

Duke Of York's Royal Military School

Duke of York's Royal Military School, Guston, DOVER, Kent, CT15 5EQ

Inspection dates 21/05/2013 to 23/05/2013

Overall effectiveness	Adequate	3
Outcomes for boarders	Good	2
Quality of boarding provision and care	Good	2
Boarders' safety	Adequate	3
Leadership and management of boarding	Adequate	3

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is adequate because

- The school is continuing to make improvements to the care of boarders and has responded well to the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. The school now meets all the national minimum standards for boarding schools but there are areas identified in need of further improvement.
- Although adequate overall, the school provides good outcomes for boarders and a good quality of boarding provision and care. Boarders are positive about their experience of boarding and demonstrate a real sense of pride in the school and their boarding house. Boarders feel safe and establish positive relationships with other boarders and with staff at the school.
- Boarders feel well supported by staff but there is a lack of robust recording of health and welfare concerns through formalised care or welfare plans. Extending the use of formalised care plans would ensure that the support provided is clearly recorded and would facilitate more effective oversight and evaluation of the support provided.
- The school meets its duty to safeguard pupils. Boarders feel that the school takes bullying seriously and that all incidents are swiftly and effectively dealt with.
- The senior leadership team has sound oversight of boarding but more robust monitoring and evaluation of the records maintained would ensure that trends and patterns are identified and acted upon.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

Information about this inspection

The school received four hours' notice of the inspection which took place over three days. Time was spent in all 10 boarding houses talking to boarders, both formally and informally and all the housemasters/housemistresses of the boarding houses were interviewed. Key staff within the school responsible for leading, managing and organising boarding provision were interviewed and the records maintained in respect of the health and welfare of boarders were examined.

Inspection team

Lucy Martin	Lead social care inspector
Sophie Wood	Social care inspector
Maire Atherton, David Putnam	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The Duke of York's Royal Military School is an Academy with military traditions. It offers full boarding to 436 pupils aged 11-18 years. The boarding accommodation is provided in 10 boarding houses on the school site which is approximately two miles north of Dover.

The school is open to all prospective pupils who fulfil the admissions criteria and who wish to attend a full boarding school with military traditions. Prospective pupils need not come from a military background.

The school had an emergency inspection in February 2013 and the last full boarding inspection took place in March 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide guidance to staff regarding the storage and administration of controlled drugs.
- Extend the use of formalised care plans.
- Formalise the induction process of housemasters/mistresses and the evaluation of boarding practice to include core training and on-going training and development needs.
- Ensure that there are effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate key records such as those relating to safeguarding and behaviour.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for boarders

Good

Outcomes for boarders are good. Boarders are extremely proud of their school and its military traditions. They enjoy the experience of boarding which enables them to develop independence and self-confidence. There are good relationships between boarders and staff and boarders are tolerant of each other. They said, 'this place is like a family' and 'we all look after one another.' Behaviour is managed well and incidents of bullying are rare. If they do take place, they are quickly and effectively dealt with. Older boarders say that the school has improved in recent years and is continuing to do so.

Boarders feel safe, relaxed and included at the school and in the boarding houses. They enjoy the wide range of activities on offer after school and at weekends. Older boarders feel well prepared for adult life as a result of their boarding experience. Boarders are appreciative of the strong levels of support provided by a wide range of dedicated staff including an independent listener. Prefects within the school and houses provide support to younger boarders and boarders develop good social skills through boarding and learn to be tolerant of others. They appreciate the opportunity to meet peers from different countries and cultures that they would not otherwise have met. As one boarder said, 'some of us may come from different backgrounds but we are all Dukeys.'

Boarders feel that they are consulted and that their views are listened to. They keep themselves fit and healthy and their health needs are met if they are injured or feel unwell.

Quality of boarding provision and care

Good

The quality of the boarding provision and care is good. Boarders feel well supported at the school and can name a number of staff they feel able to talk to about concerns and worries. Boarding staff know boarders well and quickly identify when extra support may be needed. The school also has an independent listener who is easily contactable. There is a comprehensive two day induction for new boarders in September each year and buddies or mentors are appointed for all new boarders including those who join later in the school year. One boarder said, 'everyone makes you feel welcome.'

Boarders' health needs are well met and the medical centre is staffed 24 hours a day during term time. There are currently two nurses employed and a third nurse is being recruited with specialised skills and experience which will strengthen the current arrangements. Boarders have regular access to the school doctor; dental and opticians appointments are arranged as required. Where necessary, nursing staff make appropriate referrals to external health professionals to ensure boarders' receive the medical expertise they need. Medication is appropriately recorded in the boarding houses but there is no guidance to staff regarding the specific requirements of controlled drugs.

The school is part way through a new build and associated refurbishment programme which will be completed in 2014. This programme will allow the school to have four junior houses, instead of the current two and there will be a separate sixth form house. The current boarding houses vary in quality with some of the older houses having more dated facilities but it is clear that the building programme will raise all the accommodation to a similar high standard. For example, the house for the Upper Sixth has single bedrooms, all of which have en-suite facilities. All of the boarding houses are warm, well-furnished and maintained and there are homely touches such as comfy settees and photographs of boarders on the walls. A caretaker is on call 24 hours a day and boarders are able to securely store their possessions if they wish. There are sound security measures in place with CCTV and keypad access to the boarding houses.

