

Royal Grammar School

Royal Grammar School, Amersham Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP13 6QT

Inspection dates	14/03/2017 to 16/03/2017	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Good	2

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is outstanding because

- 'It is impossible to express how happy I am with the progress made by both of them. Excellent facilities, excellent teaching and a boarding house that is home from home.' This is one of the many positive comments from parents. This was fully reflected during the inspection.
- There are significant strengths in the care provided. Young people receive excellent levels of care, which enable them to make significant progress in their educational, social and personal development.
- Young people said that they develop in their confidence, tolerance and maturity as a result of the boarding experience. They thrive in the environment and were described as 'blossoming' by their parents.
- An ethos of mutual respect is seen throughout the school environment and, in particular, in the structure of everyday life in the boarding community.
- Staff knowledge of the young people is excellent. They are able to clearly recognise when young people require additional support and can describe particular vulnerabilities.
- An extensive enrichment programme ensures that all young people participate in a range of activities that broaden their horizons. These experiences enable the young people to mature, flourish and leave the school with the confidence to succeed.
- Safeguarding is central to all decisions made in the school. Parents commented positively on boarding and they feel that their children are kept safe. Young people feel that staff are proactive in keeping them safe.
- Young people feel that they receive excellent care and that they are part of a

boarding family. There are excellent relationships between young people and the staff who care for them. These relationships are nurturing, trusting and extremely positive.

- Leadership of the boarding provision is strong, and the members of the senior leadership team constantly challenge themselves to ensure that they always move forward.
- Staff, parents and young people highlighted boarding as an area of distinction, which is at the heart of the school.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all records are kept under review and monitored. This specifically refers to the staff training supervision records.
- Incorporate the student voice fully into the guide to boarding.
- Ensure that there is oversight of policies so they are updated in line with current legislation.

Information about this inspection

The notice given to schools is a minimum of one hour before the inspection team arrives. Ofsted carried out this inspection with two hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of boarding practice over two evenings; informal and formal group and individual meetings with boarders; informal discussion during shared meals; meetings and discussions with the headteacher, the head of boarding and the deputy head of school, boarding staff, three members of the governing body (the chair, safeguarding governor and governor with responsibility for boarding), the matron and other staff. In addition, discussions were held with parents; there was contact with the local statutory safeguarding authority; a tour of the accommodation was conducted; a wide range of documentation was scrutinised; and responses on Parent View were reviewed.

Inspection team

Emeline Evans

Lead social care inspector

Melissa McMillan

Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The Royal Grammar School is a selective maintained school with academy status, for boys aged 11–19 years. There are approximately 1,379 pupils. The boarding house on site can accommodate 70 boarders. At the time of this inspection, there were 67 on roll. The school is located in High Wycombe.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Parents and young people explicitly describe the positive impact that the boarding provision has had on young people's development. Staff, parents and young people highlight boarding as an area of distinction in the school. Young people make academic progress and develop emotionally and socially. Young people spoken to feel that this is as a result of their experience of boarding at the school. Comments from parents are overwhelmingly positive, for example, 'In the space of eight months of boarding, my son has developed exceptionally not only with regards to his academic studies but, more importantly, with regards to his maturity, confidence and sociability.' One young person spoken with, who has recently left the boarding provision, said that he could not praise it enough. He described how he feels so much more independent, confident and ready for adult life. He believes that this is due to the experiences offered during his time at the school.

Staff knowledge of the young people is excellent. They know young people's vulnerabilities and are able to recognise when young people require additional support. Young people described the boarding staff as brilliant, caring and supportive. Young people really enjoy the relationships that they have with staff and the support that is constantly available. Parents speak very positively about boarding staff: 'I cannot praise the boarding environment and staff highly enough.' As the boarding staff are also teachers in the school, they are able to provide additional coaching when required. This has resulted in academic achievement and attainment being considerably higher for those who board at the school. A parent stated, 'My child receives excellent care in the boarding house. It is a well-disciplined but nurturing environment where the boys are given the opportunity to shine. The boarding experience has greatly enhanced my son's enjoyment of school.' This was clearly seen in practice, as young people relish the opportunity to be part of this boarding community.

