

Lancaster Royal Grammar School

Lancaster Royal Grammar School, East Road, Lancaster LA1 3EF

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

This is a mixed day and boarding school situated on the edge of the city. The sixth form and boarding provision has expanded to accept female day and boarding pupils. It is close to a range of local amenities and transport. Full and weekly boarding is provided for pupils between the ages of 11 and 18 years. The school has academy status and has space for 170 boarders. There are five boarding houses, offering a mix of dormitory, single and en-suite accommodation. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, many of which make good use of the extensive school grounds.

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

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 June 2023

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.

Date of last inspection: 2 October 2019

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Boarders build excellent, secure and trusting relationships with the staff. They have staff that they can confidently talk to, who support them and who are sensitive to their needs. Inspectors observed the boarders to be relaxed, happy and comfortable when spending time with the staff. The boarders spoke highly about their boarding experience. One told inspectors, 'We are like a big family.'

Staff provide boarders with high-quality care and a consistent level of guidance and support. They are confident and competent in their approach to caring for the boarders. Staff talk enthusiastically about the fantastic progress that boarders make because of their stays in the provision. In addition to this, the staff team has positive relationships with boarders' parents and staff ensure that they communicate regularly with them.

The induction into boarding is meticulously planned. Children's specific needs and interests are considered before they arrive. The staff make it a priority that children visit the boarding provision before moving in. Female boarders all spoke highly of their experiences of being integrated into the school and the boarding provision. One boarder said, 'I have been here two weeks, and everyone has made me feel so welcome. I am really enjoying it.'

The boarding experience at this school has a profound positive impact on the lives of children. Boarders make exceptional progress because of the commitment of the staff team and their experiences of staying at the school. One parent said, 'The staff, especially the matrons, are excellent. Nothing is too much. Communication is ongoing and personal.' Boarders' life opportunities are enhanced because of the boarding and academic support they receive. One example of this is that many boarders are progressing to elite universities to study a subject of their choice or one associated with their career aspirations.

The improvements that have been implemented to ensure that there is consistent oversight of the health and well-being of all boarders are worthy of wider dissemination. This specifically relates to the proactive approach the whole school has taken to support the emotional well-being of children and to ensure that they are safe. External research and resources are used to promote and improve children's mental health. The school nurse and associated health professionals work collaboratively with the boarding staff to ensure that boarders are provided with the support they individually require.

Boarders have lots of opportunities to share their views. They are confident that they are listened to and that their views are prioritised. Staff encourage boarders to talk about their opinions of the boarding houses and advocate on their behalf when necessary. All boarders attend daily house meetings to discuss routines, house

expectations and any concerns they may have. They also take part in annual surveys to comment on the quality of care provided during their stay in boarding.

The school's pupil voice group provides boarders with a forum to inform decisions made about their boarding experiences and empowers them to raise concerns on behalf of their peers. This supports positive confidence-building from a young age for boarders in all year groups. For example, chosen representatives from the boarding houses regularly meet with the catering manager and because of this the quality and variety of the food have improved significantly.

An independent listener provides an additional opportunity for boarders to speak to someone separate from the school about their home and boarding life. She routinely visits the boarding houses and is proactive in introducing herself to children as they move into the boarding houses.

The provision of recreational activities on and off the school site is excellent. There are lots of opportunities for boarders to volunteer in the local community and take part in fundraising and charity work. Boarders are encouraged to take age-appropriate risks, such as being supported to spend time away from their boarding peers and the boarding houses with local friends in the community.

The standard of the boarding accommodation has significantly improved. There is a rolling programme of refurbishment, which is regularly reviewed in the board of trustees' meetings and senior management meetings. The houses are clean and tidy and provide the boarders with a homely environment to stay in.

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

Safeguarding is of paramount importance in the school. The safety and well-being of boarders are central to the ethos of the boarding provision. Any potential risks for individual boarders are well understood by the staff. This enables staff to identify and respond effectively to boarders' changing developmental needs and behaviours. Consequently, boarders feel safe and have a strong sense of security.

