

# Colchester Royal Grammar School

Colchester Royal Grammar School, 6 Lexden Road, COLCHESTER, CO3 3ND

**Inspection dates** 24/03/2014 to 26/03/2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>51</b>
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 experience provides boarders with exceptionally high quality care that supports their educational progress, personal development and promotes their wellbeing. Boarding adds demonstrable value, evidenced in the year on year academic achievement for boarders and their subsequent entry to high performing universities.
- Boarders are safeguarded well as a result of the routines in place, the clear expectations and the proactive approach staff take in promoting safety. They develop their independence and sense of responsibility within safe boundaries.
- Boarding is exceptionally well organised and managed; there is continuous improvement, in-depth reflection of performance and extremely high levels of commitment to boarders' welfare.
- Boarders and their parents are exceptionally positive about the boarding provision. Parents hold the boarding staff in the highest regard; they can identify the progress their children make and all say their children are happy to board.
- All boarders enjoy equality of access to a wealth of academic and social opportunities and support. They benefit from living in a multi-cultural environment, appreciating each other's individual characteristics and backgrounds.

### Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

## Information about this inspection

The inspection of the boarding provision, comprising two boarding houses on the school site, took place following a notice period of three and a half hours. The inspection activities included meetings with; the site manager, deputy head teachers, assistant head teacher, head of boarding, head teacher, boarding staff, personnel manager, bursar, caretaker, the chair of governors and the link governor for boarding. The inspection included meetings and meal times with boarders, observation of practice and routines and scrutiny of records, policies and documentation. Discussion with 17 parents and feedback from 19 Parent View surveys contributed to the inspection judgement.

## Inspection team

Louisa Bayley

Lead social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

This boarding school, situated in Colchester, is an academically selective maintained school with Academy status. The school caters for boys aged 11 to 18 and both boys and girls in the sixth form. Boarding provision, for up to 30 boarders, is exclusively for sixth form boys. The boarding accommodation is provided in two houses both of which are situated on the main school site.

The last inspection of the boarding provision took place on 23 March 2010.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Consider further enhancing staff knowledge and practice by offering access to qualifications specific to boarding provision.
- Implement a central log to record all pupil related incidents, including any bullying issues, that occur in school or in boarding, so that patterns and trends can be identified and smaller concerns can be considered if it appears there are repeating incidents.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for boarders

### Outstanding

The outcomes for boarders are outstanding.

Boarders identify that they make significant progress with their confidence, friendships, language and development of their individual talents and skills. They have warm and respectful relationships with each other and with the boarding staff. They say they are prepared well for moving on to university and actively enjoy their boarding experience. Parents are extremely positive about the impact of boarding on their children and they identify the progress their children make as a direct result of boarding. Parents say, 'I was dubious at first but my son wanted to board; it was his idea. It has been a remarkable success' and 'My son has the opportunity to access a wide range of sports and activities; it is absolutely fantastic. I cannot tell you how successful it has been'.

Boarders are extremely accepting of different cultures, languages and religions. They enjoy the cultural mix of peers within the boarding houses and developing an understanding of each other's needs and preferences. Boarders develop their own network of support within their peer groups and within the wider boarding environment. They settle well into the boarding environment, which for many boarders is their first time away from their home country. They respond well to the culture and ethos of mutual respect and develop good levels of self-esteem, preparing them well for their transition to higher education.

Boarders' behaviour is exceptional. They have high regard for others, they operate with extremely little input or direction from staff and take responsibility for organising themselves in order to maximise their own potential. They respect each other's rights to privacy and security. The result is that all boarders feel happy to be able to leave their belongings unsecured, with no risk whatsoever. Consequently, the boarding environment provides a family style environment and a close-knit boarding community.

Boarders' have a great deal of responsibility; there are additional roles such as head boarder in each boarding house. Boarders take the roles very seriously and the boys perform them exceptionally well. They take care not to become authoritarian or overly demanding. They provide mentoring for others and they act as points of contact if boarders wish to raise concerns. Boarders regularly contribute their views on the boarding provision, affecting positive change.

