

Duke of York's Royal Military School

Guston, Dover, Kent CT15 5EQ

Inspection dates 10 to 11 January 2017

Overall outcome
Boarding provision

The school meets all of the national minimum standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

- Boarders enjoy and benefit from their boarding experience.
- A wide range of extra-curricular hobbies and interests are engaging and fulfilling.
- The vast majority of boarders readily settle into the boarding provision and make lasting friendships.
- A coordinated approach across teaching and boarding recognises boarders who are struggling. This ensures that they receive the support that they need to achieve and make progress.

The quality of care and support

- A qualified nursing team provides 24-hour nursing support. Strong links with the pastoral leaders and counsellors ensure that boarders who have welfare concerns and additional needs are well supported.
- Pastoral leaders receive a comprehensive training and development programme, which equips them with the skills and knowledge that they need.
- Where relevant, support plans describe individual boarder's needs and concerns, but some lack sufficient details of the precise actions for staff to take.
- Boarding house staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the unique personalities and needs of the boarders in their house.

How well children and young people are protected

- Staff understand and implement the school's safeguarding procedures. Training is relevant, topical and routinely refreshed. Staff understand how to report their concerns to external agencies.
- Bullying incidents are well managed. A restorative approach works well. Serious incidents result in timely and appropriate responses.
- Behaviour management systems are focused on rewarding positive conduct. All staff

are committed to reducing the use of permanent and fixed exclusions.

- Boarders receive information and guidance on keeping themselves safe that is in accordance with their ages and understanding.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

- The vice principal (boarding, health and welfare) drives her development plan with ambition and inspires others to do likewise.
- Positive developments include an expanding counselling service for boarders, an increase in the nursing provision and smarter safeguarding reporting systems.
- Necessary improvements and changes are continuing, but there is an absence of sufficient monitoring and evaluation to be certain that the changes are having the desired impact.

Compliance with national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the following national minimum standards for boarding schools:

Boarders' health and well-being (NMS 3)

Safety of boarders (NMS 6)

Provision and preparation of food and drinks (NMS 8)

Child protection (NMS 11)

Promoting positive behaviour and relationships (NMS 12)

Staffing and supervision (NMS 15)

Securing boarders' views (NMS 17)

Complaints (NMS 18)

Areas for improvement:

Establish proactive links with external early intervention services.

Ensure that individual support plans provide explicitly clear direction and guidance for staff to implement.

Ensure that written records of complaints contain clear details of the outcome, including the complainant's final response.

Improve current monitoring systems to ensure that processes are sufficiently reviewed and evaluated.

School details

Unique reference number	136177
Social care unique reference number	SC023666
DfE registration number	886 6918
Inspection number	10022782

The inspection of boarding provision 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
School status	Academy sponsor led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	502
Number of boarders on roll	502
Principal	Mr Alex Foreman
Head of boarding provision	Mrs Alison Kehaya
Telephone number	01304 245023
Website	www.doyrms.com
Email address	Admin.office@doyrms.com
Date of previous boarding inspection	28 April – 1 May 2014

Information about this school

The Duke of York's Royal Military School is a smaller than average 11 to 18 state boarding school with 502 pupils on roll. The school converted to academy status in 2010, from its predecessor status as an independent boarding school. The school has long links with the military, going back 200 years and has well-established traditions in military music and military ceremonial activities. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, and a higher than average proportion of pupils are in receipt of the service premium. The current principal took up his post at the beginning of January 2017.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted undertook an emergency unannounced inspection following concerns received about the care of boarders at the school. In summary, the concerns related to the school's safeguarding arrangements for boarders, its management of their health and welfare needs, behaviour management, the supervision of boarders, site security, the effectiveness of the school's complaints procedures and the school's recruitment practice. Inspectors explored these areas of concern against the relevant national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to determine the school's compliance with these standards.

This inspection was completed over two days by two social care regulatory inspectors and one regulatory inspection manager. On day two, an aligned no formal designation monitoring inspection was conducted by two HMI education inspectors, for which a separate report is provided.

Senior staff and leaders, including the vice principal for boarding and the designated safeguarding lead, were interviewed. A full tour of the whole school site was undertaken, including more detailed visits to three of the boarding houses and the medical centre. Boarders were spoken to individually and in groups. Records of safeguarding, health and welfare, complaints and recruitment were scrutinised.

