

Rikkyo School in England

Rikkyo School in England Trust

The Rikkyo School in England, Guildford Road, Rudgwick, Horsham, West Sussex
RH12 3BE

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

The Rikkyo School in England was first established in 1972 and is situated on the West Sussex/Surrey border, close to the village of Rudgwick. Rikkyo is an independent, co-educational school acknowledged by the Department of Education in Japan. All the boarding accommodation is located within the school grounds. At the time of the inspection there were 169 students boarding at the school. The boarding provision was last inspected in May 2017.

Inspection dates: 30 April to 2 May 2019

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	good
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The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 16 May 2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The culture and ethos of the school and boarding provision promote a 'one big family' approach. This has created an environment where everyone shows respect and consideration for the welfare of others. The approach is deeply embedded in practice. The teachers provide all the care in the boarding houses, and their relationships with the students are excellent. The inspectors observed staff providing nurture and support, and saw that students were clearly at ease and wanting to be in the company of the staff caring for them.

The admissions process is child focused and great care is taken to ensure that students are made to feel welcome and settle quickly. Prospective students are given the opportunity to visit the school before becoming boarders, and to meet the staff and the older students. Older students play a significant role in welcoming new students to the school. All the new students spoken to during this inspection said that the older students were friendly, welcoming and supportive. Staff quickly identify new students who experience homesickness and respond with sensitive, practical solutions. Students quickly develop a sense of belonging and feel part of the school community.

There are many opportunities for students to express their views on the standard of the boarding provision and the support and care they receive. These include a school council and an annual survey. The students were able to give examples of where their views and suggestions had been listened to and acted upon. However, it was established during this inspection that despite the students consistently expressing dissatisfaction with the quality of the meals, effective action has not been taken to address the situation.

The students have made their views known about the quality, and in some cases the quantity, of the meals on several occasions. The inspectors joined the students for two meals and the quality of the food provided was variable. It was also established that the students do not have the facilities to make healthy snacks and hot drinks in the boarding houses, although snacks are available to students in the dining hall during official breaks.

Healthcare arrangements are excellent. The nursing staff take great care to ensure that they are familiar with each student's individual healthcare needs. In one case, the nurse travelled to Japan prior to a new student being admitted, to ensure that she had a full understanding of the student's medical condition. Since the inspection in May 2017, staff have increased their awareness of the need to support students who are experiencing mental health difficulties. A counsellor has been appointed specifically to ensure that students can access timely support when needed. Records indicate that staff are vigilant in relation to the potential for students to become overwhelmed by the expectation to prioritise their studies.

The school provides a good range of sporting and leisure activities on site. There are also good opportunities for the students to visit places of interest and experience British culture. Leaders and managers have recognised that the risk assessments for these activities have not always been thorough, and have taken action to address this.

The school's 'Homestay' project, which enables students to have a short break with an approved local family, further enhances the opportunities for students to experience the British way of life. The project is well managed and is popular with students and their parents.

There are effective arrangements in place for students to keep in contact with their parents and families. These include video contact, telephone calls and email. The parents spoken to during this inspection said that they are kept informed of their children's progress and all expressed high levels of satisfaction with the care being provided and academic opportunities available.

The boarding provision provides a warm, nurturing environment where the students are supported to achieve the high academic standards expected of them. The 'one big family' approach is inclusive and contributes towards creating an environment where staff and students care for one another, show respect and celebrate successes together.

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

Overall, the standard of safeguarding practice at the school ensures that the potential for students to come to harm is minimised. The culture and ethos underpinning practice are central to the positive, nurturing relationships that develop between boarding staff and students. This is a strong protective factor because boarding staff quickly identify issues that may have a negative impact on a student's well-being, and take effective action to address emerging concerns.

The students spoken to during this inspection consistently said that they feel safe at the school, and that there are a range of adults who they would speak to if they had any concerns. These adults include teachers who provide care in the dormitories, the chaplain, the independent listener and the school counsellor. There is a strong culture of peer support, with older pupils taking an interest in the welfare of younger boarders. Any concerns that the older pupils may identify are appropriately shared with the boarding staff.

There have been two occasions when this overall standard of good practice has been compromised, both in similar circumstances. Effective action was not taken when students took, or attempted to take, inappropriate images of their peers. The designated safeguarding lead teacher did not follow the school's safeguarding policy

and seek external advice on how the concerns should be managed. Consequently, there was not an effective investigation and the students involved left the school when their parents decided to withdraw them.

The behaviour of students is excellent. Students rarely transgress the rules and boundaries that are in place to keep them safe. They do not leave the school site unless they are accompanied by staff and they do not access the internet unless they are supervised and are using school devices. The staff recognise that the students need to be familiar with the risks they may face when out in the community or accessing the internet. There are effective programmes in place to raise the students' awareness of how to keep themselves safe. No students have gone missing from the school since the last inspection and there have been no occasions when physical intervention has been used to manage a student's behaviour.

Creative approaches have been taken to ensure that the students are aware of the negative impact bullying can have. The work undertaken by students to develop anti-bullying literature is of an exceptional standard. Students of all ages who were spoken to during this inspection were unanimous in the view that bullying is not a concern at this school.