All boarders' enjoy the boarding experience; they say it gives them a good degree of independence and the ability to explore their interests. They cultivate a very wide range of talents and are able to develop new interests. They feel actively encouraged and supported by the staff to access pursuits that enhance their boarding experience. Sports and pursuits include; public speaking, swimming, water polo, table tennis, football, rugby, fencing, piano, clarinet, cycling and cultural events. These experiences give boarders the opportunity to excel in their chosen field and support individuals to remain in touch with activities that contribute to their self-identity.

Boarders feel exceptionally well prepared for their onward transitions to high performing universities; they develop a high degree of confidence and independence. They also learn how to manage the demands of intensive study and balance that with pursuing individual interests.

All boarders access the range of external health services they need. They improve their physical health by using the school gymnasium and they participate in a range of physical activities. Pupils in the sixth form access regular training from a psychotherapist. This helps them to identify and recognise issues that could compromise their emotional or psychological health. This is

significant, given the high-pressure academic environment and the pressure they place on themselves to achieve.

## Quality of boarding provision and care

**Outstanding**

The quality of boarding is outstanding.

The boarding aims are clear, promote equality of opportunity and focus on self-development and enjoyable learning. Managers and staff translate these aims into daily practice. Consequently, boarders feel exceptionally well supported, both academically and socially.

Feedback from parents, boarders and staff and review of documents demonstrates that there is an excellent induction into boarding. Boarders receive the information they need and have time to orientate themselves prior to the start of the school term. There are highly effective links between academic and boarding staff, with teaching staff taking an active role in the boarding houses. Parents say the head of boarding is exceptional; many parents reiterated the positive impact he has on their children. Boarders say they feel comfortable in talking to boarding staff if they have any issues and they know they can contact the nominated independent listener if they want to talk to someone outside of the school environment.

Parents from the United Kingdom and overseas are all exceptionally positive about the care the school provides. A parent commented, 'The school arranged a celebration for the lunar new year, so the boys would not feel homesick. The school helps them to stay in touch with their culture.' Another parent said, 'The boarding environment promotes a strong sense of camaraderie. I would recommend the school very highly. It is not ridiculously glamorous; there is a strong sense of grounding in the real world.' A third parent said, 'I felt confident in the staff from the start; they are very approachable. If we have any problems, staff manage them quickly and positively.'

The boarders access a wide range of opportunities to establish, develop and nurture their interests outside of the academic timetable. They have excellent opportunities to participate in competitive sports, clubs based in the local area, inter-school tournaments, music and specific interests. The staff provide excellent levels of support to facilitate individual access to opportunities outside of the school.

The catering staff meet the dietary needs of all boarders. The menus reflect boarders' cultural and religious dietary requirements. The food is high quality and plentiful with a good level of choice. Boarders say they enjoy the food immensely. They say staff listen to their suggestions about changes and act upon them, which mean that personal preferences are well considered. Boarders also benefit from having choices about whether they eat with others or prepare their own meals. All boarders have completed a food hygiene course; they are able to safely prepare their own food if they wish.

The boarding accommodation meets the needs of the boarders; they have comfortable desk spaces and robust office chairs, conducive to their study needs. They have the privacy they need and the social spaces to promote periods of relaxation and fun. Boarders personalise their rooms to reflect their personal choices and tastes. They are able to stay in contact with their families and friends, by telephone and electronic mediums. They all say they are very happy with the accommodation and do not raise any concerns or have any suggestions for improvements. Boarders benefit from good on site facilities, such as the gymnasium, games room, library and swimming pool. As a result, boarders live in an environment that supports them to achieve a positive balance between meeting their study demands and being able to enjoy time away from their studies.

## **Boarders' safety**

**Outstanding**

Safety in the boarding provision is outstanding.

The school implements safe recruitment procedures. The staff and governors responsible for recruiting have the appropriate training, supporting them to identify unsuitable applicants. New staff do not commence employment until satisfactory checks are in place. Personnel records demonstrate that managers carry out the required pre-employment checks, prior to confirmation of appointment. There are procedures in place to ensure unauthorised persons do not have access to boarders. These arrangements promote boarders' safety and wellbeing.

