

# Dallam School

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

<b>Inspection dates</b>	12/10/2015 to 14/10/2015	
<b>The overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The boarding provision is outstanding because;

The overwhelming response from boarders to inspectors is they are happy and feel safe. This view is backed up with the written and verbal responses received from parents.

There is an energy and drive around the whole boarding area to improve facilities, outcomes and the overall boarding experience for pupils. Much has been achieved since the previous inspection when the judgement gained then was outstanding. This includes significant upgrades to boarding areas such as bathrooms, bedrooms, recreational and kitchen areas.

Safety is given the highest priority. The arrangements to protect boarders are strong which includes regular safeguarding training for staff along with other areas designed to protect children. Health and safety, allied to the general management of the campus is excellent. For example, since the previous inspection, improved security for all external doors has been introduced.

Boarders benefit from being looked after by a dedicated, trained and well managed boarding staff team. The relationships formed between boarders and boarding staff are strong, respectful and caring. Consultation between the two parties is high which encourages boarders to contribute positively to daily life in the boarding areas.

The overall monitoring of boarding is excellent. Any slippage or deterioration of standards is picked up quickly, evaluated and put right. This allows for the high standard continuity of care enjoyed by boarders, to be both maintained and improved.

Points for further improvement have no direct impact on current boarders safety. They are made to assist with continued improvement in administrative procedures for staff recruitment and to widen training opportunities.

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

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

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

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Ensure that evidence is retained with greater consistency when verifying references.

Consider providing safeguarding training for those boarders who have as part of their role direct responsibilities over other boarders.

Look to introduce specific training for staff regarding child sexual exploitation.

## Information about this inspection

Notice of the inspection was by telephone call to the school at 08.30 on the first day of the inspection. Details of the inspection were confirmed with the headteacher and then followed up by e-mail, which also contained; a letter of confirmation, an indicative timetable, letter to parents (parent view) and a copy of Annex A.

During the inspection, inspectors undertook the following activities; Both boarding houses were inspected along with the grounds, arranged meetings with boarders from three different age groups, a drop in giving boarders an opportunity to meet with inspectors in a more informal setting, informal discussions with groups and individual boarders as inspectors toured the campus and observation of the evening and early morning routines.

In addition to this, meetings and discussion took place with; headteacher, deputy head extended learning, head and deputy head of boarding, three members of the boarding staff, matron, catering manager, site manager, chair of governors and the designated safeguarding lead. A variety of policies, records and other written information were sampled. The schools website and their own self-evaluation against the standards were reviewed. An inspector attended a meeting of the boarding governors. Information from seven parent view questionnaires have been taken into account along with the views expressed by four parents who were contacted by telephone during the inspection. Telephone contact also took place with the LADO.

## Inspection team

Graham Robinson	Lead social care inspector
Anne Bannister	Social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Dallam School is situated on the rural, southern edge of the Lake District. It is a comprehensive, state boarding school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years. The school is an IB World School. 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 952 pupils on roll, of which 127 are boarders, which is the maximum number. The school provides an extensive extra-curricular programme of sports, arts and outdoor activities. The boarding provision was last inspected in March 2013.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

**Outstanding**

Boarders make outstanding progress as they journey through to adulthood. Educationally, the school has just experienced excellent exam results, giving evidence to the fact that boarders achieve excellent educational outcomes. They also thrive in a social environment that has structure and adherence to appropriate boundaries, giving them a sense of responsibility and duty towards others in a group living situation.

An area of particular strength is in giving boarders the opportunity to participate in new experiences through the wide range of activities and clubs on offer in the evening and at weekend. This often leads them into taking up new hobbies and developing new specific interests. Activities range from outdoor and sporting events through to more cultural and gentler activities covering the arts and developing practical skills. Boarders speak positively about activities which is summed up by one saying; 'You have opportunities to take part in Dallam Outdoor Ed activities which are brilliant. No other school could provide such a range of activities'.

