

Dallam School

Dallam School, Haverflatts Lane, MILNTHORPE, Cumbria, LA7 7DD

Inspection dates	05/03/2013 to 07/03/2013	
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

- Boarders are confident and thrive in the boarding environment. Their well-being is paramount and their personal development is successfully enhanced by the outstanding level of care they receive. Equality and diversity is exceptionally well promoted to meet individual needs.
- Relationships between boarders and staff are unquestionably warm, respectful and caring. The school provides boarders with an abundance of varied and high quality leisure activities. Boarders enthuse about the level of opportunities and activities available to them.
- The school is led by a forward thinking management team who are dedicated to drive developments within the boarding provision. There have been significant improvements to the boarding facility since the last inspection. Boarding houses provide accommodation that is very well furnished and maintained to a high standard.
- The safety of boarders is given utmost priority. Excellent safeguarding arrangements, including regular child protection training, assist staff to keep boarders safe from harm. Boarders said they feel very safe and well looked after. Parents' views are overwhelmingly positive about the safety and care of their child at the school.
- The boarding provision has substantial areas of strength and no weaknesses which have a direct impact on the outcomes for boarders. Points for further improvement relate to administrative processes.

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 was conducted over two days by three Social Care Regulatory Inspectors. An inspection of both boarding houses was conducted in the company of three pupils.

Inspection team

Helen Walker	Lead social care inspector
Graham Robinson	Social care inspector
Michael McCleave	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Dallam School is situated on the rural, southern edge of the Lake District. It is comprehensive, state boarding school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years. The school has specialist status as a language college. As a school within the state maintained sector, no education fees are payable. Boarding fees are charged.

The school is on split sites; Heversham and Milnthorpe. The boarding provision consists of two boarding houses on the Heversham site. This is approximately one mile from the main school teaching site at Milnthorpe. There are 968 pupils on roll, of which 120 are boarders; the school has capacity for 128 boarders. The school provides an extensive extra-curricular programme of sports, arts and outdoor activities. The boarding and education provision were last inspected in January 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure records relating to the checks of adults working and living on the site are kept up-to-date.
- Ensure the review date of policies and procedures are noted so that staff are assured these are current documents.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for boarders

Outstanding

The outcomes for boarders are outstanding. They are part of an exceptionally inclusive boarding community and enjoy extremely positive and tolerant relationships with staff and each other. Boarders refer to the very diverse and culturally rich nature of the boarding environment, which supports them to develop friendships and gain in confidence.

Boarders are enthusiastic about their boarding experience and feel valued as individuals. They receive excellent nurturing care and support from the pastoral team. Staff are reassuring and offer sound advice and guidance to assist boarders make well-informed choices during their stay and for their future; for the majority of the sixth form this means entrance to university. Boarders develop their self-esteem and confidence through positive interaction with staff and other boarders at the school. They receive a holistic boarding experience that supports them to develop their life and independence skills. Some boarders said staff promote independence at the just the right level.

Boarders benefit from a school that fully embraces equal opportunities. Disability is not seen as a barrier to achievement or equality. The school goes the extra mile to ensure boarding facilities totally meet the needs of boarders with a physical disability, for example, fully adapted shower rooms and wheelchair accessibility.

Boarders talk about the 'unique' and 'once in a lifetime' opportunities available to them at the school. They are thrilled about the wide range of sporting activities, trips offsite and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Additionally, boarders thrive in the company of other boarders from overseas and of different nationalities. They consider this a highly valuable experience that broadens their outlook and understanding of others. Boarders said one of the best things about boarding is that they are 'surrounded by friends.'

Boarders' views definitely make a difference. There are many opportunities for them to give their opinions and improve aspects of the school and boarding houses. The boarding house captain is a substantial and dedicated voice for the boarders and champions on their behalf to the governors and senior leadership team. Boarders are confident their views are heard and changes are made as a result of this. Recent changes include transport times between school and the boarding houses and additional laundry facilities. Boarders are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms. They make their bedrooms bright and colourful with their own bed linen and have displays of small personal items on walls or shelves. This helps to make the provision more homely.

