

Colchester Royal Grammar School

Colchester Royal Grammar School, 6 Lexden Road, Colchester CO3 3ND

Inspection dates	15/11/2016 to 17/11/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Outstanding	1
The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is outstanding because

- The boarding experience delivers consistent outstanding care to young people who make exceptional progress in their education and personal development and acquire skills that will prepare them for adult life.
- Leaders and managers are clear that boarding brings added value to the school. It makes a vital contribution to helping those who board to meet their full academic potential. A comparison of results between boarders and young people attending the main school confirms that boarders routinely achieve better examination results.
- Safeguarding is excellent, both in terms of basic routines and clear guidelines. Staff understand the pressures on young people and aim to support and protect them. Internet safety is a priority and is closely monitored so that young people learn to use this positively while being aware of dangers.
- Young people are highly self-motivated to achieve the results necessary to gain entry into the country's top universities. At the same time, staff work closely with parents to ensure that young people balance study with sports, creative pursuits and experiences in the community.

- Courtesy and consideration are embedded in the school culture and the mix of boarders is diverse. They learn to question the world around them but accept different cultures and opinions. This gives them great confidence as they start independence.
- Staff place a high value on young people's well-being and are alert to signs of strain and pressure. Partnership arrangements between teaching staff, boarding staff and parents are exemplary, confirming that the priority is to ensure that each young person achieves their full potential as they begin their adult lives.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Update the school website in respect of boarding to reflect any changes in boarding staff and with the dates on which policies have been updated.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of the boarding provision by two inspectors took place following a notice period of one and a half hours. The accommodation comprises two boarding houses on the school site. The inspection activities included meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher (who also has the responsibility as designated safeguarding lead), the head of boarding, the staff team, senior teaching staff, the premises manager, the personnel manager, the caretaker and the link governor for boarding. The inspection included meetings and mealtimes with boarders, observation of practice and routines and scrutiny of records, policies and documentation. Discussions with two parents and feedback from four Parent View surveys, along with written feedback from both parents and young people, contributed to the inspection judgement.

Inspection team

Fiona Littlefield

Lead social care inspector

Michael Mulvaney

Social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

This boarding school, situated in Colchester, is an academically selective maintained school with academy status. The school caters for boys aged 11 to 18 and both boys and girls in the sixth form. Boarding provision, for up to 30 boarders, is exclusively for sixth form boys. The boarding accommodation is provided in two houses, both of which are situated on the main school site.

The last inspection of the boarding provision took place on 24 March 2014.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Young people make exceptional progress in all areas of their lives. Staff and managers promote a culture of achievement so that young people learn to work together to solve problems and build up relationships. They enjoy positive experiences and gain confidence in how to apply their knowledge.

Staff and managers place the safety of young people at the centre of their practice, from practical matters such as planning travel arrangements, to knowing where young people are at all times. Staff work in a highly integrated and purposeful way to educate young people about potential risks, including internet use. Young people confirm that they know who to talk to about any concerns, and because of this balanced approach they learn how to protect themselves.

Young people stay in accommodation which is good quality, attractive and well-maintained. Staff are empathetic and skilled, and balance providing support with respecting the young people's wishes to be treated as adults. Young people confirm that staff are available and responsive, that they listen to them and respond positively. Consequently, young people feel valued.

Staff and managers across the school operate a very comprehensive system to review young people's progress against predicted goals. They recognise that many young people have exceptional ability and make extensive efforts to provide additional support. The partnership between teaching and boarding staff is consistent and effective. Young people know this and it helps them to feel secure in a school that prioritises their happiness.

The headteacher and senior management work together with governors to provide comprehensive managerial oversight and drive for the future. Just as young people are expected to be ambitious in their learning, so staff are required to focus on an area of research as part of their professional development. This all contributes to a relentless drive for improvement which benefits young people.

