

Duke of York's Royal Military School

Guston, Dover, Kent, CT15 5EQ

Inspection dates 28 April – 1 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Life at the school is underpinned by caring and aspirational attitudes, based on military values.
- At Key Stages 3 and 4 students make good progress. They achieve very well both academically and in the very wide range of other activities available to them.
- The sixth form is good. Students in the sixth form have not experienced as much success as those at Key Stage 4, but outcomes for them are improving rapidly.
- Students grow to be confident leaders. They are courteous and well behaved. They feel safe and work together very well, supporting and challenging each other appropriately. They are rightly proud of their school and their achievements, including those derived from their military activities.
- Teaching at the school is consistently good.
- The Executive Principal and the senior leadership team have accurately identified the critical areas for improvement in the school and are rapidly securing improvements. Governors hold the senior leadership team to account very well and provide strong strategic leadership.
- Students are relaxed, happy and safe in their boarding houses. They express a very strong sense of community identity and develop strong friendships.
- The school integrates academic and pastoral care well, ensuring students' social and academic needs are supported well in both environments.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- While the sixth form is improving overall, the work-related courses on offer are not enabling students to achieve as well as they should. Students' high aspirations and outcomes are not yet embedded.
- All students' work is marked but the quality of feedback from teachers and the use of assessment to support students' learning are not consistently good across the school.
- Students from military families are not doing quite as well as others.

Information about this inspection

- The school timetable was disrupted during the inspection because Years 7 and 8 were taking internal school examinations. Students in Year 9 were off site on an educational visit on the second day of the visit.
- Inspectors were given unrestricted access to all areas of the school. They observed the work of the school including attending chapel. They observed 25 lessons, one of which was jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. They scrutinised students' work both in lessons and in their exercise books and files. In addition, they observed the Corps of Drums, many sporting activities and life around the school.
- Inspectors toured each boarding house with students, met with students in each house and visited all houses during the course of the inspection. Over 12 hours of inspector time was spent in the medical centre.
- Discussions were held with many students, parents and carers, the Chair of the Governing Body, school staff including middle and senior leaders, and staff in the boarding houses and medical centre.
- All staff and students were invited to respond to questionnaires anonymously during the inspection. The 419 responses from students and 120 responses from staff were carefully considered. Inspectors took into account 60 responses to Parent View, the parents' online survey. They also took into account complaints made to Ofsted about the school and carefully investigated the issues raised by complainants.

Inspection team

Emma Ing, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maire Atherton	Social Care Inspector
Patricia MacLachlan	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Anna Williams	Social Care Inspector
Emeline Evans	Social Care Inspector
Keith Riley	Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Duke of York's Royal Military School opened as an academy in September 2010. Prior to this the school was an independent boarding school. Both this school and its predecessor have strong links with the military.
- Many governors and staff have military connections and around 70% of students come from families with close military connections, including parents, carers and family members who are currently on active service.
- All students are part of the Combined Cadet Force, and there are regular student parades of the whole school. Military music is an important part of school life and 90 students form a full military marching band which leads parades and other ceremonial events.
- The school is small. All students are boarders. An unusually high proportion of students start at the school after the major intake in Year 7 and many have experienced disruptions to their education. About half of the students in the sixth form joined the school after obtaining their GCSE examinations.
- Students come from a range of different backgrounds. The largest group is White British, but other groups include Nepalese and students of African heritage.
- Just under one in five students speaks English as an additional language.
- An above average proportion of students are identified as requiring additional help with their learning, but few have a statement of special educational needs.
- Around half of the students are eligible for the service pupil premium funding. This is for the children of parents or carers who have been in military service within the last six years. In addition, a very few students are eligible for pupil premium because their families are experiencing financial hardship.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school does not routinely enter students early for GCSE examinations.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Support students to make even better academic progress, especially those from military families, by:
 - giving clear feedback on their work about those aspects that are successful and those that they need to develop or improve
 - helping them understand what they are aiming to achieve and how they might do so
 - ensuring that the homework activities that each student is set are appropriately challenging.
- Build on recent improvements in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that students make good progress on the work-related courses offered
 - raising the standards reached by students in individual subjects
 - further raising sixth formers' aspirations and expectations of their achievement.
- All national minimum standards are met. There are four areas for further improvement:
 - ensure there is a record of the action taken to address shortfalls identified through the medication audit process
 - further develop staff training to enhance awareness of the full range of potential safeguarding issues
 - ensure complete clarity about the role of spouses in the boarding houses
 - develop a system for recording and responding to informal complaints.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students do well at GCSE level. The standards the students reach are very high. Most students are on track to achieve five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics. Students have done very well in mathematics and science for some years at this school. Many also achieve a good pass in languages. Recent improvements in the leadership and teaching of English have led to students doing well in this subject too.
- The rate of progress students make in their learning is carefully tracked by teachers and senior leaders. Appropriate interventions are made with the result that the rate of progress increases through Key Stages 3 and 4. By the end of Key Stage 4 nearly all students have made good or better progress. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers in the school, as do those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Academically clever students achieve top grades. School leaders and teachers have had significant success in improving outcomes for these most-able students at GCSE. Black African and Nepalese students achieve in line with their peers in the school.
- Nearly every sixth former goes on to higher education at British universities while a very small minority go directly into employment. The progress made by students in the sixth form has been steadily improving over the last three years and is now above average. Any student who joins the sixth form without appropriate qualifications in either English or mathematics is supported to gain these quickly.
- Students' achievement at A level is now above average; however, achievement is not yet outstanding because students are not doing well enough in individual A-level subjects. Also, while improving, there are weaknesses in the progress made by students on work-related courses.
- School leaders check each student's attainment on arrival at the school so that teachers can build on prior learning. This is particularly important for those students whose earlier experiences of education have been unsettled or disrupted. Much of the military service premium is used to ensure that there are sufficient staff available in school and in the boarding houses to help students overcome any gaps in their previous learning. It is also used to provide emotional and welfare support to students. Students in this group, and those few eligible for the premium as a result of economic disadvantage, are making good progress but are not yet doing as well as other students.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan their lessons well and build effectively on previous learning. Lessons have a clear focus on learning, which is underpinned by highly positive relationships that exist between staff and students. As a result, there is little or no inadequate teaching.
- Teachers present their students of all ages with appropriate tasks and are not afraid to allow students time to think things through and work things out for themselves. Visual and other resources are used well to prompt thinking and demonstrate what is required. The most able students are given opportunities to extend their understanding and learning.
- Students are supported in their examination preparation by tightly focused analysis of the requirements. Students are expected to work hard, but can seek help from any of a number of different people in school, or in the boarding house. Students say that there is always help for them if they need it. This means that no one is left behind.
- Although homework is set routinely it is not always matched closely to students' individual needs.
- Teachers' questioning of students is often good, but sometimes is rushed and does not give students sufficient time or prompts to develop their thinking.

