

Dallam School

South Westmorland Multi Academy Trust
Haverflatts Lane, Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7DD
Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Dallam School is day and boarding grammar school, which admits both boys and girls from Year 7 up to the sixth form. The school is operated by the South Westmorland Multi Academy Trust. Being a state school, all tuition is free. Pupils' parents pay only the costs of boarding, making boarding an affordable attraction of the school. The school is located over two sites, a day school and a separate boarding facility. The Heversham site accommodates the boarders and was founded in 1613. The buildings are among fields, woodland and recreational grounds. Within walking distance from here, the main school campus is located on the edge of the local town centre. All classroom education is provided on the school main site, with the grounds of Heversham being extensively used for recreational activity and sporting fixtures.

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 September 2018

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **good**

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Date of last inspection: 13 October 2015

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is good because:

- Boarders make it clear that they look forward to and enjoy being in the boarding provision. They confirm that they feel safe and secure and that the residential provision is a safe place to be. This view is supported in the written and verbal responses received from boarders and parents.
- Boarders benefit from being looked after by a dedicated, trained and well-managed residential staff team. The outstanding relationships formed between boarders and staff are strong, respectful and caring. Consultation between the two parties is high, which encourages and allows boarders to contribute positively to life in the boarding provision.
- Feedback from boarders and their parents demonstrates the value they put on the boarding provision. For example, creating social networks, developing strong and lasting friendships, integration into local communities and experiencing the extended curriculum where boarders learn new and practical skills, are all areas of strength highlighted. There is a strong recognition that the boarding experience contributes significantly to building boarders' confidence and self-esteem.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- Ensure that all allegations against staff are fully enquired into, in partnership with external safeguarding agencies and in line with statutory guidance. This includes ensuring that full internal investigations under employment law and disciplinary procedures occur when necessary, regardless of other investigations, such as those conducted by the police and children's social care services.
- Provide training and guidance to boarding staff to enable them to support boarders who identify themselves as being from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.
- Enhance and upskill the boarding staff professional and personal development by undertaking a qualification in residential care of children and young people.
- Build on the independent listening service by bringing an independent person into the school whom boarders can meet and build a relationship with.
- Ensure that the school's governing body monitors all aspects of boarders' welfare effectively, particularly around managing safeguarding within the school.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Boarders make outstanding progress across all aspects of their lives as a result of attending the residential service. Boarders thoroughly enjoy their experiences and are extremely proud of the rewards they earn for improvements in both academic and outdoor education achievement.

Boarders grow and thrive both socially and emotionally in comparison to their individual starting points. This positive development and the feel-good factor when in residence enable the boarders to maintain school attendance and feel safe when other aspects of their lives outside school may be challenging. The school is represented by 32 different nationalities and this international characteristic and cultural diversity in the school gives boarders a strong sense of identity and ethos within the houses.

The boarding staff offer an excellent level of care to the boarders. Staff work well with boarders, encouraging them to be involved in different aspects of the school, including sports, activities and volunteering within the community. For example, Outdoor Education, Duke of Edinburgh award and the Young Enterprise scheme. These opportunities develop the boarders' social and emotional well-being as well as improving their physical health.

Staff have a good awareness of the different needs of the boarders because of the appropriate school-based plans. This enhances relationships between boarders and staff, as staff work to meet their needs. However, it was identified that further improvements could be made to support the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community within the school.

Behaviour management systems encourage positive behaviours throughout boarders' time in school and boarding. Boarders' views are sought regarding the development of boarding and they are encouraged to be involved with different forums to improve their experiences throughout school.

Boarders are proud of their accommodation, enjoying the individualised nature of their rooms and talking positively about sharing rooms with their peers. Different areas are available to boarders to both spend time with their friends and spend time on their own if they wish to. The extensive grounds of the school give boarders a chance to spend time in the open.

Boarders' basic health needs are responded to well by the health specialist. Improving the mental and emotional health of boarders is a key area for the residential service, with sixth formers attending a mindfulness course. Partnership working with mental health agencies ensures that boarders receive good support with their mental and emotional health. Medication administration is undertaken well,

with regular monitoring of records to keep pupils safe.

