are in each of the countries that the boarders come from. It is clear that the school values the boarders' need to be in contact with their loved ones.

The process of inducting new boarders is sensitive and nurturing, especially for the younger children. All new boarders are given a handbook before they arrive at the school. The handbook describes what they are to expect at the school, the routines and rules as well as what support is available to them if they need it. New boarders will have previously had a 'three day taster' experience of boarding as part of the assessment of their skills and to see if the school is suitable to meet their needs and aspirations. Once they are at the school each new boarder is assigned a mentor who is an established boarder and who is designated to support them until they have settled in. There is a strong ethos and sense of community in the school which ensures that all boarders look out for each other and that individuals needing support are quickly identified.

The children at the school have ready access to the outside world. They all have access to television, newspapers, email and regular outings into the community.

It is clear that the views of the children are valued and listened to and that the relationships between the staff and boarders ensure that respect and tolerance are key values in the school.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders are able to store possessions securely. Each boarder has access to a secure locker and valuable items can be given to members of staff for safekeeping.

Boarders are able to personalise their rooms with posters and pictures. Rooms are warm and comfortable. There is an active rolling refurbishment programme for improvement of the boarding areas; this includes redecoration and replacement of windows and doors. A significant further example of refurbishment and improvement is the introduction of a newly furnished common room area in Middle Block. Any maintenance issues are notified to the estate manager and addressed promptly. There are ample toilets and showers for boarders to use in privacy.

Overall, the accommodation provided to children who board is clean, comfortable and of a good standard.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school has a very well presented and attractive prospectus which clearly outlines the ethos and what boarders and parents can expect. All the boarders have a handbook which is also very clear as to what living at the school entails, including the routines, rules and systems. Additionally, there is an accessible website which describes what the school provides as well as giving information on the very significant history attached to the school, its traditions and values.

There is a clear management structure in the school. The headteacher provides strong, well-organised leadership and is in turn supported by experienced senior members of staff who deputise for him when required. The governing body is actively involved in monitoring the well-being and good reputation of the school and provides advice and guidance from individuals

who have a broad range of expertise and knowledge. Governors visit and meet with boarders on a regular basis.

The boarding areas are spread about in an older house and a more modern purpose-built accommodation area. While there are differences in the styles and presentation of the boarding areas, standards of accommodation are similar.

Staffing levels in boarding areas ensure that boarders have access and support if they need it. Additionally, a number of staff live on site and are available for further support if needed. Supervision of boarders is set at a level commensurate with their abilities and maturity, younger boarders receiving a higher level of supervision in comparison to older and more independent boarders.

The safety of the boarders is maintained by having a robust risk assessment process which is checked by those responsible for the boarding area, the member of staff responsible for health and safety issues and the headteacher. All members of staff liaise with each other on an informal and formal basis. The small size of the school means that communication is achieved quickly and efficiently. This is underpinned by having regular meetings involving all members of staff which discuss each child, their progress and any issues of note.

The headteacher regularly examines key records such as risk assessments, incident and accident records, daily logs from the boarding houses, major punishments, staff recruitment, and records kept on pupils' achievement and progress.

There is a comprehensive staff handbook which outlines policies and guidance with regards to boarding and the welfare of children in the school. New members of staff have a clear induction process which involves training in child protection and places emphasis on duties of care and supervision of boarders. The school policies outline who is responsible for reviewing staff performance and training and this is also outlined in each member of staff's job description.

The level of communication between all members of staff in the school is excellent. Each boarder's needs, concerns and idiosyncrasies are known to the staff. The staff team is managed and supported by a senior management team that is experienced and knowledgeable, and provides excellent oversight of the running of the school.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The different backgrounds of the children living in the school are celebrated and enjoyed and seen as an opportunity to learn about each other. All the boarders are recognised as being gifted and talented musicians; additionally, each boarder's individuality is acknowledged and valued, whether this be a cultural or religious difference. The acknowledgement of the importance of difference and how this can enrich everyone's experience is embedded in the school. This is achieved through academic learning in the school curriculum, the varied menu, celebrating and acknowledging different religious festivals and by giving children from different backgrounds and cultures the chance to work and socialise together.

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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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

- ensure that all sanctions are recorded in line with the school's policy on this matter. (NMS 4.1)