

Royal Grammar School

Royal Grammar School, Amersham Road, HIGH WYCOMBE, Buckinghamshire, HP13 6QT

Inspection dates 19/03/2013 to 21/03/2013

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for boarders	Outstanding	1
Quality of boarding provision and care	Outstanding	1
Boarders' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of boarding	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is outstanding because

- The boarding provision is extremely well organised and managed. There is a strong commitment to improvement through evaluation and review. Parents and boarders are very satisfied with boarding.
- The safety and welfare of boarders is paramount. The procedures are robust and effectively implemented so that boarders are cared for in a safe environment by people assessed as suitable. There is an open culture to work with other agencies. The risk assessment framework achieves a balance of safety without compromising age-appropriate challenges for boarders.
- All staff involved with boarding work collaboratively for the benefit of boarders. Boarders are encouraged to aim high with the support of staff who have great aspirations for each pupil.
- The boarding staff continually strive to improve the provision and engage with boarders to inform its development. Consultation with boarders is embedded in daily boarding life and boarders welcome how their contributions are valued.
- The behaviour of boarders is exemplary. The strength of relationships with boarding staff and mutual respect contribute to this happy safe environment where boarders succeed in their academic and social development.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced at 9.00am on 19 March 2013 and commenced at 12.30pm on the same day. Inspection activities carried out included discussions with boarders, boarding staff, school nurse, school governor, designated person for child protection, catering staff, maintenance staff and key members of the senior management team. Key boarding documents and policies were reviewed, as was the self assessment document for boarding. Meals were sampled, activities observed and a tour of the boarding house took place. No information was available from on-line surveys by boarders, despite the school having submitted them. Parents commented through Parent View.

Inspection team

Clare Davies

Lead 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 1360 pupils, the boarding house on site can accommodate 70 boarders. The school is located in High Wycombe.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- review the boarders' handbook to ensure it reflects this boarding provision.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for boarders

Outstanding

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding. Parents report very high levels of satisfaction and all would recommend this boarding provision. Boarders are equally enthusiastic and enjoy the opportunities that boarding provides. Boarding staff can readily provide examples of how boarders have grown in confidence and developed socially and academically. Staff say boarding provides a well-rounded experience. Boarders say that the boarding environment supports them with their studies, the excellent grades and exam results demonstrate their success.

Boarders benefit from exceptionally good quality relationships with experienced and committed staff members. There are some very good relationships amongst each other and older boarders act as brothers to the junior boarders, supporting them and looking out for them. There is a sense of community and belonging to the boarding house, this is expressed by staff as well with support staff describing the provision 'like a family'.

Boarders are given opportunities to be trusted and demonstrate their ability to manage situations. Boarders respond well to this and take an active role with the running and development of the boarding house. Rules are minimal and considered fair by boarders. Any misuse of trust results in losing it temporarily and possibly the loss of some privileges. There is a lot of mutual respect between boarders and staff and between the boarders themselves. Boarders support and help one another and reports are rare of any possessions going missing.

Boarders receive excellent care and support in relation to their health needs. Medication can be self-administered where the nurse has assessed that a boarder has the competence to do so safely. This assists with boarders' independence and preparation for leaving school and perhaps moving on to university. Boarders enjoy the food provided and engage with catering staff to provide feedback and make requests. Boarders are able to make snacks in the common room areas and have access to more facilities as they progress from the junior common room to the senior one and finally the kitchen area for the sixth form.

The benefits of boarding are listed as; excellent activities, no need to travel to school, staff support with studies, and you can be with your friends. Senior boarders report that boarding provides structure to their learning and avoids the distractions that may be present at home. One boarder describes the diversity of activities by saying, 'there is everything for everyone'. The structure of the day enables boarders to have some free time and take part in activities after school before settling down to some study time in the evening. Boarders report that this timetable is balanced well to meet their needs.

The head of boarding ensures that boarders are actively involved in the running of the boarding house. This extends from completing daily chores in the common rooms to running a boarders council and food council. Boarders have excellent opportunities for leadership and these are not restricted to sixth formers. An elected representative from each year group sit on the councils, boarders take on the role of a buddy, mentor, activity leader or monitor of their own peer group. Formal appointments of leadership are awarded as prefects and some boarders gain qualifications through sports coaching and the Duke of Edinburgh award.