The staff quickly identify students' vulnerabilities. Effective action has been taken when there have been indicators that a student may resort to self-harming behaviour or adopt an unhealthy eating pattern. All students with a known vulnerability have care plans which clearly define the actions staff must take to ensure the student does not come to harm. There are effective processes through which staff can share information, ensuring that there is a collective approach to supporting vulnerable students.

The head of boarding has only recently taken up his post, although he has worked at the school for many years. He has also taken on the role of the designated safeguarding lead and appropriate training has been booked. The deputy designated safeguarding lead has a clear understanding of the responsibilities that go with the role, including the procedures that should be followed when a student is identified as being at risk of harm. She was able to give a thorough account of the actions that would be taken if any student was deemed to be susceptible to extremist views.

Staff recruitment practice is exemplary. Great care is taken to ensure that adults who could pose a risk to the students are not employed at the school. There is also a high standard of practice in recruiting adults to become carers with the school's 'Homestay' project.

The health and safety of students is given priority. Maintenance issues are identified in a timely way and rectified quickly. Effective measures are in place to ensure that fire safety practice is maintained to a high standard. Personal emergency evacuation plans are written for a student as soon as it becomes apparent that the student concerned could experience difficulties in an emergency. The location of the school

presents challenges in terms of site security. There was a recent low-level security incident. Although this did not impact on the safety of the students, leaders and managers did not take this as an opportunity to conduct a review of the security measures in place.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The headteacher and head of boarding are relatively new in post, although both have gained significant experience during their long careers at the school. Detailed planning for this transition was not evident during this inspection. For example, the two leaders were not familiar with the content of the last two reports completed by the visiting trustee. However, there has been no decline in the quality of care being provided for the students. This is partly attributable to the oversight of the school's compliance manager.

There are effective systems for monitoring practice and the standard of care. Since the last inspection, in May 2017, there has been a significant increase in monitoring activities undertaken by the governing body. Regular visits have been undertaken by a trustee, and the boarding provision has been scrutinised as part of her monitoring activities. The headteacher and head of boarding attend trustees' meetings in London, where they are held to account for how the boarding provision is performing. Safeguarding practice has been reviewed at some of these meetings. There is not a trustee with specific responsibility for monitoring safeguarding practice at the school. Visits to the school are also undertaken by the chair of the parents' association, and this provides an additional source of external scrutiny.

There is an established process for obtaining the views and opinions of the students, and this strengthens the quality of care monitoring process. Detailed records are kept of the students' academic progress and social development. Prior to admission, new students complete an admission essay where they outline their plans and hopes for the future. This is an effective tool for helping students to reflect on their progress and is used as a benchmark for success.

Leaders and managers have taken steps to address all the recommendations made following the last inspection. As a result, all staff have now completed good-quality training that will enable them to provide the standard of care specified in the national minimum standards. Staff feel well supported in their role. There are formal arrangements in place for staff to be able to reflect on their practice and plan how the welfare needs of students will be met. The staff adopt a collaborative approach to caring for the students, and this helps them develop a sense of consistency and security.

The school's admissions process is thorough, clearly defined and implemented in practice. This approach ensures that leaders and managers have a good understanding of the students' needs before they commence boarding. These needs

are taken into account when allocating dormitory bedrooms, as are the views of the parents and the students. The head of boarding closely monitors how new students are settling at the school, and takes a flexible, nurturing approach when it becomes clear that a student needs additional support.

Although there is no formal development plan for the boarding provision, leaders and managers have a clear vision of their priority areas with regard to securing continuous improvement. The head of boarding is aware that one boarding house does not provide quite the same level of high-quality accommodation seen in the other houses. He demonstrates a determination to address this issue. The headteacher anticipates difficulties that could emerge, for example regarding the ability to employ staff from Japan. He is planning ahead to mitigate the potential negative impact this may have.

Leaders and managers maintain excellent working relationships with parents. They have also taken a proactive approach to engaging with the local community and developing links with other schools in the area. This is ensuring that the students have increased opportunities to experience and learn about British culture and values.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools:

- 8.1 All boarders, including those with special dietary, medical or religious needs, are provided with meals which are adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety.
- 8.3 In addition to main meals, boarders have access to drinking water and to food or the means of hygienically preparing food at reasonable times. Schools are sensitive to boarders' individual needs in this respect.
- 11.1 The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Recommendations

- Undertake a review of the measures in place to ensure security of the site is sufficient to prevent students and staff from coming to harm. Take action to address any weaknesses in site security that are identified during the review process.
- Ensure that effective succession planning takes place when there is a change of leadership within the boarding provision.
- Ensure that the school's governing body consistently monitors the standard of child protection and safeguarding practice at the school.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people 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: SC014681

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Dr Toru Okano

Type of school: Boarding school

Telephone number: 01403 822 107

Email address: toruokano@rikkyo.uk

Inspectors

Stephen Collett: social care inspector (lead)

Sarah Olliver: social care inspector

John Pledger: social care inspector

Daniel Healy: social care inspector



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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

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