

Keswick School

Vicarage Hill, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 5QB

Inspection dates

27 June to 29 June 2016

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good **2**

The quality of care and support

Outstanding 1

How well children and young people are protected

Good 2

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good 2

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is good because

- Boarding has high status within the whole school.
- Boarding pupils benefit from the holistic, joined-up approach to boarding taken by the school.
- Boarding pupils benefit from the school's strong ties to the local community, which give them access to many community facilities.
- Boarding pupils receive outstanding levels of care and support.
- The planning, welcoming, inducting and settling of pupils into boarding is an area of strength.
- Boarders live in an environment where they feel safe and are kept safe.
- The boarding house is well organised and managed.
- Five areas for improvement have been identified.

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?

- Update the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for longer-serving boarding staff and consider signing them up for the DBS update service.
- Improve the evidence base that captures and reflects the views of visiting professionals.
- For some boarding staff, consider introducing the opportunity for them achieve a nationally recognised professional qualification.
- Look to introduce a more formalised structure for the supervision of boarding staff and ensure that it is appropriately recorded.
- Develop ways to evidence better the governors' monitoring of the effectiveness of the leadership and management, and the delivery of boarding welfare.

Information about this inspection

Notice of the inspection was initially by telephone call to the school at 8.30am on the first day of the inspection. Details of the inspection were confirmed with the headteacher, then followed up by e-mail. This also contained a letter of confirmation, an indicative timetable, a letter to parents (Parent View) and a copy of Annex A.

During the inspection, inspectors undertook the following activities: a tour of the boarding house, conducted by pupils; both group and informal discussions with boarding pupils; tours of the boarding area after school, in the early evening and early morning; observation of routines and interaction between boarding staff and pupils; and sharing meals with them.

In addition, meetings and discussion took place with: the headteacher, who is also head of boarding; the head of boarding house; the senior boarding staff; the boarding staff; the school staff who have an active role in boarding; a group of governors, including the chair of the Boarding Committee; the governor responsible for safeguarding; and the designated safeguarding lead. A case-tracking exercise took place which led to meeting with a parent. Information was taken from the most recent surveys of boarders and parents undertaken by the school itself. Prior to the inspection, contact was made with the local authority designated officer and the local safeguarding hub.

Inspection team

Graham Robinson

Lead social care inspector

Elaine Clare

Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Keswick School is a co-educational day and boarding school situated in the heart 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 and 18 years. The school provides boarding provision for 53 boarders in one boarding house. This is 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 areas separate from male boarders. The education provision of the school was inspected on 4 February 2014 and was awarded outstanding for overall effectiveness.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

The overall progress and development made by boarding pupils is good. Boarding has a high status throughout the school, which means that boarding pupils benefit greatly from the school's holistic approach towards them. An example is the cross-over of activities normally associated with school, such as specialist one-to-one sessions, and other activities which take place out of school time in the boarding area. This reflects the school's joined up approach to boarding.

The school recently reviewed its delivery of boarding by critically assessing its boarding practices. This resulted in a revised development plan for boarding, which has just introduced some new and innovative practices. For example, the whole concept of boarding pupils completing prep in the evenings with an emphasis on boosting educational attainment has been rethought and overhauled.

While retaining its educational aims, conducting prep with the sophisticated electronic recording systems highlights areas linked to social progress and individual need. Both education and boarding staff monitor all areas of progress and identify areas where a pupil may require more support or help. They will then work collaboratively to meet those needs. This helps to enhance the boarding experience for pupils, as well as ensuring that they progress socially and educationally.

Inspectors received positive responses from pupils who are happy to share their views and experiences of boarding. They take great pride in their school and the fact that they board. They develop strong friendships among themselves, with other pupils in the school and with other young people in the local community through their involvement in community-based activities. One boarding pupil summed this up by saying, 'It's been really good for me, has boarding. I have got some great friends who I will keep in touch with.'

Strong, trusting and respectful relationships are also developed between boarding staff and pupils. This is reflected in the warmth of greetings when they meet, and how they sit and chat together during times of relaxation, obviously enjoying each other's company. This creates a warm, friendly and inviting environment where pupils can relax from the rigours of the day. A pupil told an inspector that boarding 'is like an extension of my own family'.

The physical boundaries and general rules of the boarding house are clear and well understood by pupils. Although a few expressed a desire for more freedom, pupils recognise that boundaries and rules are there to protect, with most viewing them as fair. All pupils spoken with confirmed that they feel safe in the school.

The overall standard of repair, decor, fixtures, furnishings and equipment is good. Pupils share dormitories that are split by gender and age, yet allow pupils to share with friends. They are at ease in their environment, which is spacious and allows pupils some peace and quiet when necessary.