Mealtimes are sociable occasions where everyone eats and chats together. Boarders are generally very positive about the meals provided.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Boarding staff and managers take very good care to keep boarders safe at all times. Boarders are encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety, but this is proportionate to their age and developing maturity, with younger boarders having greater oversight, which is appropriate to their age. The school and boarding rules are clear, and these help boarders and their families understand why safeguarding measures and other boundaries are in place.

Boarding staff and managers know the boarders well and build trusting and effective relationships with them. They understand safeguarding issues, and this helps to keep boarders safer. However, there is insufficient oversight and governance of safeguarding arrangements. The governors have not been routinely overseeing safeguarding practices, including the safeguarding of boarders. This weakens the overall effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for the boarders.

Allegations against staff are reported promptly to appropriate external safeguarding agencies, such as the designated officer and the police. Guidance from these services is followed and actions are recorded. However, there has been an over-reliance on police findings that showed there should be no further action taken to provide reassurance that all is well. Governors' investigations have not been fully completed and overseen to establish whether there is a need for other actions, for example, under the school's staff disciplinary and capability arrangements. Arrangements put in place since the new headteacher's arrival, including strengthening the governing body and the multi-academy trust, and commissioning an external safeguarding audit, are positive.

Great care is taken to ensure that boarders live in a safe environment. The buildings and the external grounds are maintained to a very high standard and fully comply with mandatory health and safety standards.

Boarding staff adopt excellent systems to know the whereabouts of boarders at all times. Procedures are in place for boarders who do not report in at the allocated time.

Liaison with parents and guardians is routine, clear and effective. There is a careful balance struck between advising parents of serious issues and providing support to boarders who are exhibiting mildly concerning behaviours, such as being withdrawn or having peer relationship difficulties, which does not warrant informing parents in the first instance. The careful attention paid to noting relatively minor changes in boarders' behaviour means that the school can put in support arrangements, which are monitored for effectiveness, and this helps boarders improve. The services of an

external counsellor have led to boarders who are in receipt of counselling to report that they feel better and are able to cope.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The boarding provision is led by an enthusiastic and forward-looking headteacher, deputy and head of boarding. There has been a significant change in the senior leadership team and governance since the last inspection, with all being keen to develop the school further. There is a culture of high expectations for the development of the service and the outcomes of the pupils.

Boarding houses are well staffed, with a diverse range of staff who show a real passion and interest in the lives of the boarders. Consistently positive interactions were seen throughout the inspection, with boarders highlighting those staff that they get on best with and whom they would turn to for support.

The senior leadership team has regular meetings with the head and deputy head of boarding, and undertakes monitoring of the boarding provision. This inclusive approach ensures that all views are secured to help improve the boarding provision.

External monitoring by governors of the residential setting is regular and contributes to the developments throughout the school. Reports, however, lack detail and do not place safeguarding at the centre of the monitoring activity.

Boarders thrive in the boarding provision because leaders and staff place boarders at the centre of the service. Staff make sure that pupils have good information about their rights, including how to complain. While boarders are confident that staff will act if they have any concerns or complaints, there is not an independent visitor whom boarders can identify with as someone whom they can take their issues to.

Staff feel that they are well qualified and there are records of different courses completed. However, there is no defined qualification that all boarding staff must complete to enhance their professional and personal practice. This could affect their awareness of pertinent changes or current thinking in boarding practice.

The school has a development plan that examines a range of areas of necessary progress. Boarding forms part of this plan and ensures that the provision is continually improving.

Staff are supported well by senior staff. Supervision discussions are held regarding the boarders and how their needs are to be met.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC040074

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr NJ Whittle

Type of school: boarding school

Telephone number: 01539 565 165

Email address: enquiries@dallam.eu

Inspectors

Elaine Clare: social care inspector

Sheena Doyle: HMI



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence>, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: <http://www.gov.uk/ofsted>

No.

© Crown copyright 2018