Boarders do not go missing. There are clear expectations and rules in respect of signing out and informing staff of their whereabouts. Boarders confirm that there are no incidents of missing and that they conform to expectations that support their safety and welfare.

Boarders do not have behavioural issues, they are highly motivated, high achieving individuals and restraint is not necessary nor would it be used. The use of sanctions is minimal; behaviour is exceptionally good and staff manage any low-key deviation from expectations very well. The records clearly demonstrate that staff explore the reasons for behaviours. They consider whether other forms of support are more appropriate than a sanction. Consequently, there is a good balance between supporting boarders to take responsibility for their behaviour and identifying where triggers for behaviour need addressing through a supportive and nurturing route.

Boarders say they feel safe. They say they have not experienced bullying in the school and are not aware of it. The head of boarding and parents confirm there are no incidents of bullying affecting boarders. Staff identify and manage issues of bullying during the school day. While bullying does not currently affect boarders, the lack of a central record of any bullying incidents would make it difficult to easily identify patterns and trends if they occur.

There are safeguarding policies and procedures in place. The designated officer for safeguarding delivers training to the staff team to refresh their knowledge of safeguarding matters. There have been no safeguarding concerns for boarders.

The boarding accommodation and associated facilities are well maintained and spacious enough to meet boarders' needs. Frequent checks take place to ensure the environment is safe. There are regular, documented checks in respect of fire precautions, evacuations and equipment servicing; all boarders are aware of the evacuation procedures. There is a current fire risk assessment and the school contracts an external company to support with fire related issues. The grounds are well kept and clear of hazards. The checks in place contribute to the wellbeing and safety of all those living, working in or visiting the school.

## **Leadership and management of boarding**

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management of the boarding provision are outstanding.

The boarding provision is exceptionally well run. Boarders' behaviour is impeccable, they observe routines and meet expectations. The levels of staff supervision are low because the boarders are aged 16 and over, and preparing for adulthood. The level of supervision does, however, ensure that boarders have access to the help and support they need.

Senior boarding staff have extensive experience in boarding and newer staff bring a different perspective and skills base. The use of teaching staff in boarding means that boarders receive continuous academic support. Boarding staff do not have any qualifications in boarding practice. Although this does not detract from the excellent job they do, there is scope to further enhance

their knowledge base. Boarding staff receive regular training, including safeguarding, food hygiene and first aid, promoting their knowledge and supporting their practice.

Managers have addressed the previous recommendation to ensure that boarders involved in preparing food receive appropriate food handling training. Boarders confirm they received food hygiene training at the beginning of the year. Consequently they have a good knowledge of safe practices in food preparation.

Feedback from parents identifies that the communication they receive from the school is excellent. They benefit from regular emails; parents say they are invited to make comment and contribution. Parents in Hong Kong benefit from visits by the school staff, who provide a parents evening for those parents who cannot attend meetings held at the school. Another overseas parent said she receives detailed feedback via email, which she finds very supportive. Parents say staff keep them apprised of their children's progress and achievements. Managers give considerable attention to ensuring all parents, regardless of their country of residence, enjoy equality of access to information.

There are robust procedures in place to monitor the quality of the boarding provision and reflect on areas for further development. The governors take an active role, adding a further layer of safeguarding. They visit the boarding houses regularly and ask for boarders' opinions on the provision. The school has strong plans in place to continue to develop. There is a culture of commitment to continuous improvement. The school has made improvements since the last inspection, including a new building that provides a fantastic space for students to conduct performances.

The school has the required policies in place to support staff to deliver a high quality boarding experience. Managers communicate the clear guidelines, protocols and procedures to the staff team. The impact of this is a highly effective boarding environment that delivers an outstanding quality of care with measureable achievements for every boarder.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137814
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC018009
<b>DfE registration number</b>	881/5443

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>	Maintained boarding school
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	30
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Boys
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	16 to 18
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Ken Jenkinson
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	25/03/2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 509100
<b>Email address</b>	kjenkinson@crgs.co.uk

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