

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.

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.

There are three boarding houses, offering a mix of dormitory, single and en-suite accommodation. There is a wide range of extracurricular activities, many of which make good use of the extensive school grounds.

There are 1,292 children on roll at the school. A total of 120 boarders can be accommodated at the school. At the time of last inspection, 113 children were boarding.

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

Inspection dates: 2 to 4 June 2026

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: outstanding

Date of last inspection: 14 June 2023

Summary of findings

Children have highly positive boarding experiences, where they feel safe, well cared for and develop strong relationships with staff and peers. They benefit from a strong sense of belonging. Parents consistently report confidence in the provision, highlighting their children's happiness and safety.

Boarding supports children's academic and social progress. Children's voices are valued, and they are encouraged to develop independence through life skills and work experience opportunities.

Safeguarding is a strong feature of the provision. Children feel safe, and staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of safeguarding responsibilities.

Leadership and management are strong, with an ambitious vision shared by leaders, managers and trustees.

Overall, the boarding provision demonstrates strong practice, high-quality care and positive outcomes for children, with only minor areas identified for improvement.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Children enjoy their boarding experiences, feel well cared for, and develop positive relationships with boarding staff. They build strong friendships with one another and experience a strong sense of belonging within the boarding provision. Staff support children to explore their individual identities, cultures and beliefs, helping them to feel valued and respected. Parents speak positively about their children's experiences in boarding. One parent commented, 'I know that they are happy, safe and well looked after.'

Children who stay in boarding thrive both academically and socially. They engage well in their education, and boarding contributes positively to their attainment. Effective communication systems between the school and boarding ensure that staff share relevant information appropriately. This strengthens partnership working and supports consistent care for children.

Children participate in a wide range of meaningful activities both on site and in the community. These include sports, cooking, games and clubs, alongside community activities such as Parkrun, shopping trips, and weekend visits to theme parks and the cinema. Children also attend places of worship, including the church and mosque, and take part in intergenerational activities, such as hosting older people during Christmas events. Staff actively involve children in choosing and planning these activities.

Leaders and managers use research to inform practice and improve outcomes for children. For example, they have implemented sleep audits and developed links with a local university, enabling children to access workshops that enhance their knowledge and understanding of relevant topics.

School nurses maintain a strong oversight of children's health needs. They manage medication effectively, keep clear records, and liaise closely with boarding staff to ensure children receive appropriate care. Nurses also provide guidance and support to staff on health-related matters. When medical emergencies arise, trained staff respond promptly and appropriately, ensuring that children access external medical support when required and receive suitable follow-up care.

Children benefit from a range of forums and platforms where they can share their views and influence decisions about the boarding provision. Children reported that staff listen to them and act on their feedback.

Staff provide a varied and regularly updated menu that caters to diverse dietary needs and allergies. When children raise concerns about catering, they can do so through the student council or meetings with the catering team, who respond by

making improvements. Children also have access to snacks, drinks and basic cooking facilities outside of formal mealtimes.

Staff encourage children to develop independence in line with their age. Children learn practical life skills such as cleaning, laundry and supporting others. Older children access work-experience opportunities to help prepare them for life beyond school.

The accommodation meets the needs of the children and provides a safe and secure environment. When children raise concerns about the environment, staff respond promptly. Recent improvements include upgrades to showers, Wi-Fi, and mattresses, demonstrating that leaders listen and act.

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

Safeguarding is of paramount importance within the school and boarding provision and is central to all aspects of practice. Children report that they feel safe and secure, reflecting a strong safeguarding culture embedded across the setting.

Boarding staff know the children exceptionally well and demonstrate a clear understanding of their individual needs and vulnerabilities. Staff benefit from comprehensive safeguarding training and are regularly updated on emerging risks and potential concerns, ensuring that they are well equipped to respond effectively to safeguarding issues.

Boarding staff provide clear boundaries and consistent expectations, which children understand and respond to positively. This consistency supports the creation of a safe, structured and predictable environment.

