

Royal Wolverhampton School

Inspection report for boarding school

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Inspector	Jackie Callaghan / Jacqui Gosling
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Nominated person	Peter Hill
Date of last inspection	20 February 2008

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

The Royal Wolverhampton School is an independent, co-educational day and boarding school. The school is located on a 27 acre site approximately a mile south of Wolverhampton city centre. Funded as the Orphan Asylum in 1850 by John Lees a local businessman, its mission was to care for children orphaned by the 1849 typhus epidemics in Wolverhampton. In 1891, the school was granted the prefix 'Royal' by Queen Victoria and in 1944, King George VI commanded that the school be known as The Royal Wolverhampton School.

The school's facilities on site include a library, gymnasium, large playing fields, indoor heated swimming pool and an all weather sports pitch. The school is easily reached by road, rail and air. There are good public transport facilities into both Wolverhampton and Birmingham city centres. Boarders are provided with appropriate bed space, storage units and study facilities in either single or shared rooms. Each house presents its own identity as housemasters, housemistresses and boarders are involved in the running of the house. There are also additional boarding staff who visit and work in the houses on a daily basis. Welfare provision also includes contact with the nurses at the medical centre and there is a school counsellor. There are currently 111 boarders.

Summary

This was an announced full inspection undertaken by two Ofsted inspectors. The inspection looked at the key Boarding School National Minimum Standards (NMS) under the Every Child Matters outcome groups. All outcome areas were inspected.

The overall judgement of the service is good. Measures to help boarders be Healthy, Stay Safe, Positive Contribution and Organisation are judged as good. Enjoying and Achieving is outstanding and meeting of boarders need for Achieving Economic Wellbeing is satisfactory. Two recommendations are raised in relation to being Healthy and Staying Safe as a result of this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection 18 recommendations were raised as a result of the visit. The head teacher was asked to formalise the induction process for new boarders and staff. Ensure risk assessments, sanctions, complaints and accident records are monitored. Improve further training opportunities for staff with boarding duties and ensure that all bathing and shower facilities be reviewed by the school and replacement outlined in a planned maintenance schedule. Finally, to ensure that consistent procedural frameworks and a clear management structure is developed.

The induction process for new boarders is now formalised and embedded into practice. This means that new students receive sufficient support when they arrive at the school. Risk assessments, sanctions, complaints and accident records are now effectively monitored which enable senior staff's ability to assess patterns and trends that might be occurring. As a result, student's welfare is being actively promoted.

A staff induction has been devised and is being used consistently. Staff can undertake specific Boarding Schools Association qualification, and other staff with boarding responsibilities complete relevant training. This improves student's care as staff are knowledgeable. The school now has a planned maintenance schedule that shows all bathing and shower facilities have been reviewed with a clear replacement timescales outlined, ensuring that all students are adequately looked after.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Students have their health needs promoted through the provision of professional and comprehensive services. The health care facilities are excellent. Three registered nurses are employed by the school and offer health care services to students day and night. Students with specific health needs are provided with additional support as appropriate, including accessing specialist input from other health care professionals. For example, counselling.

The administration of medication systems is efficient and effective and good records are maintained ensuring that medication is administered safely and appropriately. However, consent for first aid has not yet been obtained. This potentially compromises students safely accessing appropriate first aid treatment. Sick bay facilities include two isolation rooms with separate bathrooms and a day room. It is a comfortable environment for students who are ill and is closely supervised by the nursing staff. The sick bay is accessible throughout the school day and night. The nurses enjoy good relationships with students enabling beneficial health care.

Students are provided with a healthy, nutritious well-balanced and substantial diet. Many say the food is appetising and they enjoy the meals. However, there is a view held by some boarders that food, specifically the evening meal, is the area they are unhappy with. The school recognises this and are committed to ensuring continual development and improvement. Students are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle and nutritional, religious and health-related dietary needs of students are well met by the catering staff.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The Royal Wolverhampton protects its students from bullying by promoting a tolerant and accepting school culture. There is rigid enforcement of the school's anti-bullying policy and procedures, enhancing a school ethos that rejects oppressive behaviour of any type. One student demonstrates reinforcement of this by saying that 'there are no bullying issues, teenage banter but we know where to draw the line'.

The school has established positive links with the area Social Services Department and Local Safeguarding Children Board. Students are aware of who they can approach to share any matters that trouble them. All school teaching staff, ancillary, support staff and prefects are briefed annually about the school's responsibility for safeguarding children, including how to practically identify child protection concerns.