Staff and managers are mindful that they are preparing young people to manage their physical and emotional well-being. Young people are encouraged to balance academic achievement with sports and creative arts. There is a high value placed on courtesy, consideration and acceptance of one another. This means that young people are exceptionally well equipped for their adult lives in the community.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

Young people in boarding make remarkable progress because knowledgeable staff care for them and help them to settle. Boarding staff are insightful and skilled, understanding that while many young people are highly self-motivated, they still require support to

learn independence skills. Boarders appreciate this approach, developing confidence and self-reliance, 'We're young men, we don't need to be looked after, we need to learn the skills that we need for university.'

The partnership between teaching and boarding staff is exemplary. All staff are purposeful in helping young people develop their talents creatively. For instance, in boarding, staff have successfully encouraged young people to enter national competitions in finance and banking, where they have to solve problems by working together. While enjoying the challenge, they also learn to relax and make friends. This greatly enhances their confidence as they approach their adult lives.

A comprehensive approach is particularly noticeable when considering young people's emotional and mental health. A senior member of staff said about young people, 'We establish the idea of well-being. They drive themselves, we do not need to push them. We spend time making sure that they work hard but not to the detriment of their health.' Staff and managers promote this through a combination of information sessions with young people, specific training presentations to boarding staff, plus written information prominently distributed in the school. This is an enlightened and creative way of reinforcing the message and means that the issue remains a priority in the school.

Boarding staff are extremely alert and empathetic to the experiences of boarders. They approach them as young adults on the verge of independent life, but also appreciate that many are living far from home. The accommodation is attractive and well maintained. The school supplies attractive, well-balanced meals. At the weekend, the school has arranged for a Chinese chef to come in to cook for the students, who appreciate the genuine taste of home. Young people and their parents appreciate this gesture.

Young people may occasionally experience anxiety or distress and need a confident and prompt response. At such times, staff work alongside parents in an exemplary manner. They resolve the immediate problem and make sure that the young person has access to specialist longer-term support arranged by school staff for as long as they need it. Young people benefit from this seamless approach, feeling secure and gaining confidence.

Academic results for the school continue to be exceptional. A comparison of results with the rest of the school confirms that young people who board achieve consistently higher grades than those in the main school. All young people who are about to start their sixth form year are introduced to the idea of project work that will develop skills in designing and developing research. In boarding, this can be developed to a considerable degree. Boarding and teaching staff work together to encourage innovation. For instance, they have supported young people to take on projects into highly innovative areas, including developing a project into altruism, or research into gene-editing techniques in the treatment of HIV. Young people feel valued and thrive in these circumstances.

Staff across the school are mindful of the fact that many young people are driven to achieve exceptional academic results. At the same time, they place a high value on developing a balance of interests, including sports and creative pursuits, such as, music and drama. Some are working with leading theatre companies on music projects, while

others work in the community acting as volunteers or taking on work experience. This meticulous approach helps to prepare young people for the future.

Young people can and do contact their parents independently and frequently. Parents are fulsome in their praise and confidence in boarding staff. One parent wrote, 'Academically and pastorally he was been well looked after and has gained an amazing amount of independence and common sense by living away from home.'

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Safeguarding lies at the heart of all practice in the boarding service. Staff recruitment records are comprehensive and show that all checks have been completed before staff begin work. Young people confirm that they feel safe and that they have an adult whom they trust to talk to about any concerns. Managers have reviewed the arrangements for recording negative incidents. The level of negative incidents, including bullying, is extremely low and most young people have no experience of this at all. As a result, they feel relaxed and secure. The parent of one boarder said, 'We didn't need to worry about him while he was staying at the boarding house because we knew that he was in good hands.'

Staff and managers work with colleagues in boarding to reinforce systematically the importance of routines throughout the school day. This means that they know where the young people are at all times. Young people, in turn, know exactly what is expected of them and comply willingly with guidelines. For instance, they can leave the school grounds for a short trip on foot, but any longer journey needs to be planned with and authorised by a member of staff. Consequently, they feel safe and are safe.

Respect, courtesy and consideration are embedded in the culture of the school. Young people are encouraged to both challenge discriminatory behaviours and celebrate differences in outlook and lifestyle. As a result of this open discussion, they are confident when talking about issues such as mental health, are aware of risks and know who they should talk to if they feel vulnerable. Staff and managers work together in a highly integrated way to promote the importance of safeguarding as part of the overall ethos of the school. On occasion, if individual boarders have triggered specific concerns, the response from staff working with parents is swift and effective. Young people know this and it helps them to feel protected.