The ethos of the boarding house is to promote the notion of developing the whole person. Young people are encouraged and supported to develop independence, confidence and self-esteem alongside progress in their learning. An extensive enrichment programme ensures that all young people participate in a wide range of activities that broaden their horizons. These range from volunteering work in the community to mentoring other young people. These experiences enable the young people to mature, flourish and leave the school with the confidence to succeed.

Boarding is managed and organised to a high standard. A strong and focused leadership team encourages the boarding community to be the best it can be. The aims of boarding are clearly identified and implemented in practice.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Parents are very confident in the boarding team and the difference that it makes to the lives of their children. They describe it as a 'boarding family', and this is demonstrated in the positive regard that young people hold for each other, the staff and the sense of belonging that the young people describe.

Young people's individual needs are well understood by staff and clearly reflected in their welfare plans. Welfare plans are developed to a very high standard. The boarding tutors are fully aware of the content of the plans, and strategies are consistent. Regular reviews take place to ensure that they are still appropriate, and young people's views are fully reflected in their reviews. Mentoring and the accessibility of staff also contribute to the high level of support offered.

Induction arrangements are strong, and there is excellent communication between all professionals prior to young people starting to board. Young people are well prepared for this new venture. Parents really appreciate the support that they receive during this time and when their child starts to board. Staff promote excellent communication with parents throughout their child's time in boarding, which reassures both them and their children. Young people said that they were made to feel very welcome when they joined the school, with initiatives such as the buddy system and mentoring providing an excellent peer support network. The guide to boarding has been enhanced since the last inspection and, although comprehensive and factual, could benefit from being more child focused with the student voice fully incorporated.

Young people are eager to make the most of all the opportunities on offer. The excellent range and quality of extra-curricular pastimes focus on a considerable number of leisure activities and equally on personal development and fulfilment. Alongside enjoying an abundance of sporting options, young people are enabled to take on roles of responsibility. Parents reflect that this integration enables their child to become 'well rounded students'. Young people stated that they feel extremely fortunate to be able to have the experiences of so many activities, a number of which they have not previously tried prior to starting at the school. Young people feel that these opportunities have really broadened their interests.

A new matron has very recently been appointed. She is a registered nurse and is responsible for healthcare arrangements across the whole school. She is experienced and is planning to develop her role further. Medicines are stored and administered safely, ensuring that young people's medication needs are well met. Young people are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and receive age-appropriate advice and guidance. Excellent support, matched with good links with external healthcare agencies, ensures that young people have their emotional needs and well-being extremely well met.

The boarding accommodation is of a very high standard, and young people are able to personalise their own spaces. It is very well maintained and comfortable. Young people have access to various areas in which to either socialise or have time on their own. Menus are balanced, and food is of a very good standard. Heathy choices are available. Student views are actively sought through the student committee in order to develop menus.

The student voice is fully incorporated into boarding life, and this has been further developed since the last inspection. Young people's views are expressed through various councils in operation, and young people can speak to members of staff on an individual basis. Young people spoken to during this inspection all feel listened to and believe that their views make a difference to how boarding is run.

The arrangements for safeguarding are excellent. Although very few referrals have been made to external professionals, there is no complacency. Safeguarding is a priority in all areas of the school. Boarding staff are extremely confident in their responsibilities in this area, are alert to potential risks and take prompt action in response to any concerns. There is good communication between all the teams to ensure that particular vulnerabilities are understood. There is effective partnership working with other agencies and parents to ensure the safety of all young people and staff. During the inspection, there was no hesitation from young people when asked if they feel safe. All spoken to said that they feel extremely safe and some stated that this is due to having staff around to talk to and intervene if necessary. There are excellent links between senior staff and the safeguarding governor who has a wealth of experience and excellent oversight of the procedures and policies. There are open relationships with other professionals. The designated safeguarding lead is part of external safeguarding forums and cascades information to staff; this enables all to keep up to date with safeguarding matters and to evaluate their own practice. There is a culture of seeking constantly to improve practice and to learn from others.

Approaches to assessing the risks that young people may face, and indeed reducing them, are exceptional. Information from previous schools is sought and used to inform planning arrangements, both inside and outside of the school. Risks are very well understood and clearly considered, and the work with the necessary professionals is evident. The safeguarding lead strongly advocates to ensure that all the young people have the necessary support and professional involvement.

