

Lancaster Royal Grammar School

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

Inspection dates	24/01/2017–26/01/2017	
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

- Pupils live in a multi-national and inclusive boarding community. Pupils develop tolerance, understanding and respect. There is acknowledgement and enjoyment of each other's individuality and identity. Pupils enjoy being part of a community with shared beliefs. Pupils learn about the diverse cultures and nationalities which make up the boarding community.
- Pupils unanimously speak positively about their enjoyment of their boarding experience. They develop meaningful friendships, enjoy the varied activities and feel safe and secure.
- Pupils' welfare is promoted very well because boarding staff have a sound understanding of safeguarding and their responsibilities and obligations. Pupils report that bullying is not an issue and that the school community will not accept or tolerate it.
- Staff are unreservedly committed to pupils' welfare. Careful consideration is given to the emotional well-being of pupils. Bespoke arrangements ensure that pupils with particular needs are extremely well cared for.
- Pupils live in a boarding environment that is furnished, decorated and maintained to an exceptional standard. They demonstrate the pride that they have in their boarding areas by taking excellent care of them and keeping them clean.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their educational, moral, social and cultural development.

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?

- Following overall improvements regarding the catering arrangements for pupils, senior staff should continue to monitor and consult with pupils and catering staff to ensure that the improvements continue.
- Ensure that external monitoring visits capture the detail of the visit and contribute towards a culture of challenge and improvement.
- Consider introducing for boarding staff the opportunity to achieve a nationally recognised qualification.

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with three hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of boarding practice over two evenings and early morning; formal and informal discussion with a wide range of pupils who board; sharing mealtimes; and discussions with the headteacher, head of boarding and other members of the senior management team. Boarding and ancillary staff were consulted, contact was made with the local statutory safeguarding authority and the school's nurse was spoken to. A tour of all the accommodation was undertaken. A wide range of documentation concerning boarding was scrutinised. The responses on Parent View were considered and the point-in-time surveys conducted in November 2015.

Inspection team

Elaine Clare	Lead social care inspector
Graham Robinson	Social care inspector

Full Report

Information about this school

Lancaster Royal Grammar School is a boys' educational day and boarding school situated on the city edge. It is close to a range of local amenities and transportation. Full and weekly boarding is provided for pupils between the ages of 11 and 18 years. The school recently achieved academy status and has 167 boarders. There are four boarding houses. The pupils are predominately white British with a large number of pupils reflecting other ethnic origins. Recreational and dormitory facilities are provided for each year group. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, enhanced by the extensive school grounds. The last welfare inspection to the school was on 14 May 2013 and received an overall effectiveness judgement of outstanding. The education provision at the school was inspected on 18 January 2007 and was awarded outstanding for overall effectiveness. This was followed by an interim assessment on 2 December 2010 which highlighted that the school's performance had been sustained.

Inspection Judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Outstanding

Pupils make exceptional progress in this school. Difference is valued and celebrated, with different nationalities contributing to a vibrant and welcoming boarding environment. The ethos of boarding promotes the spiritual and moral development of each boarder. Pupils spoke of the companionship, tolerance, friendship and happiness in the most positive of terms. All pupils learn to be part of a team by taking part in shared chores and others by being part of the combined cadet force. This enables them to also develop their leadership skills and confidence.

Equality and diversity are real strengths. Pupils celebrate their own heritage and learn of others' beliefs. Pupils enjoy each other's company and there is a buoyant and vibrant atmosphere. They are happy to board. Many pupils told inspectors that boarding felt like family. One pupil said, 'I really love boarding and I think that my boarding house is also a fantastic area for studying.' Another pupil said, 'The boarding staff are friendly and accessible and the boarding community is very good with plenty of activities to take part in.' A parent said, 'Through his experiences in boarding, we have witnessed our son's personality develop and his confidence grow, resulting in a measured, self-assured teenager who knows his own mind, yet respects the views and opinions of others. He has developed the ability to get along with everyone, to share and to unquestioningly accept differences between others in valuing the culture and diversity of his boarding peers.'

Pupils benefit from having their views and opinions valued and promoted to an excellent standard. Pupils contribute fully to the running of the boarding community. Boarding has a high status in the school and the views of those living there are seen as important and worthwhile. A number of avenues are available for pupils to express their views and to put their requests forward. Pupils say that they feel listened to and that their views contribute to decisions made regarding the boarding community. They have been able to influence decisions with regards to menus, decor, activities and bedtimes.

Pupils maintain contact with world events primarily through news programmes via their telephones or on television. This awareness has led them to raise funds for charities both locally and internationally to help and support services aiding them. They raise a significant sum each academic year to show their support practically for others in need. They help with events at the local schools and church. They show a sense of responsibility and empathy for others and develop a sense of community through these acts.

Pupils benefit from comprehensive healthcare arrangements. Pupils learn how to overcome life's adversities and succeed in their learning. Any specific health needs are known and met. Pupils lead healthy and active lifestyles. Physical activities and interests are embedded as part of the daily routines and this supports fitness, team building and healthy living.

