

The Royal School Wolverhampton

The Royal School Wolverhampton Academy Trust

Penn Road, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV3 0EG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

The Royal School Wolverhampton is a state-funded free school. The school is non-selective and non-denominational, offering education for pupils, irrespective of gender, aged from four to 19 years old. Boarding places are available for pupils from 11 years of age.

The residential provision comprises two houses situated on the main school site. Accommodation is in shared and single rooms for up to 120 pupils.

There are 1,363 pupils on roll and, of these, 101 pupils board.

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 February 2020

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: good

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The boarding staff have successfully created a nurturing, supportive and inclusive environment. There are a wide range of international boarders with a broad range of needs and complexities; these include unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). The staff provide strong pastoral and academic support to ensure that the boarders' holistic needs are met. Boarders, parents and professionals are unanimous in their praise and describe the boarding provision as having a warm, welcoming, 'family' atmosphere.

There are established links between the boarding and the academic staff. The staff know when boarders require additional support. The liaison with other school staff, parents and professionals is seamless. The continuous sharing of information helps monitor boarders' individual welfare and encourages them to achieve. This joint working enhances the benefits of boarding.

The staff provide a very clear daily structure. Boarders understand the expectations, including daily tasks and routines. These include ample time for school work, revision and activities. The boarders' academic progress compares favourably with peers who do not access the boarding provision. The data analysis of academic results shows that boarders outperform day pupils in both mathematics and English.

The staff have high expectations and are ambitious for boarders. Boarders' careers and destinations are discussed early on. The staff support the boarders to make choices that help them to meet the eligibility requirements for their career aspirations. This includes boarders with vocational aspirations and skills, elite athletes and academics. The staff strongly encourage boarders to develop their individual strengths and consider their long-term goals. The staff focus on effort, potential ability and interests. This promotes a culture where achievements are valued. Consequently, boarders excel.

A recently introduced 'boarding passport' covers a wide range of practical experiences. British values, office skills, employability skills and life skills are all taught and practised. This structured approach is beneficial in building broad skills in preparation for independent adult life.

The wide and exciting array of activities on offer suits boarders' interests. These activities include boarders' ideas and their specific interests. The staff encourage boarders to develop their ideas into activity plans. Boarders and day pupils put together a business plan for trip to Gambia. They planned the trip and visited Gambian schools, gaining rich experiences.

The staff prioritise boarders' physical and mental health with equal importance. There are accessible staffed medical facilities for boarders who are unwell. The school counsellor supports boarders' emotional well-being. The staff make appropriate

referrals to children and adolescent mental health services when boarders require this. The staff are clear that positive mental health ensures boarders' emotional well-being and helps them achieve.

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

The staff safely manage a wide variety of trips, outings and activities, all of which are assessed for risk and organised safely. Free time is agreed in line with the boarders' age and behaviour.

The staff provide fair rules and clear boundaries. They have high expectations of boarders' conduct. Boarding staff provide positive and respectful role models. Their dedication and commitment to boarders' welfare is reflected in boarders' behaviour, which is generally very good. The staff manage any incidents of inappropriate and unsafe behaviours quickly and effectively. Sanctions are proportionate and meaningful. The boarders rarely repeat unwanted behaviours, and this demonstrates that they learn from sanctions.

Boarders' electronic devices are managed safely, and they understand the rationale behind this. The boarding staff demonstrate a clear understanding of safety around the use of mobile phones and are alert to potential risks and exploitation. Monitoring and internet filters protect boarders' online safety and this is reinforced in school.

Senior managers are fully aware of the role of the designated officer in the local authority and they have developed a positive working relationship. The headteacher makes appropriate referrals. The headteacher has managed two recent allegations about boarding staff quickly and effectively. The staff have annual safeguarding training and there are clear systems in place for the reporting and recording of any safeguarding concerns.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

A new head of boarding is in post. He has ample experience for the role. His role also includes teaching. This enhances the liaison between the academic and the boarding staff. There have been significant changes to the senior boarding staff team. These are positive and have improved the boarders' overall experiences.

The head of boarding has reviewed the established systems and routines and identified areas for improvement. There are several new initiatives, including the introduction of boarding registration software and formal staff performance management systems.

The staff are of a high calibre and provide positive role models. A diverse blend of culture, gender and age ensure that boarders can relate to the staff. Students on their gap year and ex-pupils supplement the team. This enhances the staff team.

The staff work exceptionally well with other professionals and the local authority.

Staff from the local authority describe this as 'stand out' practice. They described how this has come about by the 'school's flexibility and willingness to engage differently'. The staff work in close partnership with the local authority to support UASC, children looked after and children in need. The boarders who need assistance or extra support are given these. The headteacher leads a culture that is generous and caring and one in which vulnerable boarders are assisted towards their chosen career destinations and life choices.

Any parental concerns are addressed quickly and these are fully investigated. However, complaints are not always recorded as such. This presents an unrealistic picture. The headteacher responds to complaints and resolves these with parents in line with the complaints policy. However, the categorisation of complaints could be improved to enable better monitoring.

The boarding staff hold clear responsibilities in each house and have defined roles. Health and safety issues are managed by the estates team. A big refurbishment is planned but there are required works that have previously been identified and a lack of evidence that these have been done. This requires better oversight.

The governors share the school's vision and ethos and have relevant experience of education, boarding, safeguarding and finance. They support the headteacher and the senior staff and share their vision for the school.

Parents and professionals provided a number of positive testimonies. These include:

- 'Boarding is fantastic. Everything we have asked for they have done. Can't thank them enough.'
- 'Any problem, they will sort it out. They listen to us as parents and also the boarders. They are brilliant. The whole set up. Can't fault them.'
- 'Their open day was impressive. When [name of boarder] started, the welcome he received was very positive. As well as being looked after... they also get enough free time.'
- 'The headmaster is wonderful and always helpful and accommodating and so are the staff.'

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

- Continue to modernise and refurbish the boarding accommodation.
- Ensure that the safeguarding records and the complaints records include all of the correspondence and the actions taken.
- Provide better accountability in the oversight and monitoring of the health and safety arrangements.

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: 1267025

Headteacher: Mr Mark Heywood

Type of school: Boarding school

Telephone number: 01902 341 230

Email address: mh@theroyal.school

Inspectors

Deirdra Keating, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Natalie Burton, Social Care Inspector

Mark Jackson, Social Care Inspector

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