Staff and managers are particularly purposeful about educating young people about safe use of the internet. This is promoted throughout the school and confirmed in regular training. In boarding, young people sign up to contracts that emphasise the need to use the internet safely, while posters in their rooms repeat the need for safety. However, boarding staff have been creative in bringing this to life, by inviting speakers with direct experience of some of the dangers of the internet to speak to the young people. This is a powerful and effective tool and has helped young people understand the importance of alertness to risk.

All internet use is subject to routine scrutiny through parental controls operated within

school grounds, and on occasion this has triggered some concerns. The response from staff is both firm and sensitive so that young people understand the boundaries, but also have the opportunity to discuss any worries with a responsible adult. This balance of care and control means that, over time, young people learn to enjoy the internet and use it safely.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

The headteacher, senior management team and governors are proud of the young people's achievements and are ambitious for them. They particularly value the contribution that boarding makes, both in preparing the young people for university life and their future as adults. Senior managers say that boarding adds value to the school through sustaining high academic performance, but also that young people benefit from the family atmosphere and ethnically diverse nature of the boarding group. Boarding is seen as a key element in future planning for the school and this reflects the confidence that senior managers have in boarding staff. Young people know how to complain, but prefer to raise issues in regular surveys and meetings between boarders and staff. They are positive about staff, finding them always available and responsive. Parents have not made any complaints and are also enthusiastic about the care that their children receive. They comment that the staff keep them well informed of any developments.

The young people are looked after by a small team of boarding staff, comprising long-standing, well-established staff working with colleagues who have joined relatively recently. The management team has addressed the recommendation from the previous inspection. New staff are either in the process of completing their probation or are taking on specific training to equip them with formal qualifications for boarding. There are succession plans in hand to ensure a smooth transition when the current head of boarding retires next year. All staff receive supervision. The head of boarding is working with the headteacher to update supervision records so that they are in line with the rest of the school staff. Boarding staff have a shared sense of responsibility and exchange information constantly. They demonstrate complete confidence in one another's ability to share information, pick up and deal with issues and follow them through. Young people benefit from this coordinated approach.

Teaching staff offer additional support to young people in boarding at weekends, both for academic subjects, mentoring around personal issues and planning for the future. They have insight into the pressures that young people experience and consequently are measured and positive in their responses. One senior teacher said, 'I make myself available in the library and the vast majority of the time I am dealing with my subjects but they may also want to talk to me for support with references or discussion in a pastoral or academic role.' Consequently, young people have access to a wide group of staff who work as a team in their interests.

Shortly after his arrival, the new headteacher commissioned an evaluation of all services in the school, including boarding. All staff were encouraged to reflect upon and challenge established practice, using data on academic achievements in addition to direct feedback from both young people and families. This led to the development of a school improvement plan that provides the detailed direction for the school over the next year.

Scrutiny of boarding by the senior team and governors on how boarding fits into the overall achievements in the school is extremely rigorous and effectively integrated. One governor has particular responsibility for boarding, and along with the chair of governors shares responsibility for undertaking regular unannounced visits. They meet the boarders independently and spend time with them ascertaining their views. One governor said, 'I think it is important to make sure that the whole governing body understands boarding and we have achieved this by disseminating [reports] to the whole governing body so that they have a good broad oversight.'

As part of this systematic review, the senior management will be updating the school website, with particular reference to boarding, to ensure that details of the staff are up to date, and dates when policies have been reviewed are clear.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	137814
Social care unique reference number	SC018009
DfE registration number	881/5443

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	Boarding school
Number of boarders on roll	30
Gender of boarders	Boys
Age range of boarders	16 to 18
Headteacher	Mr John Russell
Date of previous boarding inspection	24 March 2014
Telephone number	01206 509100
Email address	jrussell@crgs.co.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/ofsted." If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.co.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2016