Quality of boarding provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the boarding provision is outstanding. A key strength is the commitment and dedication of all staff who place the wellbeing of boarders at the centre of their practice. Boarders benefit from pastoral support of a very high standard. Staff with different roles work collaboratively knowing they are all contributing to the quality of care. This ensures that boarders

benefit from a joined-up approach, receiving consistent responses to support them in their social and academic progress.

The induction of new boarders is managed well with visits from boarding staff to see prospective junior boarders in their primary schools. This contributes to the assessment of suitability to be a boarder as well as providing the opportunity for new boarders to meet key staff and ask any questions. New junior boarders receive support from a 'buddy' of a similar age and a sixth form mentor; these arrangements help build relationships across the year groups. New boarders value their buddies and mentors and report that this level of support makes them feel welcome in the school. The handbook for boarders has all the key information yet lacks photographs and would benefit from a review.

To support boarders with particular needs, they may be involved with a welfare plan. These documents identify health or social issues and what action will be taken to address them. Boarders are fully involved in these plans and the strategies employed may only be required for a short period. For example, if a new boarder requires help with organisation skills, staff will provide structure and routines, enabling boarders to make good use of their school planners. The support for boarders is underpinned by excellent communication across the school.

There is an extensive range of activities for boarders to enjoy with a daily programme of events. There is a big focus on sports activities in response to boarders requests. However, there are plenty of opportunities for music, craft, drama and swimming. The school grounds and facilities offer lots to do in addition to going off site to local leisure attractions.

Boarders receive health care and medication from a qualified nurse who has a very good working relationship with health care professionals in the community. There are sound systems for the safe storage and administration of medication. The nurse and boarding staff respond well to emerging medical issues, implementing effective protocols for the safety and well-being of all boarders. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle is achieved through physical activity and a good diet. Through the school curriculum boarders are informed of matters relating to sexual health and the dangers of drug use, smoking and alcohol. Boarders with this information are supported to make safe, healthy choices.

Boarders benefit from having exclusive catering arrangements. They report how they enjoy coming back to the boarding house from school at break times and for lunch where the catering team, who are separate from the main school, provide nutritious food of a very good standard. This provision contributes to the homely and comfortable environment of the boarding house. Boarders have very good relationships with the catering staff and direct communication daily about their preferences, this is formalised through the food council. Boarders report that they are very happy with the food and when they raise an issue or make a request they feel listened to. The catering team have been awarded a five star rating by the local authority.

Boarding accommodation is of a good standard and subject to a rolling programme of refurbishment. Junior boarders share rooms with up to four boarders and the accommodation for older boarders consists of twin or single rooms, most with en-suite facilities. Support staff ensure that the accommodation is well maintained, clean and comfortable for the boarders. They take great pride in their work and in turn the boarders show respect for the support staff and their boarding house with minimal damage to property.

Boarders' safety

Outstanding

The quality of the school's arrangements to safeguard boarders is outstanding. There is a culture of openness and this attitude ensures that safety is at the heart of the operation of the school. At times the level of pastoral support has been exceptional in order to protect and support young

people.

There is excellent practice in child protection and good inter-agency working. This ensures that matters are openly shared with other agencies to ensure best practice principles are followed. All staff are fully trained in child protection and the designated person is trained in detailed safeguarding matters in order to be an effective trainer across the school. This school liaises appropriately with the local authority safeguarding team and invites comments to ensure that they are providing best practice in child protection.

The school follows Department for Education guidance on safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education. Further to this, the school applies even more stringent checks such as specific questions on safeguarding matters at interview for any prospective member of boarding staff. These robust procedures ensure that only suitable people have contact with boarders.

Boarders report that they feel safe and they recognise the systems in place to protect them. There are very low levels of any bullying and boarders report confidently that staff would intervene and stop such behaviour. The boarders receive information on how to counter bullying and take part in surveys issued by the head of boarding to establish if there are any incidents of bullying to address. Parents and boarders attend presentations on e-safety, ensuring they know how to use social media and computers appropriately. Boarding staff are able to remind boarders of the code of conduct they have all signed up to.