Inspectors received positive feedback from parents either directly, in comments retained by the school, or from Ofsted's website. One sums up the majority of the views expressed by parents by stating, 'I cannot praise highly enough the pastoral care of the boarding house parents – they are approachable and sensible. Pupils are given independence according to their age, and my daughter has had a fantastic first year as a boarder. The academic side is also excellent and there are plenty of different sports and clubs on offer, as well as more esoteric pastimes such as the glass-blowing club and archery. I can't think of a single improvement that the school could make.'

A high proportion of the activities available to boarding pupils involve exercise, which promotes fitness. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and all dietary needs are catered for. This includes religious as well as medical needs. Steps are taken when necessary to ensure that the religious and cultural needs of pupils are met. For example, the school is actively looking to create relationships with schools and other institutions with ethnic and minority backgrounds.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

The quality of care given to boarding pupils is outstanding. Boarding staff work cooperatively and cohesively with other staff in the school, which provides pupils with a coordinated approach to their care and education. This joined-up, holistic approach is supported by the recent critical review of boarding practice. This has led to a number of new initiatives being developed that are improving the overall quality of care and support. An example is that the improved recording that captures welfare and health issues is leading to better planning to identify the needs of each pupil, and how those are to be addressed in both boarding and school. This links to the recent changes made to prep and gives appropriate staff of all denominations access to information that shapes the way that they work with individual pupils. These recent additions to everyday working practice, which improve the care that pupils receive, are deemed to be both innovative and outstanding.

Boarding pupils are looked after by a team of boarding staff who are stable and experienced. They are well organised and managed. Although many have been in post for some time, they remain alert, sympathetic and sensitive to the issues faced by young people today. For example, they have all received updated safeguarding training, along with e-safety and 'Prevent' training. The level of communication between staff and pupils is high, helped by the excellent relationships between the two parties. All pupils spoken with could identify someone within the school who they felt confident enough to confide in.

'The boarding staff are lovely, they really care about us.' This was one of many positive comments made by boarding pupils about the staff who care for them. Some of the comments came from pupils who were still in their first year of boarding. Planning, welcoming, inducting and settling pupils into boarding is an area of strength. Well thought-out, flexible arrangements allow for visits, meals and overnight stays to be made by prospective boarders, even those from overseas. Individual needs and preferences are identified and then put into practice on arrival, which helps pupils to settle.

An excellent 'buddy' system works well, where a new boarder is teamed with a more experienced one. Inspectors received excellent feedback both from pupils nearing the end of their first year and those acting as buddies to others. For example, a group took an inspector through the process from the perspective of someone new and in need of a buddy. Those who are new feel that it helps them to become more at ease with boarding and accelerates the development of friendships. Those providing the guidance appreciate the confidence that is shown in them by staff. This results in providing pupils with opportunities to take on greater responsibilities, giving them greater self-esteem and confidence. This is not a system unique to the school, but one where the school excels in its implementation.

Promoting and meeting the health needs of boarding pupils is outstanding. Excellent links with parents, coupled with the tenacity of staff, ensure that they receive all the relevant health information required. This allows for individual health needs and arrangements to meet those needs to be addressed at a local level. The recent introduction of recording systems that capture and bring together welfare and health issues allows for more detailed planning to take place. This is a significant development taken by the school which goes some way to improving outcomes for boarding pupils.

Boarding pupils feel that they are kept well informed, and they are satisfied with the levels of consultation. As well as formal exercises, such as weekly house meetings and boarders' council meetings, consultation is a feature of daily life. This is due to the excellent relationships between staff and pupils. These foster high levels of communication and consultation. The views of pupils are listened to and acted on. One example is the recent revision and rewriting of the pupil guide to boarding. A voluntary group of pupils worked with staff to produce a new guide. Minutes from meetings show the high level of consultation that took place and the levels of influence that pupils had in decision making. For instance, all pupils felt strongly that there should be a new page showing useful skills to have as a new boarder. The quality of the finished guide is excellent. This is an outstanding example of where pupils have had a real say and influenced decisions as a result of the in-depth consultation that has taken place.

Being in the boarding house gives an insight into the respect and fondness that staff and pupils have for each other. This creates an atmosphere where pupils can relax, play, cement friendships and feel at home. They benefit from experiencing an environment where individual needs, disabilities and identities are fully accepted. As they develop their interests and their confidence grows, they become more involved in community life.

Appreciating and celebrating different cultures is built into the daily life of the provision, for example by themed nights and strong involvement in community-based activities. As a result, pupils develop a greater appreciation of life outside the confines of school, giving them insight into areas that they may not have experienced before. Community-based involvement of pupils is viewed as a real strength of the school.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

The arrangements to protect and keep pupils safe are good. Safeguarding practice is professional. Policies are clear and regularly reviewed. Well-trained staff, together with a designated lead, understand safeguarding issues and procedures, ensuring that children and young people are well protected. Any child protection concerns are immediately

shared within the school and escalated as necessary to the appropriate local authority safeguarding hub. The lead governor for safeguarding meets regularly with the designated lead in the school, who monitors the progress made regarding any child in need.

