

St. Mary's Prep School

School Care Accommodation Service

St. Mary's School
Abbey Park
Melrose
TD6 9LN

Telephone: 01896 822 517

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
6 February 2025

Service provided by:
St. Mary's School, Melrose

Service provider number:
SP2003003590

Service no:
CS2005110882

About the service

St. Mary's School is an independent, co-educational, day and boarding preparatory school located in Melrose. The School Care Accommodation service is registered to care for a maximum of 37 pupils at any one time. The service operates from two houses on the main campus: Main House - caring for a maximum of 24 children New Buccleuch House - caring for a maximum of 13 children. The service operates during term time. Children at St. Mary's may board from aged 7 (Form 3) within a flexi-boarding model, meaning that parents and children can choose when they want to board.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 4 February 2024 between 12:30 and 18:00, 5 February 2024 between 09:00 and 19:00 and 6 February 2024 between 09:00 and 15:00. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service, we:

- spoke with 21 children, and reviewed 85 completed questionnaires;
- spoke with 12 staff, managers and support staff and reviewed 2 completed questionnaires;
- reviewed 24 parent/carer questionnaires;
- spoke with a member of the Board of Governors
- observed practice, the environment and daily life; and
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Children were happy, relaxed and having fun with their school friends
- Children were respectful and supportive of each other
- Staff provided very good role modelling by being kind, sensitive and respectful
- The culture in boarding was inclusive and the flexi boarding model supported families
- Care plans could provide better evidence of the work and strategies used to support children
- Medication processes could be improved
- Staff recruitment processes could be improved

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

An evaluation of very good was awarded to this key question, as significant strengths were identified that supported positive outcomes for children.

Children were relaxed and comfortable as staff were caring and sensitive towards them. This supported trusting relationships and helped children feel emotionally and physically safe.

Staff knew the children well, meaning they could respond promptly to any changes in presentation, providing support and offering comfort when required.

Staff had a good knowledge of child protection procedures and any concerns had been responded to promptly and effectively. The child protection policy was clear and provided good direction for staff.

Consistent care and support ensured children's emotional and physical wellbeing was tended to. This was assisted by effective communication between boarding staff. The school had developed a care planning template, which they used for medical needs. However, further developments were required to establish a pathway and thresholds for children who may require additional emotional, social or behavioural support.

Clear procedures for addressing bullying were in place and we did not find any instances of bullying. Proactive measures, such as the 'girls on board' initiative was utilised to encourage empathy and kindness, and promote a shared language across students, teachers and parents.

Children felt well listened to and we heard examples of where feedback from children and parents were utilised to make changes. High levels of respect between children, and staff ensured an open culture where children's voices were at the centre of their care.

The boarding environment was of a very high standard, offering welcoming and cosy spaces for children. Children's bedrooms were warm, comfortable and some were personalised to their tastes.

Physical and mental health was prioritised with a focus on outdoor activity and exercise as well as healthy diet and attention to personal wellbeing. Staff were conscious of the children's moods and demeanour and could identify when a child was not quite themselves, sensitively intervening and helping children to find ways to manage their emotions.

Systems for administering medication did not meet current best practice guidance. We have made an area for improvement about this. (See Area for Improvement 1).

Meals were tasty and wholesome and all the children ate well. The staff serving food had a very good rapport with the children. The children spoke about changes made to improve breakfast options and having a snack after school.

Age-appropriate emotional regulation and social skills were reinforced through clear expectations, responsibility and modelling from the boarding staff. This supported children when moving to higher education where they may be boarding full time in the future.

Successful communication between boarding staff and education staff ensured a holistic approach to

achievement. Boarding staff made efforts to ensure prep time was appealing and motivating for students, cultivating interest and promoting educational attainment.

Staff were available in sufficient numbers and with appropriate skills to meet the needs of the children. The school management team should develop further knowledge of safer staffing legislation, to ensure that all appropriate staffing checks are carried out, and all required paperwork is held and available for inspection. (See area for improvement 2).

Areas for improvement

1. In order to ensure that medication administration is in line with current best practice and children receive medication safely, the provider should review the medication process to establish records which provide the ability to audit the count of medication. Medication administration should be audited regularly to identify and address any discrepancies.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with;
Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that "Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective". (HSCS 1.24)

And

Practice guidance; Professional guidance on the safe and secure handling of medicines

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/resources/browse-all-resources/professional-guidance-on-the-safe-and-secure-handling-of-medicines/>

2. In order to ensure children are cared for safely by competent and approved staff, the provider should update recruitment practice to include retention of documents supporting safe recruitment, such as, though not exclusively, person specifications, application forms, interview schedules and references for any new post. They should also ensure that staff are registered with the appropriate professional body within the appropriate timeframes and that professional codes of practice are followed.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with;

Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that "I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on practice and follow their professional and organisational codes.(HSCS 3.14)

And

Practice guidance; Safer recruitment through better recruitment

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/resources/safer-recruitment-through-better-recruitment/>

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life	5 - Very Good

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