- Staff recognise that developing reading is an important strand in improving the attainment of those who are not doing as well as others. Many strategies are in place to help students become confident and fluent readers. Writing skills are not always as consistently well supported.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because not all teachers are helping students to know what they are aiming for, or how they might improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- There can be few more moving or uplifting experiences than being present at a performance of the school's Corps of Drums. Under the leadership of the Drum Major, (a Year 13 student) this group of around 24 young musicians marched and performed for inspectors in impeccable order. Earlier this year, they led the school's marching band and wreath-layers on parade marking the centenary of the start of World War One at the Menin Gate. The teamwork, discipline and skill that these young people demonstrate exemplify many of the admirable qualities shown by students at this school.
- The behaviour of students is good. Students arrive at lessons punctually, well presented and ready to learn. They almost always concentrate on the task in hand well. They work very well together offering constructive challenge and feedback to each other and are also comfortable working on their own.
- Students are rightly proud of their military heritage, of their parades and drills. They participate with enthusiasm. Their behaviour in respect of these, as also their singing in chapel, remains outstanding.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The vast majority of students report feeling safe at the school. They describe the school culture as 'open' and one of 'trust and respect'. They say there is always an adult they can talk to about any concerns. They appreciate the support they get to help them through tricky patches.
- Students say that there is a zero tolerance of bullying, and can outline what this means in practice. Students are appreciative of this approach and are confident that it is working and that bullying is properly dealt with. Students know about bullying including cyber bullying and are aware of how to keep themselves safe.
- Staff have recently implemented a rewards and sanctions scheme, which is overseen by the housemasters. Students have an excellent understanding of this and feel it is fair and proportionate. The senior leadership team has developed improved recording, monitoring and evaluation of behaviour management. This ensures that rewards and sanctions are consistently applied and are proportionate. The information is also being used to identify any themes, patterns and trends for individuals or houses so as to target meaningful interventions both for individuals, through personal support plans, and groups where necessary.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because not all students are reaching the new, high standards expected of them by the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The Executive Principal has successfully sought to empower his staff to drive improvements at all levels in the school. His leadership is clear-sighted and determined; and his approach is collaborative. Without being overbearing, he commands the respect of staff and students alike. Members of teaching and boarding staff say that the Executive Principal has introduced helpful training opportunities and has supported them well to lead change.
- Students and staff alike explain that the school has changed in recent years. The culture is more open, and, while there is rigorous accountability at all levels, the processes by which staff are set targets and held to account are perceived as appropriate and fair. Increases to teachers' salaries do not take place unless they have met their targets, which are linked to students' progress. Nevertheless, a very small minority of students feel that the school should take better account of

students' views.

