

# Duke Of York's Royal Military School

Duke of Yorks Royal Military School, Guston, DOVER, Kent, CT15 5EQ

## Inspection dates

13/02/2013 to 14/02/2013

## Reason for inspection

Ofsted undertook an emergency unannounced inspection following concerns received about the care of boarders at the school. In summary, the concerns related to serious welfare incidents, poor recruitment practices, poor nursing provision, inadequate supervision levels and unsatisfactory boarding accommodation

## Conclusions

This inspection was completed over two days by two inspectors. Senior staff including the Executive Principal and head of boarding were interviewed as well as other boarding team members, including the lead nurse, human resources manager, house masters and a group of matrons. A general tour of the whole school site was undertaken which included more detailed visits to four of the boarding houses, the health centre and the dining hall. Three separate groups of boarders, representing Juniors, Middle Years and Senior students met with the inspectors and gave their views and opinions about the boarding provision. Key records, with regards to health and welfare provision, complaints, staff training and recruitment were scrutinised.

There was a serious bullying incident in May 2011 resulting in an internal inquiry by the governing body. This uncovered wider concerns regarding the safeguarding practices at the school. As a result, the school has undergone significant personnel changes with the departure of 16 staff, including members of the senior management team.

In the summer of 2012, a new senior leadership team took over and in September 2012 there were two serious welfare incidents affecting a particular year group of boarders. This has resulted in a robust review of welfare policies and procedures being undertaken by the new senior leadership team. The boarding staff are vigilant in reporting welfare concerns; daily record books are effectively used to monitor individual boarders' well-being and any worries are swiftly communicated throughout the school.

The resignations of staff led to staffing shortages in the medical centre. The impact of a diluted nursing provision has negatively affected the formal induction processes for newly appointed house matrons and some gaps are noted with regards to communication systems between the health centre and the boarding houses. The school is aware of these shortfalls and has satisfactory plans in place to reduce any risks to the well-being of the boarders. In order to fully meet the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, the school's own health care procedures need to be formally embedded within the induction programmes for new staff to ensure protocols are diligently followed, including accurate record keeping.

A review of the school's historic recruitment practice was also undertaken by the new senior leadership team. Appropriate remedial action has addressed concerns raised from this review. The school has consulted with the LADO but has not always kept them informed of the outcomes of its subsequent actions. In the event of individual staff members leaving the school, where there are concerns about their practice, the school should refer such concerns to the relevant external agencies, in line with current legislative guidance. Records seen demonstrate that current recruitment practice is diligent and robust and that boarders are effectively safeguarded.

Boarders are particularly positive about the relationships they enjoy with the adults around them and with each other. Older boarders talk of 'an extreme change in consultation processes with us.' They describe the senior leadership team as inclusive, approachable and committed to ensuring a safe and happy environment. Younger boarders say the boarding teams are stricter and enforce more rules this term. They view this positively and say that bullying isn't tolerated and this makes them feel safe.

Boarders confirm they are able to maintain contact with their family members and friends. Those with parents living overseas describe some difficulties relating to differing time zones. However, they further cite e-mail, mobile phones, letter -writing and Skype as good examples of keeping in touch. Although appropriate rules are implemented regarding the use of mobiles after bed-time, Junior boarders understand such boundaries. They also confirm that in the event of an emergency call being necessary, they can have access to the House Master's telephone.

A new catering and cleaning provider was commissioned in January 2013. Boarders are very positive about this change. Satisfaction levels with regards to the quality, choice and quantity of the meals provided by the school have improved this term. Further planned changes include the redesign of the dining hall servery.

Planned refurbishment of the whole school site is continuing in line with the findings of the school's two previous welfare inspections of 2008 and 2011. The new Senior house is now complete and the Junior re-build is well underway. Existing boarding houses are poorer by comparison. However, these too are subject to planned improvements. They are decorated and furnished in line with boarders' wishes, for example, pool tables in boys' houses and greater emphasis upon bathroom décor in the girls' provision. All boarders are provided with lockable storage although many choose not to use it. Laundering arrangements in each house are understood by the boarders. Current systems do work; however, the major refurbishment plan includes a new laundry build for the whole school. The rationale is to remove this task from the matrons to give them more time to spend directly with the boarders.

Supervision levels are generally satisfactory outside of the school day. Boarding staff know the whereabouts of the boarders and their general safety is assured. There are times however, when specific individual activities may be hindered due to thinner staffing levels and lots of sporting activities, particularly at weekends. To fully meet the National Minimum Standards for Boarding schools, the school should review its staffing availability at these key times.

Recent policy changes have been made to the school's own complaint's procedure. Systems and processes are clear and appropriate and the school engages with an external consultant where necessary, to provide an independent view on the school's handling of complaints.

Boarders say they feel safe at school. They speak positively about security arrangements which include signing in and out, clear rules about where they can and cannot go and the newly installed CCTV system. As a result, boarders are adequately protected. Staff members understand the school's own missing person's procedure and describe an excellent relationship with the local police.

The senior leadership team understands its own strengths and weaknesses and there are preliminary indications that the current leadership is improving the welfare provision at the school. There are clear development plans which are being implemented but there is still some way to go to ensure these are fully implemented or embedded.

## **National minimum standards**

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools.

- The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 11)
- Schools operate safe recruitment procedures and vet staff in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards') issued by the Secretary of State. (NMS 14.1)
- The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time are sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved. (NMS 15.3)
- The school has and implements appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, dealing with medical emergencies and the use of household remedies. (NMS 3.1)

## Inspection team

Sophie Wood

Lead social care inspector

Tola Akinde-Hummel

Social care inspector

## Information about this school

The Duke of York's Royal Military School, is an Academy with Military Traditions. It is situated within 150 acres of parkland, approximately two miles north of Dover.

The school can be traced back to 1801 when it was governed by a Board of Commissioners, appointed by Her Majesty The Queen. Today the Governors come from a wide variety of backgrounds in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) guidelines to help fulfil the vision of the Academy.

The school was formally funded by the Ministry of Defence, offering full boarding facilities to boys and girls aged between 11 and 18 years whose parents had or were serving in the Armed Forces. The age range and co-educational aspects remain unchanged.

In September 2010 the school became an Academy, and as such it is now open to all prospective pupils who fulfil the boarding suitability requirement and who wish to attend a full boarding school with military traditions. Prospective pupils need not come from a military background.

According to its prospectus, the school aims to, "encourage pupils to develop as confident, accomplished individuals as well as thoughtful and caring members of a wider community".

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136177
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC023666
<b>DfE registration number</b>	886/6918

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Russell
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	07/03/2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01304 245025
<b>Email address</b>	headmaster@doyrms.com

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