The house has effective links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and utilise LSCB training. Senior staff have recently attended training in the issues of child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and 'Prevent' training, e-safety and female genital mutilation. The lessons learned from such training have contributed to a new behaviour management policy that has just been created by the school.

Staff have an excellent understanding of children's and young people's safety. They identify, understand and manage risks effectively. Clear, individualised risk assessments are in place and include known intervention strategies that staff follow. Regular reviews and updates to these documents ensure that staff have relevant, up-to-date information. Pupils confirm the view of staff that physical restraint is not used. They have no concerns about bullying, confirming that staff are quick to intervene should an incident or argument occur. There is an effective procedure for the investigation of complaints and any serious incidents.

Sufficient staffing is in place, with staff supervising pupils according to their age and status. They are well organised, with their deployment dependent on the needs of the group at that time. Within the framework of required supervision and support, pupils are encouraged to maximise their independence, with opportunities to have free time and use public transport.

The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is an immense strength of this school. Nurturing staff meet pupils' holistic needs. A pupil commented, 'It's like we are our own community down here, like a family, we are all there for each other. My mum keeps asking when can I come home and stay with her, I say I just love it, mum, as a boarder.'

Staff and volunteers are carefully vetted by procedures that comply with standards and follow current guidance. However, the ongoing monitoring is not sufficiently robust. For example, longer-serving staff are not being rechecked, resulting in not knowing about any subsequent criminal activity that could have taken place following recruitment. Relying on public knowledge and self-declaration is not appropriate. Potentially, pupils could be vulnerable through living alongside boarding staff who may be unsuitable.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Good

The head of the boarding house oversees and manages the daily operation of the boarding house. She is very experienced and is currently undertaking a two-year course, the Boarding School Association boarding certificate, which is an accredited qualification. She is well supported by an experienced team that has experienced little change since the last inspection. This gives the boarding provision stability and continuity. The headteacher, who is the designated head of boarding, has regular oversight and contact with the boarding house during the week.

The boarding staff team is experienced and well trained with regard to the school's core training programme. Staff support and respect the senior staff team, buying into the ethos, culture and working practices that have built up in the boarding house over the

years. They adopt a genuine team-centred approach which provides pupils with a consistency of care. The whole organisation and functioning of the boarding provision is child focused and aimed at meeting the ever changing needs of pupils. Although boarding staff work positively and cooperatively with external agencies and visiting professionals, capturing their views regarding the school's own performance is an area that can be improved.

The boarding staff work cohesively with school staff, with some having roles in both areas. This provides boarding pupils with the holistic, joined-up approach to boarding and education that is a real strength of the school. Supervision of boarding staff is provided on an informal, daily basis by senior boarding staff. Discussion around creating a more formalised approach that is clearly evidenced took place between inspectors and senior boarding staff. All boarding staff receive an annual appraisal, complemented by a half-yearly review of performance.

Boarding staff benefit from the core staff training programme which is active. There is a clear expectation of them to keep their core training modules up to date. Doing so helps them to reflect on their own practice to meet the needs of the pupils in their care. Although experienced, none of the boarding staff hold any form of professional qualification linked to caring for children and young people. Ways of introducing this generated discussion between inspectors and senior boarding staff.

Monitoring of the boarding provision is good, and lines of accountability are clear. Senior staff are active in this area, and are ably assisted by a group of governors who oversee boarding. They visit regularly and play an active role in the boarding provision. They are aware of issues and ongoing developments, providing oversight and advice. However, evidencing their input by way of written reports is still an area to be developed.

The school has an excellent record of compliance. Although no recommendations were made at the previous inspection, three areas were identified as areas for improvement. These have all been fully addressed, leading to improvements such as: the development and introduction of a boarding house annual training and development plan; boarding staff receiving specific training in the new framework and evaluation schedules that were recently introduced; and continuous review and evaluation of health and safety policies and procedures.

Boarding has high status within the whole school. A critical review of practice has led to changes being made, with new developments such as introducing improved recording of health and welfare issues, leading towards stronger planning, and the complete overhaul of prep. There is still much to do, with plans clearly laid out in the boarding development plan. Senior staff sought the views of inspectors as the inspection progressed, showing a willingness to contemplate change and to develop boarding practice further.

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

Unique reference number	136902
Social care unique reference number	SC034907
DfE registration number	

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	Boarding school
Number of boarders on roll	53
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 18
Headteacher	S Jackson
Date of previous boarding inspection	2 July 2013
Telephone number	01768 772952
Email address	boarding@keswick.cumbria.sch.uk

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