

Keswick School

Keswick School, Vicarage Hill, KESWICK, Cumbria, CA12 5QB

Inspection dates

02/07/2013 to 04/07/2013

Overall effectiveness

Good **2**

Outcomes for boarders Outstanding 1

Quality of boarding provision and care Outstanding 1

Boarders' safety Good 2

Leadership and management of boarding Good 2

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is good because

- The overall effectiveness of the boarding provision is good with some outstanding features. The school provides a valuable boarding experience impacting significantly on the lives of boarding pupils. Boarders make exceptional progress, grow in confidence, independence and are given extensive opportunities to realise their potential.
- Staff are very positive in their views and demonstrate energy, drive and commitment to support boarders in achieving their aspirations and preparing them for transition to their next stage of education.
- Boarders feel they receive excellent care and say they are looked after and feel they are part of a family. An obvious sense of community is further nurtured by the excellent quality of relationships between boarders and the adults who care for them.
- The boarding house is managed in a way that promotes the best interest of boarders and provides them with access to a varied programme of activities and events which promote their self confidence, self esteem and increases their self confidence. The school has made good progress and now meets all the national minimum standards for boarding schools.
- The senior management team is reflective about practice and is ambitious to drive forward improvements and quality which are already of a high standard.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

Information about this inspection

The school was contacted on the morning of day one, by the lead inspector to announce the inspection. Email notification letter, indicative timetable and letter to parent (parent view) sent to the head teacher. The inspection took place over three days with feedback provided on the afternoon of day three. There were many opportunities for boarders to pass on their views and opinions to the inspection team. A range of documentation was reviewed including responses on the Parent Web Site.

Inspection team

Anne Bannister

Lead social care inspector

Stephen Trainor

Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Keswick School a co-educational day and boarding school situated in the centre of the Lake District. It is close to a range of local amenities and transportation. Full and weekly boarding is provided for pupils between the ages of 11 to 18 years. The school provides boarding provision for 50 boarders in one boarding house. This is in a three storey property set in the school grounds adjacent to the main school buildings. Young people only share rooms with other boarders of their own gender. Bedroom accommodation is sited so that all female boarders are accommodated in separate areas from male boarders. The education provision at the school was inspected on 02/07/2011 and was awarded outstanding for overall effectiveness.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- continue to review and evaluate the health and safety policies and procedures in line with the consultant's recommendations
- continue to enhance the evaluation processes that are operational within the boarding house in order to develop a boarding house annual training and development plan
- all boarding staff to have access to training that relates to the new inspection framework and evaluation schedule

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for boarders

Outstanding

The outcome for boarders is outstanding. Staff work closely together across the school community to ensure boarders receive the support they need in relation to both personal and academic matters.

Boarders develop excellent social skills through their boarding experience and learn to compromise and get on well with others from different backgrounds. As a result, all boarders feel valued and respect one another. Boarders are positive about the care they receive. They say that, 'There is always someone there to speak to about any issues relating to school or any other worries and anxieties.' Boarders are observed to be sensitive to each other's needs. For example, in discussion about being away from home for the first time, boarders show considerable empathy, recalling how homesick some of them had initially felt and how they believed this enabled them to support each other. One boarder said, 'New boarders can see how happy I am now, and how well I am doing in school but it wasn't like that at the beginning, I was dreadfully homesick. I feel I can now support new boarders through the initial difficult period when you're away from home for the first time.'

New boarders are given an induction tailored to their individual needs and are welcomed into boarding house by existing boarders. Boarders are increasing in confidence as they have opportunities to volunteer to take on these additional responsibilities. A 'buddy' system enables boarders who are well established in the school to act as mentors for new boarders. This has positive effects for all parties, with new boarders indicating that the buddy system helps them to settle and understand the school's routines. For the 'buddies' it promotes feelings of self-confidence and responsibility to support others. All boarders spoke of the boarding experience in terms of feeling part 'of a large family'. One stated, 'Just like in a family you sometimes fall out with your brothers and sisters, we sometimes wind one another up but we do really care for each other and want each other to enjoy the boarding experience.'

