

# Liverpool College

Liverpool College Independent School Trust

Queen's Drive, Liverpool, Merseyside L18 8BG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this boarding school

Liverpool College is an academy with state boarding. The boarding facilities are for male and female students aged 16 to 19 years. All attend the sixth form. Most boarders are from Europe. The purpose-built boarding accommodation is opposite the main school. The boarding provision accommodates a maximum of 34 students. It is overseen by a full-time head of boarding. At the time of inspection, there were 34 students in residence.

### Inspection dates: 9 to 11 March 2020

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

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

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The boarding school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** good

**Date of last inspection:** 28 June 2016

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Boarders make excellent progress in education and thoroughly enjoy their experiences. All are in sixth form and are studying for a range of A levels. A recent inspection of education found the school to be outstanding. Inspectors of education noted that the curriculum offer for sixth-form students is ambitious, and students' achievement is excellent. Boarding acts as a springboard to their chosen future academic life or career. Boarding helps them to learn about, and understand, core British values and experiences. They make outstanding progress in learning social and functional independence skills.

Boarders told the inspector that the things that are best about boarding are the friendships they enjoy, the activities, and the feeling of being a family. They stay in exceptionally well appointed accommodation. Each boarder has a single room with their own bathroom. Small groups share kitchen and lounge areas. Many like to cook, and they enjoy sharing food from their culture with other boarders. They are integrated well into the large sixth form, and many make friends with local day pupils. They enjoy exploring English cities and have recently begun to enjoy activities such as walking in the countryside. The school has appointed experienced and qualified outdoor leaders for this purpose.

The boarding community has a strong sense of pastoral care. Boarders are proud of the way that they look after each other. Final year students share their positive experience with new students. They help them to make the emotional and social adjustments to living away from home. Staff are always on hand to care for students who need additional adult support. All say that they are confident that staff will help them. One boarder said, 'Whatever the problem, staff are going to help us to sort it out.' Staff create strong links with boarders' families and communicate well about any concerns they may have. The head of boarding provides a termly report to parents about each boarder's academic achievements. She takes care to provide information about social activities and relationships, and how well their child is doing in boarding. This reassures parents that their child is thriving away from home.

Boarders benefit from seamless support from the whole school team. All staff have a keen eye for any boarder who may need additional support. Effective recording and reporting include daily handovers with the head of boarding. Any concerns are shared promptly. The school uses well-established links with local external well-being services. For example, boarders are being supported to come to terms with bereavement and with emotional upset. The pastoral team at school regularly reviews their progress to make sure that the help they are getting meets their needs. Communication with parents about their child's unique needs is exemplary.

The head of sixth form oversees boarding for one night each week. His presence is much appreciated. It makes him accessible to boarders for additional or informal

learning support and advice. He is better able to help them because he understands their boarding experience. All senior sixth-form staff drive boarders' academic achievement. Outstanding careers advice and support prepares students for interviews and university applications. There is a rich programme of lectures provided by professionals and industry employers. This introduces students to the range of possibilities open to them. A holistic approach to education means that staff understand the importance of helping students to become rounded individuals. This fosters a strong sense of security and well-being among boarders. It means that all reach their target of attaining university or apprenticeship offers. All boarders believe that their boarding experience is first class.

Pupil voice is strong in boarding. All boarders are encouraged to have their say, and staff listen to them and adapt the boarding experience to reflect their wishes. There is lively conversation about food, about rules and sanctions, and about the range of activities and opportunities to increase their independence. All boarders say that staff treat them with respect and care about them. Most like to use the boarding opportunity to explore boundaries and get ready for university life. They say that staff help them to think about their choices and values. This helps boarders to learn to take responsibility for themselves.

Boarders have an effective induction to boarding life. They are given good information prior to arrival, and staff encourage a visit as part of their application to the school. Boarders have created an excellent video about what it is like to start at an English school. With frankness and good humour, they describe the ups and downs of settling into boarding. They emphasise that Liverpool College is a great place to come to.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

Boarders say that they feel safe. Enthusiastic and caring staff encourage them to take part in a range of activities to develop their self-esteem and social skills. From admission until they leave, staff identify boarders' strengths and vulnerabilities. They nurture careful development that helps them to experience growing independence and learn to problem-solve any difficulties that arise. Staff work hard to build warm, trusting and respectful relationships. Boarders flourish in the positive and safe environment of the boarding house.

Leaders promote a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. All leaders and staff are trained in how to help boarders to stay safe. They share promptly any concerns they have about boarders. Leaders are vigilant in ensuring that a transparent safeguarding environment is maintained. They make sure that recruitment follows good safeguarding practice. The physical environment is well maintained. Leaders have enhanced security measures to help young people to feel secure. Leaders work with external agencies and the local authority to make sure that any child gets timely and effective support and protection.