An excellent programme is in place which ensures that pupils receive comprehensive guidance and support in their transition toward adulthood and independence. All pupils

are provided with extensive opportunities to develop their independence skills. An excellent approach toward future planning allows sixth-form pupils an invaluable chance to experience increased levels of responsibility and autonomy. Sixth-form pupils can become prefects and take on a mentoring role within the boarding houses. This enables them to develop their leadership skills and to take responsibility for leading and guiding younger pupils. This is an extremely important aspect of the boarding provision and enables pupils to become positive role models. One parent said, 'Our son transferred from another school at the beginning of the sixth form. We were confident that we had found the right setting for our child and our subsequent experience has only served to confirm this view. We are confident in the quality of teaching and learning and in the warmth of the pastoral care. We particularly like the support given by the older boarders to the younger year groups, which benefits both parties.'

The four boarding houses are a comfortable, modern facility. Pupils like the accommodation, particularly the shared living spaces and bedrooms. The headteacher is committed to continually improving the setting and driving up standards. This is to allow pupils to benefit from the positive impact that the residential experience has on pupils' educational attainment and progress.

The quality of care and support

Outstanding

There is an intimate and individualised approach to care. Staff are very knowledgeable about pupils' needs. They have a thorough knowledge of their responsibilities. They are sensitive to the ongoing and emerging needs of pupils, including their emotional well-being. Pupils are at ease, knowing that staff are taking appropriate action to ensure their all-round health. All pupils identify adults who they can turn to. This includes the school nurse or counsellor.

Staff prepare pupils who are coming into boarding or leaving it for their new experience. Parents say that there is a good induction, when the head of boarding gathers information to aid the integration of their child into boarding. Boarders are allocated a 'buddy' who takes responsibility for showing them the routines and explaining rules. This helps boarders to settle into their community very well. 'It was good, it helped', is a comment from a boarder. One parent said, 'After just over one term boarding at Lancaster Royal Grammar School, our son feels he is a part of the school community and is both physically and emotionally comfortable staying there. He enjoys all aspects of school life and is, we feel, given the correct balance of personal freedom versus structured activities outside of "normal" school hours. The pastoral care has to date been perfect.' Those leaving, gain advice from staff about their next move and guidance on appropriate university courses.

The pupil enrichment programme is a particular strength. Pupils access a vast range of activities of their choosing, within the school, the local community and further afield. From paintballing to helping at church services, charity days to being a leader at a local scout group, there are many opportunities for all pupils to be involved in the richness and diversity of life.

Staff make considerable effort to seek the view of pupils about the food provided. Pupils from a variety of cultures have a varied and healthy diet. The newly appointed catering

manager ensures that any specific dietary needs, for example, due to religion or health, are fully met. The menu is improving week on week as he listens to the pupils about their views on the standard of the catering. One pupil said, 'With the new caterers the food has become much better recently.' Plans to improve the catering are ongoing and include extensive consultation with pupils and staff.

Accommodation is to a very high standard. Pupils take care of where they live. They are proud to show others around their accommodation. They use the variety of communal areas. Staff listen to them and their ideas about the creative use of space. A maintenance team is on hand to attend to any necessary repairs promptly. Pupils live in a warm and homely environment.

Healthcare arrangements for boarders are excellent. There are succinct and up-to-date written plans to promote health. All staff provide full support to pupils who have experienced difficult and painful life events. Pupils are able to continue and succeed in their academic studies while their emotional well-being is cared for. All members of staff are trained in first aid and there is also a nurse available on-site for advice and support if needed. Members of staff transport boarders to medical appointments if needed. There is an effective system in place for the administration of medication and some boarders are assessed as being competent to self-administer their own medication, for example asthma inhalers. There is a sick bay which can be used if boarders need to be isolated, for example if they have a condition which may be contagious.

Contact with parents and others is a strength. Staff use social media to update parents daily. Pupils make full use of digital technology, such as video conferencing, to speak to their parents and family. Staff consider carefully how to facilitate this, for example, to accommodate time differences in other countries. Pupils and their parents trust the boarding staff and say that they provide good advice and guidance. Parents are particularly confident in the head of boarding and the accessible contact point that he provides for them. All pupils are also aware that there is an independent listener who they can contact if they wish to receive support from someone outside the school.

How well children and young people are protected

Outstanding

Pupils are very safe in this school. One parent said, 'The school house where my boy is now residing provides a warm, homely and safe environment for pupils to learn, to develop and to enjoy their adolescent life with peers.' Designated safeguarding leads are suitably trained. They are very familiar with the most recently published statutory guidance. All staff, including governors, are concerned with safeguarding pupils. They are trained and well versed in safeguarding procedures. They consult with other professionals who give advice and guidance in the event of any concerns or allegations. Safeguarding leads take swift and robust action to keep everyone safe while established procedures are followed. This promotes pupils' well-being and safety.