Designated managers have an excellent understanding of multi-agency safeguarding practice. They have responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns, have up-to-date training and provide 24-hour safeguarding support to the boarding houses. They ensure that up-to-date knowledge in managing a wide range of complex safeguarding issues is clearly articulated to the staff working in the boarding houses.

There have been some complex safeguarding incidents since the last inspection. The school ensures that suitable arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of the boarders. Robust safety plans are in place for boarders who require additional support to be safe and to minimise potential risks. The designated safeguarding lead works alongside other safeguarding professionals to make child-centred decisions and to ensure that boarders are appropriately supported during

difficult times. On one occasion, there should have been better consideration given to the timeliness of reporting a historical safeguarding concern to the police. However, this did not impact on the protection or the development of the boarders involved.

Behaviour management practice is exceptional. There have been no physical interventions. Boarders do not go missing from this school on a regular basis. Staff immediately responded to one isolated incident by quickly locating the boarder. The very low number of incidents of children going missing from the school demonstrates that the children have positive relationships with the staff and that there is a very settled cohort of boarders.

The boarders make good friendships with each other. They respect, help and support each other. The school has a rigorous approach to managing any potential incidents of bullying. Staff teach boarders to develop strategies to manage any conflict. Consequently, boarders enjoy a largely harmonious experience living with each other.

Boarders are supported to keep themselves safe online and in the community. Regular education in the houses helps inform boarders of potential dangers and how to keep themselves safe.

Safeguarding practice is audited through rigorous internal monitoring and by specialist external consultants. In addition to this, members of the board of trustees ensure that safeguarding practice is reviewed and updated. All trustees have undertaken a range of safeguarding training. This ensures that high safeguarding standards are in place throughout the school.

The physical environment for boarders is thoroughly monitored by the house masters and the staff team. Boarders are provided with a safe and secure place to stay that protects them from risk of harm.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders and managers work together and have a shared ambitious vision for the boarding provision and for changing children's lives. House masters have high expectations for the boarders and are focused on progression to support them into adulthood. They are innovative and organised and are exceptional role models for the boarders.

Leaders and managers have an excellent understanding of the boarders, their needs and their long-term plans. They drive achievements, goals and seek permanence for their futures. They are honest and transparent, recognising the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They have effective monitoring systems to enable them to monitor boarders' progress and demonstrate exceptional progress over a sustained period.

The boarding provision is appropriately staffed and resourced. Agency staff are not used. This ensures that there is continuity of care provided to the boarders by a

stable, qualified and experienced staff team. The school and boarding staff work seamlessly together to ensure that communication is open and the boarders' needs are met.

Staff feel highly supported by leaders and managers and they recognise the high expectations of them to change the lives of children. Staff regularly receive effective support to develop their practice and skills. Staff appraisal targets are focused on developing the service and promoting individual personal development.

Leaders' and managers' oversight of staff induction, training and professional development is highly effective. The arrangements in place ensure that there is a highly skilled and qualified workforce. Staff are trained in a variety of areas that are bespoke to children's needs. When issues arise, the management team acts so that all staff receive additional training, in areas such as eating disorders, emotional well-being and online safety. This ensures that boarders are helped by adults who have the knowledge and skills to support them.

The development plan is focused and drives improvements in children's experiences of boarding. The provision's self-assessment is a comprehensive tool that evidences the excellent practice and development work that has been implemented in the boarding provision. Leaders and managers work with other boarding schools to share exceptional practice and support further improvements to children's boarding experiences.

The board of trustees holds the school to account to ensure that the highest standards of care are provided to the boarders. A separate boarding committee provides an additional forum to focus solely on improving the boarders' experiences. The meetings are child-focused and take account of the boarders' views. Trustees routinely visit the boarding houses to undertake boarding inspections. This provides an extra layer of scrutiny in relation to the boarding provision and ensures that any areas for development are identified, and swift action is taken to resolve them.

Leaders and managers have successfully addressed all the points 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

- The school should ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders at the school. Specifically, the school should complete a lessons learnt activity in relation to the historic safeguarding incident to ensure better consideration is given to the timeliness of reporting safeguarding concerns to the police.

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: SC042778

Headteacher: Christopher Pyle

Type of school: Boarding school

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Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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