Boarders learn how to take responsibility for their behaviour and choices. In general, their conduct is excellent. Staff are trained in restorative thinking. It underpins the way that staff maintain boundaries and rules. There have been rare occasions when staff have managed situations related to drug or alcohol misuse. Staff implement effective communication with senior staff to seek advice and make sure that they respond proactively and effectively to ensure that boarders are safe. Staff work further with all boarders to offer a chance for reflection, education about risks and vulnerability, and any impact on boarders' futures.

Lessons learned are thoughtful and encompass staff actions as well as understanding the exploratory world of those learning to become responsible young adults. Boarders appreciate the calm and sensitive manner in which staff challenge them and discipline them. This has included those who have had fixed-term exclusions for their behaviour. Letters from those pupils highlight their steep learning curve, and how they intend to approach such risk-taking in the future. Parents and boarders recognise the restraint and care with which senior leaders approach such difficulties. It enables boarders to seek help from staff when they are worried about their friends' welfare. This helps to preserve a safe and trusting boarding community.

The school provides a wide range of sessions from external bodies to educate boarders about the risks associated with drugs and alcohol, and how to enjoy safe sexual relationships. This equips boarders with the information they need to make safe and positive choices.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

Leaders and managers show exceptional levels of competency. They model commitment, collaboration and dedication to the core values of the school and continually seek to refine and improve the service they offer. This provides the very best experience for boarders that improves their progress, achievement and attainment across a range of skills and attributes. It is a constantly evolving environment that focuses on the needs of all children at the school. Leaders embrace boarders as a small but significant element of school life.

Leaders and managers demonstrate commitment to the whole child. They aim to help boarders to excel and stretch their potential. They do this by offering very high levels of holistic support and encouragement. Academic progress is important, but this is fully integrated into expectations about supporting all students to experience healthy development through secure attachments and growing confidence. They leave with a toolbox of skills that will help them in their future lives.

Boarders' individual needs are prioritised. Leaders ensure that staff have realistic expectations that enable boarders to become self-sufficient in emotional regulation and decision-making. There are many and varied systems and processes that offer support across the whole site. Professional collaboration and communication are

demonstrated in well-coordinated approaches to give boarders just the right amount of support to help them to thrive.

Leaders have a clear understanding of boarders' progress throughout. They know how well new boarders are settling, to how much improvement and progress they are making academically. There is a careful balance of self-directed leisure time, well-managed daily prep, and the support systems that surround individual boarders. Prefect and peer mentoring involve students in empathic support and enable boarders to accept guidance and support in a more relaxed way.

The head of boarding ensures personal communication between school and boarding. She uses reflective practice to explore the quality of boarders' experiences. This could be further developed into formal supervision sessions for all staff to support them to think about how they can improve the quality of care provided. Additional support needs, such as mental health training, have been provided by an external agency to ensure that children are appropriately cared for. The impact of this is seen in the high-quality and trusting professional and interpersonal relationships throughout the school.

Leaders and managers promote and model a culture of tolerance, inclusiveness and understanding across the school and boarding provision. Boarders said that their culture and ethnicity are respected, and they do not experience negativity from other students. They say that school lays a positive foundation for relationships to flourish. A strength of the school and boarding is the way staff support children who have additional needs to accept help without fear of being stigmatised.

Governance is strong. The head of boarding provides regular reports to governors. Individuals have key roles and responsibilities. This includes current boarding arrangements and the future of boarding provision. They provide constructive criticism and challenge to drive improvements. They have identified actions to further promote positive behaviour support approaches. They are improving the range of training that all boarding staff access. They are researching how to provide boarders with opportunities to take appropriate risks. The governor responsible for safeguarding ensures that all the necessary information is discussed in a cross-disciplinary group. Their priority is that children are safe. They monitor staff actions and promote reflective learning following incidents. Leaders and governors consistently strive to help all children to flourish.

All recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed. An aspirational boarding self-evaluation plan has highlighted development needs and sets out expectations for progress. The boarding provision is achieving its child-centred aims and objectives.

When boarders' needs are not being met by external agencies, the school prompts and chases professional support. Staff also put in place the school's own helping strategies to ensure that they are supported. There are good relationships with the

local community and all students give of their time to support charity initiatives. Excellent links with other boarding schools ensure that good practice is shared.

The school development plan recognises the need to rethink the boarding offer. Brave and sterling work is being undertaken to accommodate in the future more local children on both an extended day and full boarding experience. The local authority speaks highly of the collaborative and innovative approach of the school, and its preparedness to work with more complex children who have significant needs. This will build on the considerable success already achieved for those who currently attend as day pupils. Planning is assiduous, including areas of international research about good practice. New living accommodation is being prepared. Leaders are reviewing requirements for staff qualifications and experience to ensure that all boarders have a positive experience.

This school is an excellent multi-layered community, where boarders from overseas blend in extraordinarily well with more local children, and are thoroughly enjoying their experience.

## **What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Recommendations**

- To promote continuing improvement in the quality of boarding, leaders should ensure that all boarding staff have opportunities for meeting as a group and taking part in individual formal supervision.

## **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:** SC411519

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Hans van Mourik Broekman

**Type of school:** Boarding school

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## **Inspector**

Denise Jolly, Social Care Inspector



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