Boarders' health and well-being is effectively supported by an exceptionally well-informed staff team. They promote access to professionals for boarders' physical, emotional and psychological health needs to be met. The school matron and local doctor's surgery are very accessible to provide routine and appropriate medical advice and care. Boarders have considerable opportunities to keep fit and healthy. Many boarders said they participate in and are enthusiastic about activities such as camping and jogging in the extremely pleasant countryside bordering the school.

Quality of boarding provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of the boarding provision and care is outstanding. Boarders benefit from excellent pastoral arrangements which are supportive and nurturing to meet their individual needs. Staff have a real commitment to provide boarders with first class care and support. A well-planned, informative induction process enables boarders to develop warm, trusting relationships with staff

and meet with other boarders. Boarders said the induction was 'really organised and structured.' A boarder described staff as 'great, they listen to you, they're like friends.'

The boarding provision is a vibrant and well-organised facility. Staff have a wealth of experience and provide boarders with consistency of care. Good routines are part of boarding school life. This supports boarders to have structure and focus both with learning and in their free time. Close liaison between teaching and pastoral staff helps to ensure boarders with additional support needs have these attended to quickly and effectively. For boarders with more specific individual needs, the staff develop and implement comprehensive welfare plans.

Boarders significantly benefit from the recent extensive and continuing refurbishment of the boarding houses. The newly built boarding house provides accommodation for older boarders and all have individual bedrooms with en suite facilities. Boarders are delighted that the new house gives them 'much more individual space.' Boarders have appropriate lockable facilities in their bedroom to keep personal possessions safe and secure. Accommodation is very well maintained, pleasant and comfortably furnished. Domestic staff are dedicated to maintain the boarding facilities to a high standard of cleanliness.

Boarders' well-being is given the utmost priority. Staff significantly promote their good health and encourage them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Administration of medication is monitored by the school matron to ensure boarders receive the medication they need. The matron maintains considerable links with primary care services so that boarders have appropriate access to the range of health care they require.

Boarders have access to a wide range of varied and meaningful opportunities and experiences. Staff are motivated for boarders to reach their full potential and promote their involvement in social inclusion. They participate in different aspects of school, community and local life. This includes use of the excellent school facilities and visits to places of interest. A number of boarders enthused about the recent trip to Edinburgh and the celebration of Chinese New Year at a local Chinese restaurant. Other boarders said they really look forward to their regular tennis and dance lessons.

Catering standards are excellent and boarders are generally very positive with regards to the quality of the food. Catering staff are made aware of any specific dietary needs and ensure these are met discreetly and effectively. Mealtimes are very social and well-ordered occasions where boarders enjoy informal discussions and develop friendships with others at the school.

Boarders are encouraged to maintain regular contact with their family and friends. They have access to landline telephones at the school as well as use of the internet. Boarders said they primarily use their mobile telephones, email or social media for this contact.

Boarders' safety

Outstanding

The arrangements for safeguarding boarders' welfare are outstanding. Boarders' safety is at the very heart of the school and staff are dedicated to provide them with safe and secure care. This is also reflected in the quality of policies and risk assessments that staff are familiar with, understand and put into practice.

Boarders said they feel extremely safe while staying at the school. They confirm staff listen to them and they have people independent of the school to talk to should they have any matters of concern. Boarders are very well informed with regard to keeping themselves safe both on and off of the school site, this includes the use of social networking sites. All staff, including ancillary staff have child protection training. The designated safeguarding staff have this training to the appropriate and higher level needed for their role. They have purposeful contact with

safeguarding agencies to ensure accurate and up-to-date information and guidance is available to staff.