Boarders increase in self-confidence as they engage in a wide range of self-chosen challenging and rewarding activities. This is made possible by the commitment of the staff team to developing boarders' interests and hobbies. Boarders have opportunities to engage in a wide range of activities such as horse riding, mountain biking and sailing, which help them develop skills and interests while also improving their self-confidence and sense of achievement. Boarders engage in fundraising activities in the local community and support chosen charities. Such opportunities ensure boarders look at the needs of the wider community and promote moral and social development.

Boarders are supported to develop social and independent living skills, problem-solving abilities, emotional well-being and the ability to think independently. Each boarder's individuality and uniqueness is celebrated and their strengths built upon in order that they develop their full potential. Boarder's opinions, both individually and as a group, are routinely sought and taken into account when developing all aspects of the care provided. This encourages them to take responsibility for decisions that affect their lives and their well-being. Through the boarding experience they grow substantially in independence and self-confidence and have a clear sense of responsibility.

Boarders are actively involved in keeping themselves fit and healthy. They have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy living. They have the knowledge to make positive choices about the type of diet and exercise which will promote their physical health and wellbeing.

Quality of boarding provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of boarding provision and care is outstanding. Positive relationships between house staff and boarders ensure all boarders feel valued and able to contribute positively to the life of the school. The ethos of the school promotes respect, self-awareness and an inclusive atmosphere. Formal systems for consultation, such as the school council and house council, allow boarders to make suggestions on ways the school can improve.

A very strong partnership between academic staff and boarding staff means boarders are able to gain the knowledge, skills, values and attributes they require to give them a strong sense of their own safety and wellbeing. These partnerships cover all elements of boarders' education, health and wellbeing. Boarders are exceptionally well supported to achieve their academic potential and extremely well prepared for further education and adulthood.

Both school and boarding staff place the well-being of individual boarders at the centre of their practice and boarders' achievements both academically and socially are celebrated. Behaviour is respectful and of a high standard. Positive behaviour is consistently promoted and rewarded. Staff are very good at managing the complex group dynamics brought about by the differences in age, gender, background, culture and nationality of the boarding population. Any arising issues are used as an opportunity to provide a social learning experience for boarders. As a result, there is a sense of community within the boarding house because boarders develop an understanding and tolerance of each other.

Boarders' health needs are very well met. Staff promote young people's individual needs in a very supportive and nurturing way. Detailed care plans, overseen by the school nurse and head of house, ensure boarders' individual needs are detailed and addressed, promoting positive outcomes in all aspects of their school life. The school nurse has strong links with local healthcare services. This means boarders have access to the right support, information and guidance to ensure their physical, emotional and psychological health needs are met on a day-to-day basis. Boarders appreciate that their views on menus are regularly sought by catering manager, who provides them with an exceptionally high quality, varied and nutritious diet.

Boarders say they are very happy with their boarding accommodation. On-going improvements to the boarding environment have significantly raised the standard of accommodation. The boarding house provides a good range of resources for boarders to ensure their needs are well catered for. Accommodation for boarders includes shared dormitories and smaller rooms. The domestic scale of the boarding house enables boarders to acquire and develop practical life skills to prepare them for further education and adult life. For example, in sixth form they participate in an independence programme that helps them to become more self-sufficient and prepares them for university life.

Boarders' safety

Good

The arrangements for safeguarding boarders' welfare are good with some outstanding features. The school gives a high priority to the safety of its boarders and teaches them how to look after their own and others' safety. Boarders report that they feel safe at school. All staff undertake regular child protection training appropriate to their role. This ensures there is a consistent approach to safeguarding throughout the school. The designated school safeguarding team is competent in their role and is known to all boarders. Therefore, boarders know exactly who to approach with concerns. Boarders recruited as house prefects also receive introductory safeguarding training. The school's practice ensures staff and boarders are fully aware of safeguarding procedures and key personnel. This prioritises boarders' welfare and safety throughout the school.

Individual care plans and risk assessments are completed and regularly reviewed. This means that risks are identified and minimised to ensure boarders can safely participate in activities, trips and events. Staff have effective and robust systems in place to ensure they know the whereabouts of boarders at all times. There have been no recorded incidents of boarders going missing. Boarders have responsibility for signing in and out of house and staff monitor these records closely. This helps ensure boarders are safe and return to the boarding house at agreed times.