Boarders appreciate living in an inclusive environment which is truly multi-cultural and embraces equal opportunities. The individual needs of boarders are recognised, with the school prepared to go to great lengths to ensure those needs are met. For example with the care provided and extra facilities created, to ensure any boarder with a physical disability can access all boarding areas, receive the personal care required and install appropriate adaptations to bedrooms and other areas which allow for greater independence.

Outstanding and often, long-lasting relationships are created between boarders and the dedicated team of boarding staff, who provide an excellent standard of nurturing care. Boarders recognise the high levels of support they receive with one telling an inspector that; 'staff are very supportive. I know there are staff here that I will always keep in touch with as they genuinely care and want us to be successful'.

These relationships create excellent levels of communication, which in turn leads to high levels of consultation where boarders' views and requests are listened to and taken seriously. For example, requests for improvement or something new is dealt with by boarding staff who are accountable to the boarding governing body who oversee and monitor practice in the boarding houses. This process shows boarders that their views and requests are important and taken seriously. As a result, confidence and self-esteem levels grow as they realise they have a voice, making them more willing to take on extra responsibilities around the boarding areas.

A significant area of improvement since the previous inspection is with the arrangements for boarders' health. The matron's post has become a full time post with no other responsibilities being linked to it. This has led to continued development. For example, the form requesting parents for medical information has been revised and updated, which has led to improved health information being available on site for all boarders.

Excellent links into local medical services ensures boarders every-day health needs are being fully met. If required access can be gained to more specialist input. Many boarders take advantage of the opportunities for keeping fit, through organised sporting activities and in their own time. Dietary needs are catered for and boarders are encouraged to eat healthily. Advice and help with issues such as alcohol, drugs and smoking cessation are available. As a result, boarders often improve their overall health and fitness.

## **The quality of care and support**

## **Outstanding**

Boarders receive an outstanding quality of care. A diverse group of boarding staff in age and gender, work effectively with all age ranges to ensure they are well cared for and kept safe. For example, one staff member spoke in some depth about the tutorial group they are responsible for. Regular weekly meetings give opportunities to consult and check out with boarders how things are and to take steps to rectify if not. These sessions help to develop relationships which give boarders the confidence to approach tutors or other staff at any time, should they have an issue or concern.

New boarders report they are happy with the way they were received into boarding and with the induction programme they experienced recently. This was confirmed by parents of new boarders spoken with. For example, one parent commented favourably on a question and answer session he was involved with. Another when asked about their experience commented; 'Very good. We visited the school over two days. Staff were helpful to us and our daughter.' Boarding staff have already met to evaluate this year's induction of new boarders, with a view to making further improvements for next year. This is one of a number of examples of how boarding staff are prepared and willing to review and evaluate their practice in an effort to make further improvements.

Boarders speak well of staff and their experiences of boarding. A number likened it to living with a big family. Others recognise they develop strong friendships with fellow boarders. One summed up the general feeling boarders have about boarding staff by saying; 'the boarding staff are great, they are kind and understanding.' A parent reports that; 'staff are very attentive. They are caring and create a family atmosphere.' Another told an inspector; 'we are very happy and our daughter is happy at the school.'

Boarding routines are well established. The whole area is vibrant and energised. Boarders demonstrate a great deal of self-discipline and are comfortable operating with the routines in place which are designed to be as unobtrusive, yet supportive as possible. For example, the early routine before school is calm and relaxed. Boarders once awake are given time to negotiate breakfast and get ready for school in a calm and unpressurised way. Staff monitor from a distance ensuring breakfast is taken, boarders have everything they need for the day and that no-one misses the last bus to school. This is an excellent example of ensuring boarders are fully cared for whilst giving them some personal responsibilities.

The multi-cultural makeup of boarders exposes them to a wide variety of cultures that expands their thinking and appreciation of others. Boarders are also exposed to community life which provides them with opportunities to be involved and put something

back into the local community. For example, being involved with local fund raising schemes. Sensible precautions are taken which allow for boarders to visit friends and with appropriate permissions, stay over. Boarders can also invite their friends back for a meal or to just spend time with each other.