The head of boarding and the staff strongly promote the personal responsibility of each boarder. Through structure, consistency and support the boarding staff create an environment where rules and expectations are clearly understood and respected. This results in a secure place where boarders are happy and able to take advantage of the opportunities available to them for personal growth and development. Such an environment ensures that incidents of misbehaviour or rudeness are rare. The behaviour of boarders is exemplary, this is evidenced through their presentation, achievements and inter-personal skills with staff and each other. There are very few records of disciplinary matters, indicative of the success of this boarding provision.

Boarders aspire to receive merits from the boarding staff for a variety of efforts. The culmination of merits each half term awards the year group winners with an outing. In addition the staff select a 'boarder of the week' who has contributed in some way and worked towards their personal goals. The boarder of the week enjoys the prize of having the meal of their choice on the menu one day. Boarders respond well to these incentives and feel valued by the boarding staff.

This school has a comprehensive approach to risk assessment. Individual staff are made aware of their responsibilities to safety and assessing risk and then there is a system of monitoring by designated staff members and ultimately the governing body. This ensures sufficient levels of checks are in place to enable boarders to take reasonable risks as part of their learning and personal development. Boarders take part in adventurous activities that are well planned and managed by school staff including many opportunities to travel around the world.

There are effective systems for the detection and prevention of fire, these are regularly checked. Prompt attention to the maintenance and servicing of equipment contributes to the safe environment for boarders. The sixth form are permitted to have use of a cooker in their common room. With these privileges comes risk assessment and training. For example, the sixth form have been shown how to use the fire blanket and how to store food safely along with food hygiene practices.

The head of boarding provides outstanding leadership and management of the boarding provision, effectively supported by the resident staff, boarding tutors and support staff. Although boarders make up a small number of pupils from the whole school population the headteacher, supported by the governing body, ensures that boarding has a high profile. The headteacher is currently the chair of the State Boarding Schools Association and is therefore a strong advocate for boarding. Parents of boarders are in strong agreement with the statement 'boarding is well organised and managed effectively.'

The boarders have undertaken a review of the statement of boarding principles to ensure that they are relevant and meaningful to all boarders. This level of engagement in reviewing documentation is outstanding and reflects active participation in the development of the boarding provision.

There is a commitment to raising standards within the boarding provision and the school makes good use of self-evaluation, identifying areas for development. The recommendations from the last inspection have all been addressed. There are improvements with an increase in staffing levels at weekends and robust risk assessment in relation to fire, the boarding house and self-medication. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and approved by the governing body, this ensures the governors are fully informed of school life and aware of their accountability. Boarders and parents are aware of the complaints procedure and the school has effectively responded in a timely manner to the few complaints received. Any areas of concern are used to inform practice and drive improvement.

Boarding staff are experienced, skilled and qualified to deliver the care and supervision to boarders. The head of boarding meets with staff to review their contribution to the boarding provision in line with the school's performance management system. This ensures that they are monitored in their work and supported with any training needs. Professional development is strongly encouraged and staff have formal qualifications such as the Boarding Management Certificate.

The boarding provision values individuals and celebrates difference. This enables boarders to explore an understanding of equality and diversity through music, food, sport and festivals. To take action in thinking of others, boarders can visit older people in a care home, assist in local primary schools and take part in charity fundraising events.

Parents report that communication from the boarding team is excellent and they can easily contact the staff who care for their child. Consultation with boarders is a real strength of this boarding school and some boarders have contributed to a forum held by the Children's Rights Director. Boarders have very good relationships with staff that enables them to speak freely and air any problem of concern. Boarders recognise that they have a 'pupil voice' and that action has been taken in response to many of their suggestions and requests.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	136484
Social care unique reference number	SC049244
DfE registration number	825/5404

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	Maintained boarding school
Number of boarders on roll	70
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	11 to 19
Headteacher	Mr Roy Page
Date of previous boarding inspection	13/11/2008
Telephone number	01494 524 955

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