Effective recruitment procedures are in place and nobody commences work until all checks required by legislation have taken place. Such checks and procedures help protect boarders from being cared for by people who may cause them harm.

Clear expectations are communicated to boarders regarding behaviour and house rules. No problems are raised by boarders or staff with regard to bullying or disrespectful behaviour. There is a culture of good behaviour and a consistent promotion of clear boundaries by boarding staff. Staff and prefects use incentives to recognise and encourage effort, kindness and helpful contribution to the boarding community. Boarders are fully aware of the behavioural expectations and of potential behavioural sanctions. Recording of sanctions is clear and monitored well by senior management. Action taken to address general behavioural issues is undertaken by staff with boarders. This is managed with an open and democratic approach and general issues relating to communal living are discussed between boarders and staff at weekly meetings. Such meetings are designed to encourage boarders to reflect on personal conduct and take responsibility for their behaviour. Boarders report the rules are fair and they feel safe and cared for in the boarding house.

In November 2012, the management team secured an independent health and safety audit of the whole site. The audit highlighted areas for development and an area where practice had not met statutory requirements. In particular there had been slippage in the annual update of fire risk assessments. The immediate implementation of an action plan in response to audit has ensured all required legislation is now adhered to. The school has an up-to-date fire safety risk assessment and other fire safety measures are in place including regular equipment checks and fire drills. All staff receive regular fire safety training. Regular safety and servicing checks are carried out to support the maintenance of a safe environment.

Fire drills are carried out regularly during boarding time. Boarders always respond to fire drills in accordance with instructions, demonstrating they know what to do in the event of a fire evacuation in order to keep themselves safely accounted for. The boarding house is secure and well maintained through prompt attention to repairs and effective maintenance. These actions ensure boarders live in a safe environment and their safety and welfare is protected.

Leadership and management of boarding

Good

The quality of leadership and management is good, although there is much strength in the new senior management of the boarding provision that includes evaluation by the new head teacher and the very new head of the boarding house. The judgment reflects an area of concern identified in relation to the schools' health and safety practice since the previous inspection in 2011. The head teacher and governors have now taken effective steps to rectify the identified weakness and to ensure that practice fully promotes the safety and wellbeing of all boarders.

A rigorous programme of self-evaluation has been implemented that is promoting a strong commitment to on-going development. The senior management team are in the process of reviewing and revising policies and procedures and when necessary challenging practice to drive improvement and benefit boarders. Action plans timetable improvements, which are well planned and implemented to promote positive outcomes for boarders.

The boarding staff team work well together, are enthusiastic and supportive of the ethos, aims and working practices developed by the school. They understand their role and responsibilities and work with the support of the head of boarding to address boarders' needs and help them achieve their potential. All boarding staff have defined responsibilities and accountability. Staff receive comprehensive induction to their roles. The head of house and senior management team monitor practice, identify training needs and provide performance review and management of staff. This contributes to ensuring that staff are effectively resourced to promote boarders' welfare and safety.

Relationships with parents are good. Feedback from surveys is positive, with parents saying their child enjoys boarding, feels safe and is well looked after. One hundred percent of parents said that the boarding provision is well managed and effectively organised. Parents say they are welcomed into the school and are able to make contact with staff easily. One parent wrote, 'My son is far more organised, has gained confidence in all areas of his life and is applying himself more positively in school. He has matured and gained social skills.' Another indicated that, 'Her (child's) personality has been allowed to flourish and she has a keen sense of responsibility and sensitivity towards younger boarders. We cannot recommend the boarding house and the school highly enough.'

Boarders say that they enjoy the boarding experience because of the good support they receive, the friendships they make and the opportunities they have to develop. Some boarders say that they are not looking forward to the long school holidays as they enjoy spending time with all of their friends in the boarding house and look forward to the range of planned weekend activities. Several boarders agree with the statement: 'I don't really look forward to the summer holidays because I'd rather be in school.'

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	136902
Social care unique reference number	SC034907
DfE registration number	909/5414

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	
Number of boarders on roll	
Gender of boarders	
Age range of boarders	
Headteacher	Mr Simon Jackson
Date of previous boarding inspection	25/01/2011
Telephone number	01768 772605
Email address	boarding@keswick.cumbria.sch.uk

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