Since the previous inspection, the accommodation and general facilities for boarders has improved significantly. For example, a complete new kitchen has been installed, which has transformed the whole dining area. An on-going programme of refurbishing bedrooms and bathrooms is nearing completion and recreational areas have been improved. The whole campus has benefitted from being generally upgraded, making it look bright and well kept. One development popular with boarders is the creation of lockable space in bedrooms where laptops and other equipment can be stored safely overnight.

### **How well children and young people are protected**

### **Outstanding**

The arrangements to protect and keep boarders safe are outstanding. Boarders say they feel safe and secure in the boarding areas and in school. Boarding staff are trained in safeguarding and can demonstrate an understanding of their responsibilities to keep boarders safe. Boarding staff have benefitted from recent training brought in to address specific areas. However, in discussion, other areas of training were suggested by inspectors, appearing in the report as improvement points.

The school has a new designated person for safeguarding who has refreshed the administrative procedures linked to safeguarding and staff recruitment, bringing them back to the high standards noted at previous inspections following a slight dip.

The school maintains purposeful links with external services charged with keeping young people safe. Staff ensure boarders are kept well informed and understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, the parent of a new boarder reported how he had quizzed staff on internet safety and was very pleased with their response which showed insight and understanding to the potential dangers of the internet.

Security in and around the boarding area is of a high standard. Appropriate procedures are in place for dealing with visitors to the campus. A range of risk assessments, all revised and updated within their specified timescale are in place to protect everyone using the campus.

Recruitment and clearance procedures are robust and thorough. Monitoring procedures recently identified some slippage regarding the quality of some administrative procedures linked to staff recruitment. This was rectified and the slippage did not have any detrimental effect on boarders safety.

Rules and boundaries for boarders are clearly defined, particularly in the boarding handbook. Tariffs, if rules are broken, are clear. Feedback from boarders generally is they think rules and boundaries are usually fair and although in some cases they would like greater freedom, they understand they are there to keep them safe.

Bullying is not an area of concern to boarders. They confirm staff are quick to intervene if boarders appear to fall out with each other. No issues or concerns were raised with inspectors on this matter.

A number of new initiatives have been introduced recently in the quest for continual improvement. For example, a new electronic tracking system has replaced the old paper based system. This system can be interrogated to identify trends and incidents that allow for early intervention with boarders should issues of concern arise. However, it also tracks and records areas of achievement, mapping in some detail the progress boarders make.

### **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

### **Outstanding**

A new headteacher who shows genuine interest in the boarding provision has taken up post since the previous inspection. More recently, a new head of boarding was appointed, only taking up their post at the beginning of this term. The deputy head Extended Learning is now well established in the role and has been a driving force in the quest for continued development of boarding since the previous inspection took place.

The deputy head Extended Learning demonstrates a high level of awareness around the functioning and operation of the boarding facility. A high standard of monitoring undertaken with consistency identifies any shortfall, which is quickly rectified with appropriate action plans put into place. Constant evaluation, coupled with the willingness and ability to make changes where necessary, allows for continual progress to be made.

Boarding staff confirm they are well supported by senior staff who supervise them regularly. Staff also receive appraisal where professional development is identified and agreed. This is underpinned by an active training programme, with staff completing all the expected core areas such as safeguarding and first aid. Recent training in drugs and the prevent strategy have widened the skill and knowledge base of staff, which helps them to reflect on their own practice and make further improvements.

Policies and procedures are exceptionally well maintained with evidence of regular review and update, keeping them current and in line with recent legislation and change. Records on individual boarders are also of a high standard. For example, where necessary, care and welfare plans ensure that boarders individual needs in relation to their well-being are identified and being effectively met.

The school has a good record of compliance with all national minimum standards being met. The two areas highlighted in what the school needs to do to improve further section following the previous inspection, have both been fully addressed. This has led to an improvement in keeping records of checks for adults working and living on site more up to date and with improved evidence of review regarding policies, procedures and other documents.



## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137205
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC040074
<b>DfE registration number</b>	

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>	Boarding School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	127
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	11 to18
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr W Bancroft
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	March 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01539 565 165
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@dallam.eu

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