Boarders said they feel extremely safe while staying at the school. They confirm staff listen to them and there are people independent of the school to talk to should they have any matters of concern. Staff responsible for health and safety and safeguarding demonstrate the safety of the boarders is taken very seriously. Safeguarding policies are clear, robust and have been approved by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Thorough vetting procedures at the school and boarding houses ensure staff and visitors are monitored. The school operates a robust and effective recruitment process which ensures that all adults who have contact with pupils are subject to all necessary checks prior to employment. Additionally, comprehensive and thorough checks are carried out on other adults, such as spouses and partners, who may live on site. However, records of these checks are not routinely updated to confirm when these have been carried out.

Boarders say there are no issues with regard to bullying and they get on very well together. They comment about the diverse boarding community and enjoy the integration with others. Staff provide consistent care and fair behaviour management of the boarders. Boarders are happy with this; they feel safe and well protected by staff. They are comfortable and able to talk to members of staff. The senior leadership team provide boarders with many opportunities to give their views and voice any concerns as individuals or in a group setting.

The school are proactive to work in partnership with other agencies and fully involve parents in all aspects of boarders' safety. Parents are kept well informed of any issue or concern relating to their child. The site manager is passionate about his work and promotes health and safety to a high level. He is meticulous to detail and has a comprehensive overview of the risks associated with the site. Risk assessments and checks in relation to the boarding facilities and the site are thorough and a valuable tool to minimise and eliminate health and safety hazards.

Boarders are encouraged to take age appropriate risks as part of their growth and development. They talk about the systems in place to promote their safety, for example, a register is maintained so that staff are aware of boarders' whereabouts. Additionally, discrete and unobtrusive electronic security systems ensure boarders' privacy is maintained. These help to prevent unauthorised persons from gaining access to the site and boarding houses.

Leadership and management of boarding

Outstanding

The leadership and management of the boarding provision are outstanding. The boarding is effectively and efficiently managed by an experienced and dedicated staff team. The head of care has a wealth of experience and manages an enthusiastic staff team.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a high level of awareness about how the boarding facility is operating. The deputy headteacher is dynamic in his approach to identify any weaknesses through comprehensive self-evaluation processes. Action plans are put in place according to ensure the provision continues to provision run smoothly and for the benefit of the boarders.

All required policies, documents and records are comprehensive and readily available. However, policies do not always show a review date so that staff are assured these are the most recent and relevant documents to follow. The school's comprehensive statement of principles and practice is shared with parents so that they are aware of the care their child receives as a boarder. In addition the school has a detailed and very informative website.

The senior management team is reflective about practice and motivated to drive forward improvements and quality which are already of a high standard. All recommendations from the last inspection have been met. There has been significant refurbishment of the boarding houses including access and suitable adaptations for those with a disability. The health and medication arrangements for the boarders have been further enhanced by the provision of dedicated sick bay facilities and the appointment of a matron.

Boarders are looked after by a motivated and enthusiastic staff team who provide them with equality of care and have their best interest at heart. Boarders confirm there are sufficient staff available to care for them throughout the school day and in boarding time. They said they really enjoy their boarding experience and feel valued and respected by staff.

Staff talk unreservedly about the considerable support and guidance provided by the management team. Boarders receive good support from staff who are well supervised for their role. This enables staff to be up-to-date with boarding matters and to receive on-going mandatory training such as first aid, child protection and fire safety. Staff are proactive and engage in professional development, for example, they have achieved recognised national qualifications to increase their knowledge and understanding about the welfare aspect of boarding.

Excellent relationships and regular contact with parents exist. Communications are clear which enable the parents to raise any issues with the school. This is a listening organisation and the views of the boarders are seen as a valuable contribution to their enjoyment and well-being.

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	137205
Social care unique reference number	SC040074
DfE registration number	909/5405

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
Number of boarders on roll	120
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 18
Headteacher	Mr Steven Holdup
Date of previous boarding inspection	27/01/2010
Telephone number	01539 565 165
Email address	enquiries@dallam.eu

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