Three full-time qualified nurses provide 24-hour nursing cover, seven days a week, based in the medical centre. Recently updated systems provide the nurses with direct electronic access to the local general practitioner surgery for boarders' medical records. These improved procedures give the nurses quicker access to necessary information and enable them to initiate referrals to external health professionals, such as the child and adolescent mental health services. The vice principal for boarding recognises the need to forge stronger links with external service providers, in particular early intervention services. Where necessary, written support plans describe the specific support needs of individual boarders and how these will be met by identified staff. Regular welfare meetings review these plans to keep them live and relevant. Some plans contain generic guidance for staff to follow and would benefit from sharper instructions in order to be explicitly clear. Boarders speak very positively about the health and welfare provision, which is complemented by two qualified counsellors. One boarder said, 'We didn't have the counsellors when I first came here, but a lot of us now use them.' This aspect of the provision includes focused nurture groups, for example for new boarders who are homesick.

Revised electronic safeguarding reporting mechanisms are becoming embedded. The online system is welcomed, and the majority of staff have used it. Boarders have their own similar system and can readily pass on their own concerns to staff. Interviews with staff from different departments demonstrate that they possess a sound knowledge of the school's safeguarding procedures, which include whistle blowing and making referrals to external safeguarding agencies. The case tracking of individual incidents demonstrates the school's transparent practice with external agencies. Consultations and referrals to the local authority safeguarding team have been swift. The school works in partnership with the police, in particular the missing person's department, as well as the local council. Consequently, there is a heightened awareness of the potential risks to boarders from the locality. Sensible, pragmatic steps reduce these risks. For example, staff provide additional trips out to areas of interest, and the development of more on-site activities keeps boarders away from the town centre. Recent improvements to site security include

key-fob entry to the boarding houses, restricted to the occupants and key school personnel. Additional external lighting and closed circuit television promote safety, without compromising privacy. Senior leaders conduct night-time patrols, which boarders find reassuring. Boarders are routinely reminded of the areas which are out of bounds; some of these are appropriately physically restricted.

During the evening of the inspection, boarders were enjoying a wide range of activities in and around the site. Regular checks ensured that the whereabouts of all boarders were routinely verified and known. All of the boarding houses visited were sufficiently staffed. Boarders confirmed that they can readily summon assistance throughout the night if necessary. Boarders were joined for meals in the main school dining hall. Discreet monitoring identifies any eating issues, and the majority of boarders are very complimentary about the range, choice and quantity of the food provided. They are extremely proud of the recently added coffee bar, which is a highly valued social hub.

Boarders confirmed that incidents of bullying are rare and well managed. Written records demonstrate a strong approach, which results in appropriate action. Lower levels of friendship issues are successfully resolved through restorative justice approaches. Serious incidents receive a higher tariff of intervention, which has included the use of permanent exclusion and police involvement. Boarders said that the school's clear approach to bullying is reassuring. It makes them feel safe. The school recognises that its use of exclusions is, and has been, high. Consequently, behaviour management systems are focused on rewarding positive behaviour. More emphasis is now needed to analyse and evaluate these systems, in order to measure their effectiveness. The conduct and behaviour of the boarders during the inspection were excellent. Their relationships with each other are generally very positive. In particular, the prefect system is successful in demonstrating excellent role modelling and supporting younger boarders. Prefects work explicitly to clear guidance, which emphasises how they can and should support others. It suitably restricts their ability to use any form of sanctions.

Boarders and parents know how to make representations and complaints. Written records demonstrate robust investigatory action, which includes detailed chronologies. Those sampled show a robust investigation, but there is less clarity in recording the final outcomes and the complainant's satisfaction. Governor oversight in this process is not clear.

A whole-school educative approach to safeguarding in its widest context is welcomed by staff and boarders. Recent topics for staff training have included radicalisation and the 'Prevent' duty. Boarders spoke very positively about the presentations that they have received about online safety and consent. One member of staff said, 'It is about giving them the information they need to take appropriate responsibility and keep themselves safe.' There is a strong connection between the teaching of personal, social and health topics and the pastoral leaders (formerly known as matrons), who are based in the boarding houses. As a result, boarders are reliably informed about the issues and risks that affect them in ways and styles that are appropriate to their ages and understanding. Pastoral leaders are building an impressive training portfolio, which includes a wide range of relevant topics. Examples include mental health, eating disorders and sex and relationships. Older girls spoke very positively about the value of their regular 'nights in' in their boarding houses, where they can talk freely with each other and staff about personal topics. Boarders frequently described the boarding house staff as trusted adults who can be relied on for sound advice and guidance.

Staff recruitment practice follows safer recruitment guidance. This includes the use of

agency and temporary staff. One such example was case tracked. In response to a previous recommendation, all spouses of staff who live on the site have a written description of their roles and responsibilities.

The new principal recognises the areas of strong safeguarding practice across the school but wants further reassurance. He has commissioned an external safeguarding audit, from which to learn lessons and seek to improve further. The roles and responsibilities of governors are also under review.

Inspection team

Jennie Christopher, lead inspector	Social Care Regulatory Inspector
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