There is a strong approach to behaviour management, which enables young people to develop constructive ways in which to address any issues of conflict. Young people understand the boundaries and rules in place to ensure that everyone is treated fairly. Young people are supportive to each other and have expectations that others will be tolerant and respectful. Such an approach has been very successful in bringing about nurturing relationships. The few incidents that have occurred are recorded in detail and reviewed, to consider trends or patterns. Staff amend strategies used in response to any emerging issues. A parent commented, 'My son can be challenging at times, but the boarding staff take this in their stride and make the environment vibrant and at the same time relaxing for the boys.' Bullying is not reported as a concern by the young people spoken with, and they said that staff intervene quickly if there are any concerns. The young people develop good friendships and enjoy each other's company. One young person said, 'I enjoy being with all my friends, and there are people around all the time who help me.' Young people said that sanctions are fair and they understand why they are given and staff talk with them rather than using sanctions. There is a focus on rewarding positive behaviours. A very low number of major sanctions have been given and only one is recorded. Staff focus on de-escalating situations and, through the relationships formed, staff are aware of when to intervene. Success is celebrated and achievements are the focus of conversations with the young people. They feel valued and confident in their successes.

An excellent approach is taken regarding the safety of boarding provision. Fire precautions and fire equipment are checked on a regular basis. Health and safety are well managed and routine maintenance is carried out promptly. Servicing is timely and meets requirements. Young people stated that any damage is fixed very quickly, and this

results in their feeling comfortable in the boarding house. The health, safety and welfare of young people are considered at all times by the senior leadership team, and young people are fully involved in this process.

Staff recruitment is sound and is in line with legislation. New reference forms have been introduced, and recruitment processes have been developed since the last inspection. Those involved in recruitment have completed safer recruitment training.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

Boarding is managed to a high standard. The leadership team encourages the boarding provision to be seen as something to be proud of. The aims of boarding are clearly identified. Boarding is central to the ethos of school life. Parents spoke extremely positively about the management of boarding and, in particular, the head of boarding. Comments include, 'The most exceptional head of house and both my sons respect and admire him hugely', and 'The boarding teachers are truly wonderful, led by an outstanding, calm, caring and listening head of boarding.' All the staff team members, including those of the senior leadership team, are inspirational and promote positive experiences for all boarders to support them in reaching their full potential.

The senior leadership team uses peer reviews and a range of other resources, including research, to constantly review the boarding practice. There is a culture of continuous improvement, which is evident in practice and through discussions with the staff team. However, records of staff training and supervision are absent. This hampers management oversight of these areas. Appraisal systems are in place, which demonstrate targets being set for the staff. The leadership team recognises the need to develop some of the monitoring practices. In addition, although the majority of policies have been updated, there is sometimes a delay in updating policies to reflect new legislation. However, staff understanding in these areas is strong, and staff are very aware of the policies in operation and of when legislation has changed.

Young people are cared for by a number of experienced and dedicated staff who share the school's aspirations for young people to make exceptional progress. Staff are deployed, and students are involved in some activities. A good approach to and focus on developing and training staff is in place. This ensures their professional development and enables them to care for young people extremely well. Staff said that they receive excellent guidance and feel motivated to be part of such a caring and energetic team.

Complaints processes are followed and managed effectively. All complaints, concerns or grumbles have been taken seriously, and learning is evident from them. Young people are able to make suggestions, and if there are any concerns all young people spoken to said that these are well responded to. Good communication is maintained between the school, parents and young people.

Governance of the school, including the boarding provision, is strong, and governors have a wide range of skills. Governors have a strong presence in the school. They have an excellent understanding of their roles, and challenge the leadership team when necessary. Governors also visit boarding regularly to enable them to gain views of the young people.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceed the standard of good and result in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding, and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services, which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children's and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean that children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	136484
Social care unique reference number	SC049244
DfE registration number	

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Boarding school
Number of boarders on roll	67
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to18
Headteacher	Mr Phillip Wayne
Date of previous boarding inspection	19–21 March 2013
Telephone number	01494 524955
Email address	dmc@rgshw.com

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