The welfare and safety of boarders are prioritised effectively. Staff demonstrate a strong understanding of individual children's needs and vulnerabilities, enabling them to provide tailored support. Children are supported to take age-appropriate risks. This is proportionate to their age and developing maturity. This approach promotes independence while maintaining appropriate safeguards.

Leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), maintain strong oversight of safeguarding practice. Robust systems are in place to identify and manage risk, supported by effective planning. Staff work well with external professionals and take a shared, proportionate approach to managing risk. While there have been no residential referrals to the local authority designated officer (LADO), clear procedures are established and information is appropriately shared when external concerns arise.

Safeguarding practice is further strengthened through reflective review. The DSL and managers carry out thorough analysis of safeguarding incidents to identify learning and improve practice.

However, following a recent medication error, although an initial investigation was completed promptly, the established process for notifying the DSL was not followed within expected timescales. As a result, senior leaders could not exercise timely oversight or fully implement established learning and review processes on this occasion.

Staff provide excellent, consistent support for children experiencing mental health difficulties. A shared approach is embedded across both the school and boarding provision, ensuring that all staff, regardless of role, understand how to respond to and support children effectively. As a result, children receive high-quality support that positively promotes their mental health and wellbeing. One parent reflected this strength, stating, 'The support for mental health is exceptional. They are amazing.'

Staff manage behaviour exceptionally well. Clear and effective systems enable children to understand expectations, including managing curfews, while also supporting staff to maintain accurate records of children's whereabouts. Behaviour management and disciplinary approaches establish consistent boundaries, and children respond positively, actively contributing to the development of fair, proportionate and restorative outcomes.

Staff take a proactive and reflective approach to managing incidents. Records are detailed and clearly outline actions taken, demonstrating a strong understanding of children's individual needs. Information is shared effectively and consistently with key professionals and parents, ensuring a coordinated and informed approach to care.

Leaders have established safer recruitment systems. However, one personnel file showed that leaders had not fully explored gaps in employment and education history.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders, managers and trustees work collaboratively and share an ambitious vision for the boarding provision, with a clear focus on improving children's lives. Collectively, they bring the skills, experience and capacity required to support the effective operation and continued development of the provision.

Leaders and managers demonstrate a strong understanding of the behaviours and needs of children accessing boarding. They recognise and celebrate children's progress and respond promptly when additional support is required. Boarding staff, parents and the main school work closely together to provide a cohesive, wraparound approach. This ensures that children receive consistent, high-quality care and are well supported to make progress towards their individual targets and goals.

Leaders promote an open and transparent culture in which children feel listened to and valued. This culture underpins a positive working and learning environment, where staff prioritise children's welfare alongside a commitment to continuous

improvement. High expectations are consistently maintained, and strong standards of care support children to develop confidence, resilience and positive futures.

Leaders monitor and evaluate the boarding provision effectively through continuous and targeted review processes. There is a clear vision for boarding, which is developed alongside children, staff, managers and senior leaders, ensuring shared understanding and engagement in improvement. Trustees provide effective scrutiny, hold leaders to account and drive improvement.

Trustees understand both the strengths and challenges in the boarding provision. They work closely with the board, committees and boarding staff. Trustees demonstrate a strong understanding of safeguarding and take a proactive approach to the oversight of children's safety and wellbeing. The safeguarding governor works closely with designated safeguarding leads and fulfils responsibilities effectively. The boarding committee receives regular reports and updates, providing both support and challenge to drive further improvement.

Leaders maintain a stable and experienced staff team that provides continuity of care and support for children. Staffing levels are sufficient to balance children's independence with their care and welfare needs. Children benefit from the individual strengths and skills of staff to enhance their social and educational development.

Leaders review boarding staff practice annually through reflection on the previous year and evaluation of previously agreed targets, while also setting priorities for the year ahead. Leaders also carry out regular observations and walkarounds to review practice. However, these are not consistently formally documented.

Boarding staff meet regularly to share information, discuss the environment, and review children's feedback about the boarding houses. Leadership teams also hold separate strategic meetings.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- School leaders should monitor the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school and take appropriate action where necessary. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards 2.1)
- School leaders should ensure that they 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. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards 19.1)

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/teacher in charge:

Type of school: Boarding School

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Inspectors

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