

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 110 pupils.

There are 1,494 pupils on roll and, of these, 74 pupils board.

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

Inspection dates: 3 to 5 October 2023

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: 25 February 2020

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Boarding is an integral and thriving part of the school community. A diverse mix of children form a community that is enriching for those involved and provides a good range of opportunities to develop their strengths and interests. A strong sense of belonging helps children to care for each other and take pride in their school and their achievements.

Communication and information-sharing is good and means that boarding and education staff work well together. This cohesive approach has resulted in a supportive and open culture and means that the school values are applied across all aspects of boarding and educational life.

There is a well-organised process of induction for all children. Visits and overnight stays are in place so that children can experience boarding life before admission. Staff are sensitive to children's individual needs, and they provide effective levels of nurture and support to all children.

The boarding community has a strong sense of pastoral care. Children are proud of the way that they look after each other. Final year children share their positive experience with new children. They help them to make the emotional and social adjustments to living away from home. Staff are always on hand to care for children who need additional adult support. All children say that they are confident that staff will help them.

Staff create strong links with children's families and communicate well about any concerns they may have. The head of boarding provides a termly report to parents about each child's academic achievements. He 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.

There are detailed health plans in place for each child. These plans help the staff to understand each child's health needs. Medication is stored securely, and clear records are maintained of all medication dispensed. The school nurse conducts regular audits of medication to ensure that practice remains safe.

Consultation with children who board remains central to the ethos of the boarding provision and there are several different ways by which their views are sought. House meetings and discussion groups provide children with opportunities to contribute to the ongoing development of the boarding provision.

The physical environment is safe and secure, and there is a programme of investment to bring all areas up to a good standard. However, inspectors identified areas where replacement of some mattresses and minor repairs would improve the environment for children.

Mealtimes are sociable occasions, where everyone eats and chats together. The catering manager ensures that children's religious or special dietary needs are safely met through the use of a biometric system.

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

The arrangements to protect and keep children safe are good. Safeguarding practice is professional. Policies are clear and regularly reviewed. Well-trained staff, together with a designated lead, understand safeguarding issues and procedures, ensuring that children are well protected. Any child protection concerns are immediately shared within the school and escalated as necessary to the appropriate local authority safeguarding hub. However, in some cases, the overall recording of actions taken doesn't show all the positive steps taken to safeguard children.

Children benefit from staff who provide care that is open and inclusive. Staff strongly promote and celebrate the uniqueness of all children. Staff are skilled at building children's identity, self-confidence and self-esteem. As a result, children learn to respect and value the strengths of others, and this enhances the school's inclusive community.

Behaviour is seen to be exemplary. Children are observed to be polite and considerate to each other as well as members of staff and visitors. There is an embedded culture of mutual respect operating in the school. The imposition of consequences is rare and, where these are applied, they are almost exclusively related to behaviour in the boarding area. Consequences mainly involve a child completing a community chore, such as litter picking or cleaning the boarding house fish tank.

Routine maintenance, testing and servicing of equipment provide children with a well-maintained, safe and secure physical environment. Health and safety processes are robust, underpinned by detailed risk assessments which are updated to reflect changes in legislation. There have been visits from health and safety professionals, and advice is sought as necessary to ensure that the school is compliant with the necessary regulations.

Leaders have not ensured that appropriate references have been sourced for one member of staff. Furthermore, there is not always an audit trail kept of verification of references. This is not following safer recruitment processes.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Ambitious and inspirational leadership is reflected in a culture of high expectation, in which all boarding staff strive to support and motivate children to achieve to the best of their ability. Leaders and managers are highly competent. Boarding staff share a common purpose of providing an excellent, nurturing experience for children to enhance their academic progress, promote success and develop their individuality.

Children respond to an ethos of high aspiration. The head of boarding and boarding staff provide the appropriate level of guidance and influence. As children move through the school, they become role models for younger children, who emulate their success, recognising that the support network provided in boarding helps them achieve their goals.

The governing body is visible and active and provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge on an ongoing basis. Governors have a good understanding of boarding and its strengths and areas for development. Governors are an active and integral part of the comprehensive quality assurance process.

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

All staff are appraised annually. Staff receive a wide range of training, and most have completed their professional qualification. However, records of training are not monitored or updated, which does not support the manager in reviewing when a staff member is due to undertake new or refresher training courses.

Partnership working with parents, carers and professionals is good. One parent reported, 'The boarding house and everyone working there are fantastic. They get back to you quickly and they care for each child as an individual. My son feels listened to and cared for.'

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:

- 19.1 Schools operate safer recruitment and adopt recruitment procedures in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 4.5 Accommodation is well furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders accommodated, with appropriate protection and separation between boarder accommodation and staff accommodation. Bedding is warm, clean and comfortable.

Recommendation

- Leaders should maintain and monitor staff training records as needed.

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/teacher in charge: Mark Heywood

Type of school: Boarding School

Telephone number: 01902 341230

Email address: mh@theroyal.school

Inspectors

Dave Carrigan, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Carl Wilton, Social Care Inspector

Louise Battersby, Social Care Inspector

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