- Staff and students explained that leadership is understood differently now. One Year 13 boy encapsulated this sentiment explaining that 'now we are respected for what we do and how we behave rather than simply for being higher up the school'.
- Historically, sanctions were sometimes applied that the current leadership team does not consider appropriate. These are no longer in use. For example, prefects are no longer permitted to impose punishment on others without permission from their housemaster.
- Almost every member of staff who completed a questionnaire was overwhelmingly positive about the leadership of the school and the changes introduced. All comments were considered fully by the inspectors.
- The school improvement plan is a very useful working document that identifies the areas for development and the strategies that will be employed. It demonstrates that senior leaders understand what needs to be done and have good strategies to achieve their objectives.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong and effective. There is close attention to detail. The right issues have been addressed. There has been considerable progress, for example, in improving outcomes in English, raising the attainment of the most able students and improving the quality of the sixth form. These improvements and others have been achieved because the middle leaders have worked effectively with senior leaders and been supported to introduce initiatives of their own.
- The range of subjects meets the needs of students well. The information, advice and guidance given to sixth formers have improved. The school provides cultural enrichment through drama, music and the visual arts. A very wide range of sporting and adventurous opportunities is available to students and much appreciated by them. The military and ceremonial aspects of the school add significantly to the personal development of students. As a consequence, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The school has entered into a collaborative partnership with the Dover Federation for the Arts and through this has increased the development opportunities available to staff and opportunities for students.
- Leaders have begun to monitor and analyse behaviour systematically. They have introduced a pupil support plan process to support young people if issues begin to arise in respect of their behaviour. This is an appropriate response to the current higher-than-average rates of fixed-term exclusions.
- Outcomes for boarders and the quality of residential provision and care are good. In the two full terms since the last full social care inspection in May 2013 the well-led and effective senior leadership team has addressed all the areas identified in need of further improvement. They have also made significant improvements to other key areas and through robust self-evaluation have plans to develop further.
- Because staff at all levels in the school are newly learning to be leaders and developing confidence and skills, leadership and management are not yet judged outstanding.
- The school meets the current requirements for safeguarding. The school is inclusive of all students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors manage the school extremely well. They have taken a strong strategic lead while ensuring that the executive Principal and his team are rigorously held to account. Meetings of the governing body have been carefully structured to enable governors to have a very good understanding of the information about students' progress, how it compares with similar schools nationally, the quality of teaching and other elements of what the school offers. Minutes of governing body and committee meetings demonstrate that governors are demanding and ask probing questions. The performance of staff is well managed and only those who can demonstrate very strong performance are rewarded. When it has been necessary, governors have acted to ensure that underperformance has been addressed. Governors are well trained and knowledgeable.

Outcomes for boarders	are good
Quality of boarding provision and care	is good
Boarders' safety	is good
Leadership and management of boarding provision	are good

- Students are happy, relaxed and at home in their boarding environment. They express a very strong sense of community identity, within which they develop friendships with each other that they believe will be lifelong. They describe good relationships with staff and say, 'They know us really well; they know how we're feeling by reading our body language.'
- Students express high levels of satisfaction about and enjoyment of their boarding experiences. They talk about a culture of trust and respect, with teamwork and tolerance at the centre. A boarder said, 'They teach you how to get on with people that you have nothing in common with.' Another said the school 'has enabled me to be who I am right now' and eloquently outlined the process and progress made in the journey through school. This view was echoed by many.
- There are established induction procedures that effectively support boarders as they get to know both the people and routines of the whole school. Academic staff lead the boarding houses and are committed to ensuring that information is shared as necessary to provide boarders with consistent support in their personal development and learning.
- Boarders are very complimentary about the range of activities available. Students say, 'It's impossible to be bored here' and 'There are so many opportunities and if you want to do something staff will give you the opportunity to do it.' The planned overseas trips to Borneo and the Philippines are eagerly anticipated.
- Good welfare plans are in place and provide the information necessary to deliver the tailored support required for individual boarders. Staff are rightly extending the use of these. The arrangements for the promotion of boarders' healthcare are robust. Since the last full inspection staffing levels in the medical centre and boarding houses have been increased. Communication between the medical centre and outside agencies has been strengthened so as to further secure boarders' well-being. There is clear auditing of medication, however it is not always clear the action taken to address shortfalls identified through the audit process.
- Any instances of bullying are taken very seriously and addressed promptly.
- Since January 2013, three students have been accommodated in the medical centre awaiting collection by their parents or carers following the imposition of a fixed-term exclusion. This has included overnight stays by prior arrangement with parents or carers. Although not ideal this process is satisfactory and the students are properly safeguarded. School leaders are currently reviewing policies and processes in relation to exclusion.
- The school has excellent links with the Local Safeguarding Officers. In talking about the school's approach to child protection one safeguarding officer said, 'The school has done as much as is humanly possible and [staff] have demonstrated that they are prepared to learn lessons.' Staff are well trained in safeguarding issues but there remain areas where some staff could be more sensitive to individual students' needs. Students are not however left at risk.
- There is a robust approach to health and safety and fire requirements. Routine checks and servicing checks are undertaken. Fire safety arrangements are robust and include personal emergency evacuation plans where necessary.
- The senior leadership team is further increasing the boarding house staff complement. This will provide an additional pastoral team member in the evenings in all houses; it is in place for some already. The role of spouses in the houses is well understood but not fully reflected in writing. Staff are supported to carry out their roles competently through regular supervision, appraisal and training.
- There is a good complaints procedure in place and formal complaints are thoroughly addressed. Informal complaints are not recorded.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

Boarding provision		
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	136177
Social care unique reference number	SC023666
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	444909

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

The inspection of boarding provision 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	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	452
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	105
Number of boarders on roll	452
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Soar
Executive Principal	Chris Russell
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 November 2012
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