

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 a state-funded academy with boarding. The boarding facilities are from Year 7 through to sixth form. The purpose-built boarding accommodation is opposite the main school. The boarding provision accommodates a maximum of 17 students. It is overseen by a full-time head of boarding. There is one boarding house, offering a mix of dormitory, double and single accommodation. At the time of inspection, there were 12 students in residence. The boarding provision also supports day boarders.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 June 2023

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.

Date of last inspection: 9 March 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The head of care and house parent have positive relationships with the boarders. They are confident and competent and demonstrate the consistent support they provide to the boarders to help them settle into boarding. They are enthusiastic about the progress the boarders make and support them to be aspirational and hardworking. Inspectors found that the boarding staff work with education staff to ensure that there is regular and effective communication in relation to children's progress and development.

The induction into boarding is well planned. Children's specific needs and interests are carefully considered before they arrive. On the rare occasions that children struggle to settle in, leaders and managers work closely with parents to agree a support plan to sustain their child's boarding placement.

Children's life opportunities are improved because of their boarding experiences. All boarders spoke positively about the close friendships and connections they make with each other. Boarders access a wide range of extra-curricular activities, to enable them to develop their skills, confidence and relationships with their peers outside of boarding.

The boarding experience has a positive impact on the social and emotional well-being of children. Staff are proactive in their approach to supporting positive mental health and the emotional well-being of the children. Staff are trained in mental health first aid to enable them to support boarders effectively and to keep them safe. Children told inspectors that they are comfortable and confident talking with chosen boarding staff about personal issues, including their mental well-being.

Parents are complimentary about their children's boarding experiences. One parent said, 'She is in extremely good hands. All the boarding staff, as well as the academic faculty, take care of my daughter very well. It's peace of mind. I would recommend this school to all my friends and families.'

Boarders have a number of opportunities to share their views, through house meetings, pupil voice, an independent listener, an anonymous post box and online systems. They told inspectors that they know how to make a complaint and there is a clear process in place. However, some children said that they are not confident that when they have raised concerns about the operation of the boarding house that action has been taken to improve their experiences.

The introduction of day boarding for children has been a support to parents and provides children with additional support during after-school hours. It also provides an introduction to boarding for families should their children need to or wish to board at the school in the future.

The provision of recreational activities on and off the school site is good. There are lots of opportunities for children to take part in volunteering in the local community, fundraising and taking part in charity work. Boarders have been actively involved in raising money for and supporting charities such as the Dogs Trust, local homeless shelters and Cancer Research.

The boarding provision is clean and tidy and provides suitable accommodation for children. The boarders are encouraged to personalise the house with pictures and their own artwork. There is an agreed programme of maintenance and redecoration work to be rolled out through the summer months ready for the boarders returning to school at the beginning of the new term.

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

The safety and well-being of boarders are a priority in the boarding provision. Boarding staff have a good knowledge of individual boarders. This enables them to identify and respond to children's changing developmental needs and help to reduce risk. Boarders are provided with all the additional support they require to keep them safe, such as access to external mental health support and therapy.

Designated safeguarding managers and the safeguarding governor have a good understanding of multi-agency safeguarding practice. They ensure that safeguarding practice is monitored, reviewed and updated. They have the required training and provide safeguarding support and guidance to the boarding staff on managing a range of complex safeguarding issues.

During the inspection, boarders raised concerns with the inspectors about staff practice and conduct in the boarding provision. They said that they had not felt confident or comfortable raising these concerns previously. During the inspection, children did speak to leaders and managers about their concerns. The school principal took immediate action to explore these concerns, liaise with external safeguarding agencies and instigate an internal investigation.

Leaders and managers acknowledged that a proactive approach needs to be implemented to improve boarders' confidence in raising concerns about their experiences in boarding, and reassure them that their views will be listened to and taken seriously.

Behaviour management strategies are effective. There have been no physical interventions used. Boarders do not go missing from the school. This reflects a settled cohort of boarders. Inspectors found that the boarders are kept occupied and their whereabouts are monitored appropriately by boarding staff.

Boarders are supported to keep themselves safe online and in the community. The boarding provision works in partnership with the school to educate children about any potential dangers.

The school has a clear policy and thorough approach to managing any potential incidents of bullying. Boarders are encouraged to live with one another respectfully. There is not a bullying culture between children. Children's relationships with each other are a strength of the boarding provision. Staff teach the boarders to develop strategies to manage any potential conflict and use mediation to resolve any minor issues.

The physical environment for boarders is safe and secure and protects them from risk of harm. The head of boarding ensures that regular monitoring of the premises is undertaken, and all health and safety issues are dealt with promptly.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and managers work together and have a shared and ambitious vision for the boarding provision in improving children's lives. They know the plans for individual boarders and are focused on supporting boarders into further education and adulthood. Leaders and managers are innovative in their approach to change and progression. They are positive role models for the boarders and advocate on their behalf when required.

Leaders and managers recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the boarding provision. They monitor boarders' progress effectively and can demonstrate progression over a sustained period. They use research-based practice and their individual studies to promote boarders' positive well-being and to review the effectiveness of their admissions process for children joining the boarding provision.

Boarding staff regularly receive support to develop their practice and skills, on a one-to-one basis and as a group. This includes safeguarding-specific supervisions and having regular reviews during their probationary period. Staff appraisal targets are focused on developing the service and promoting staff's personal development. Staff told inspectors that they feel well supported by leaders and managers.

Induction, training and professional development for boarding staff are monitored effectively. Staff are trained in a variety of areas that are specific to boarders' needs, which means that children are helped by adults who have the knowledge and skills to support them. The principal has accessed additional resources to ensure that there is continuous staff professional development, with boarding staff working towards additional qualifications in relation to their roles and interests.

The boarding development plan is focused and drives improvements in children's experiences of boarding. It evidences the change and progression that has already been implemented in the boarding provision and the goals for the new school year. Leaders and managers have developed good networks with other boarding schools to share good practice and to support positive changes to children's boarding experiences.

The governing body holds the school to account to ensure that a good standard of care is provided to the boarders. A separate boarding governor visits the boarding provision regularly and works with the head of boarding to review the effectiveness of the service provided. This provides an opportunity to focus on boarders' experiences and an extra layer of scrutiny in relation to the operation of the boarding provision.

Leaders and managers have successfully addressed the point for improvement made at the last inspection. All national minimum standards are met.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Point for improvement

- Boarders should be actively encouraged to contribute their views to the operation of the boarding provision. Boarders' views should be considered in decisions about the running of the school and boarding provision and they should be provided with feedback about their expressed views. Specifically, boarders should feel confident in sharing any concerns they have about staff practice or conduct and confident that any views they share about the operation of the boarding provision are listened to and acted on and that changes made are sustained.

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

Telephone number: 0151 724 4000

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Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Kelly McCurdy, Social Care Inspector

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