Risk assessments guide staff as to any individual risks. A robust policy is in place in the event of a missing person episode. Suitably qualified staff train boarding staff in any presenting issues, such as specific health needs. Pupils feel comfortable with staff. Staff trust pupils to tell them about any issues that are troubling them. Pupils feel supported

and confident to tell their parents their struggles. Bullying is not an issue. Staff address any hint of teasing quickly and efficiently. Pupils, who are new to the school, quickly learn what is acceptable. A parent stated that he was grateful for the support that staff had given to his child.

There is an excellent approach to e-safety. Senior managers have undertaken a comprehensive audit. There are excellent systems in place to manage risk without becoming wholly risk-averse. Staff are well trained and versed in the latest software applications that pupils may download on their phone and computer devices. They know what to do to keep pupils safe. Trusting relationships mean that pupils are not averse to showing their device to adults.

Behaviour is seen to be exemplary. Pupils are observed to be polite and considerate to each other as well as members of staff and visitors. There is an embedded culture of mutual respect operating in the school. The imposition of sanctions is rare and where these are applied they are almost exclusively related to behaviour in the boarding area. Sanctions mainly involve a pupil completing a community chore, such as tidying up or fetching the bread from the canteen. One pupil said, 'Staff are good to us and I think sanctions are fair.'

Pupils' health needs are met in full. The qualified on-site nurse is able to give guidance about important health needs, such as vaccinations. Staff work effectively with health professionals to ensure the ongoing health of pupils. This includes utilising other agencies, such as child and adolescent mental health services, when necessary.

The holistic approach, considering fully the welfare of each individual student, is impressive. Senior managers go beyond expectations to ensure that any student in need gets the right help and support. They keep the clear and succinct welfare plans under regular review. Pupils speak in the most positive terms of the support that they have had. Results are spectacular, for example attaining excellent grades at GCSE level in the midst of difficult personal circumstances. A parent said, 'The pastoral care is as good as parents' [care]. It is a home from home.'

All necessary health and safety certificates are in place. Pupils regularly practice fire evacuations. The management team ensures that there is a suitably qualified person on-site to test portable appliances. Electronic devices brought into the school, such as phone chargers, are tested for electrical safety. As a result, pupils live in a safe environment.

The recruitment process is exceptional. All necessary checks are in place to ensure that only suitable adults have contact with pupils. This includes running checks on adults who only have a short and limited contact with the pupils.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Outstanding

Leadership and management are exceptional. The head of boarding provides effective leadership to the staff team and drives the culture of educational progress, respect and valuing diversity. Senior leaders are confident, inspirational and ambitious. They lead by example, demonstrating a respect for others and a humility that pervades the whole

culture of boarding. There is harmonious working to deliver the highest quality of care, putting students at the centre of practice. 'Praesis ut prosis' (lead in order to serve) is an underpinning principle for staff and pupils.

The senior management team ensures that new staff are fully inducted into boarding. Staff have the experience, knowledge and skills to perform their role effectively. Line managers ensure that performance management targets are linked to the statement of principles and the national minimum standards as well as the pupils' needs. This means that each staff member's development plan is unique. They are able to gain specific skills, but not any formal qualification in boarding or adolescent care. This limits further opportunities for boarding staff to progress further in the school.

Communication between staff is excellent. There is cohesive working in a supportive and open culture. The school assesses the effectiveness and performance of the boarding provision on an ongoing basis. Weekly meetings between the boarding staff reflect upon pupils' well-being and staff performance. This is underpinned by having other state boarding schools assess the school's performance. As a result of this, improvements in areas such as decor and reviewing of procedures and policies are effectively implemented.

Professionals, parents and other key stakeholders form excellent relationships with senior leaders and boarding staff. The board of governors has developed into a highly engaged board of governors. The board is representative of the local community and includes members with skills essential to the development of the whole setting. The headteacher includes reports on the boarding setting in his school development plan that is agreed by the governors. The school governor with a lead in boarding visits the school and gives a professional opinion on the quality of care. This takes place on a yearly basis and the headteacher has already committed to increasing the frequency of these visits.

The head of boarding analysed the pupils' responses to the Ofsted survey, in particular where boarders indicated unhappiness with the food. The head of boarding used this information to aid discussion with the pupils and responded positively to their concerns. Pupils confirmed that this had resulted in a range of improvements including the appointment of a new catering manager. Pupils confirm that the complaints system is fair and effective and does allow them an active voice in the development of the boarding service. There have been no formal complaints made by parents or pupils since the last inspection in 2013.

Any informal complaints are taken seriously. Staff take robust action to address any issues. Continual improvement is the underlying ethos. The senior management team has a thorough self-evaluation in place. The management team already knew about any minor issues identified during the inspection.

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	136742
Social care unique reference number	SC042778
DfE registration number	

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 pupils on roll	1019
Gender of pupils	Boys
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Headteacher	Dr Christopher Pyle
Date of previous boarding inspection	14 May 2013
Telephone number	01524 580600
Email address	genoffice@lrgs.org.uk

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