The food provided is varied and plentiful. All meals are provided in the main dining hall and mealtimes are sociable and well ordered. There is always a choice of hot food available, including a vegetarian option, as well as a salad bar. Boarders confirm that they are consulted and the regular 'messing' meetings enables the boarding house representatives and the caterers to ensure that pupils' views are raised and discussed.

Boarders are enthusiastic about the wide range of activities on offer at the school. Various sporting opportunities are available and boarders with special talents are supported to attend local teams. Music, arts and craft and cookery activities are provided as well as trips off site and specific activities in the boarding houses. One boarder said, 'the opportunities open so many doors that I would never have the chance to experience otherwise.'

Boarders' safety

Adequate

The school makes adequate provision to safeguard boarders' welfare. There are sound procedures for staff recruitment which ensure that pupils are protected. At least one member of all interview panels has undertaken training in safer recruitment and. Staff files are well maintained and evidence that the required checks have been completed.

The school has a comprehensive policy for staff to follow in the event of a child protection issue which is understood and followed by staff. Safeguarding concerns are reported to the designated member of staff who takes appropriate action in response. The school has an open and proactive relationship with the local authority and other statutory agencies. All staff received child protection training in September 2012 and the three members of staff who take a lead role in this area have received more specialised training. Detailed records are maintained regarding the actions taken in the event of specific safeguarding concerns but no summary is maintained, so there is no written overview of incident, the effectiveness of actions taken or the outcome. This inhibits effective review of safeguarding concerns. In addition, written risk assessments are not used although these would evidence the factors that have been considered when decisions are reached.

Although boarders feel well supported by staff, there is a lack of robust recording of health and welfare concerns through the use of formalised care or welfare plans. There are a number of boarders at the school who are identified by staff as requiring significant levels of support but there are currently only a very small number who have documented care plans in place. Extending the use of formalised care plans would ensure that the support provided is clearly recorded in one place and would facilitate more effective oversight and evaluation of the support provided.

All boarders spoken to confirmed that the school does not tolerate bullying and has 'zero tolerance' regarding such incidents. Boarders could give specific examples where staff have taken quick and effective action and records seen confirm that any incident of bullying is taken extremely seriously. Boarders feel that sanctions are fairly given in the houses although there is some variation in the numbers of sanctions recorded between houses.

The school recognises and rewards positive behaviour. House activities and treats are given and boarders like the use of a 'praise book' in some houses which records their good deeds and can be read by all members of the house.

Boarders feel safe at the school, both physically and emotionally. There are robust procedures and practices regarding health and safety and as a result boarders are protected from harm. There are effective fire safety measures in place including routine checking and maintenance of the equipment. Staff and boarders are aware of the actions to take in the event of a fire and

regular fire drills take place.

Leadership and management of boarding

Adequate

Leadership and management of the school is adequate. The school is continuing to make a number of improvements but they are not yet all in place. Since the last inspection in February 2013, the school has appointed an assistant principal responsible for health and welfare. This is a new post and there are clear plans for the future development of this role. The school has responded well to the shortfalls identified at the last inspection and the school now meets all the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

The senior leadership team has a wealth of boarding experience and is well led by the executive principal. Boarders and staff alike feel listened to by the executive principal and say that the school has improved under his leadership. There are clear aims for boarding which are translated into practice and are understood by parents, staff and pupils. Regular meetings take place for housemasters/mistresses which could be further developed by introducing opportunities to discuss aspects of professional practice.

Since the last inspection the school has reviewed the number of staff on duty in the boarding houses and procedures have been introduced through which extra staff can be obtained if required. Staffing levels vary with the junior houses having higher staffing levels than the senior houses. Overall staffing levels are sufficient although there are occasions when there is only one adult on duty in the senior houses in charge of approximately 40 boarders, with additional staff available if required. A rota of the senior leadership team who provide 24 hour cover is circulated to all staff. Boarders feel that there are sufficient staff on duty and can always find an adult when needed.

Housemasters/housemistresses and house matrons have opportunities to attend external training appropriate for their role. Although new housemasters/housemistresses receive an induction to their role, a more formalised process would provide clearer evidence that key areas have been covered. Monitoring and appraisal of boarding practice takes place and targets set but it is unclear how this is evaluated and used to improve practice or determine training needs.

Boarders feel that there are opportunities to contribute their views and that as a result changes are made. Boarders like the fact that there is an opportunity every week for them to talk to the 'head man' and there are a number of house meetings and committees where they can voice their opinions. Prefects receive suitable training and support for their role and are used appropriately in the boarding houses.

The senior leadership team reviews the records maintained but there is a lack of effective evaluation in key areas such as safeguarding and behaviour. For example, there has been no evaluation regarding incidents of poor behaviour to understand trends and patterns. This is an area for further improvement.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	136177
Social care unique reference number	SC023666
DfE registration number	886/6918

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	
Number of boarders on roll	436
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	11 to 18
Headteacher	Chris Russell
Date of previous boarding inspection	14/02/2013
Telephone number	01304 245025
Email address	headmaster@doyrms.com

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