The management of behaviour is extremely effective with the majority of students imposing high levels of expectation and self-control. Students respond positively as comments include 'I like it here its good', 'love being here' and 'staff are kind and supportive'. Policy and practice on the whole is very good, however, the current sanctions for students caught smoking in the

building is by way of large fines. Whilst it is recognised that this is a serious offence the standards prohibit fines being more than two thirds of student's actual pocket money. Good monitoring effectively enables the school to identify any patterns and trends. This enables staff to effectively encourage students to talk about any issues that maybe troubling them.

The school has a clear complaints procedure with information being widely available to students, boarders and parents through well-written and widely publicised material. Students confirm that they know how to complain and to whom they would make any concerns known. Student's privacy is respected. Staff show a very high regard for their privacy and students say staff assist them in an unobtrusive manner.

There is good awareness amongst staff and students of the fire safety precautions. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis and at different times of the day and fire safety equipment is checked regularly and a record kept. This ensures that students can exit swiftly and calmly in the event of a fire. Staff undertake the supervision of high risk activities and formal documentary evidence is held on file. Student's safety and security is continually assessed and promoted by the school's management team and features strongly in the school's development plan.

The school operates an established staff vetting procedure and articulates its awareness of safeguarding students by diligent recruitment practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Students receive outstanding support when they need it. The Royal Wolverhampton provides a considered and purposeful range of academic support services and recreational opportunities that allow students to successfully achieve both educationally and socially. The school embraces a diverse range of cultures and religious beliefs and actively promotes the equality of all students. Within a Christian framework the schools chaplain provides inclusive pastoral support and spiritual guidance in a format that welcomes the attendance of students of all faiths or denominations. Individual students are enabled to access places of worship which reflect their religious persuasion. An effective staff support framework is in place, with clearly outlined responsibilities for relevant staff and, well-defined and effective channels of communication to ensure each students needs are identified and met. Consequently, all students receive wide-ranging individualised care.

The school has an approach that values the diverse needs of it boarders and vigorously addresses any discrimination based on gender, race, religion, cultural or linguistic background. The school makes good arrangements to assist those students who's first language is not English. The positive social contribution of overseas students to the school community is evidently embraced and well-integrated into the fabric of the school's daily life.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The school puts effort into fostering the self-worth of students through encouraging positive relationships between themselves and the staff at the school. Students are actively encouraged to participate in consultation and discussion about the school. For example, students can contribute their views regarding food via the catering committee and every boarding house

has a suggestion and worries box. The school demonstrates a strong commitment to securing the views of students with systems beginning to be well-embedded into boarding life. As a result, students feel they are listened to.

Students are supported by each other when settling in to life as a boarder. Older students and those who have boarded for longer support new boarders. The support given when settling in is described by some students as one of the best things about boarding. The service of an Independent Councillor provides the opportunity for students to talk through concerns or issues they might have with an appropriate degree of confidentiality. This promotes students self-esteem and feelings of general wellbeing.

Students are encouraged to maintain contact with their families by e-mail, phone and by post, with no restrictions placed on contact. They have access to school phones and their own mobile phones outside of school hours. Students say they value boarding and it helps them to further their independence, social and educational skills.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Students are actively encouraged to open a bank account to keep their finances safe. Overseas students are appropriately assisted to do this. Each student's room is lockable and has a number coded safe. Main school office administers all pocket money accounts with appropriate records kept of all transactions.

The Royal Wolverhampton provides a range of boarding accommodation varying in condition from satisfactory to good, some of which is located in buildings of historic and architectural interest. The accommodation is functional and the school actively recognise that some boarding areas are in need of major refurbishment. There is a school development plan with appropriate timescales in place to address this. Sleeping accommodation at the school ranges from traditional dorms with multi-occupancy to single bedrooms. All rooms offer ample individual space and lockable separate storage for boarders. Communal areas are reasonably well-maintained and provide sufficient space for all students to convene and relax in. All boarding houses are equipped with galley style kitchens for the preparation of snacks or supper by resident students.

The communal toilets and washing provision is adequate in number and condition, providing students with appropriate levels of privacy. The school is beginning to undertake a phased process of renovation geared to initially refurbish the most tired facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Royal Wolverhampton has a Statement of Boarding Practice and Principles, which is clear and concise. The school provides all required information to students and their families on the services available. This includes the philosophy of care and the expectations of the school. Students are enriched by both the care and educational experience and this is underpinned by the school's coherent philosophy, values and sound leadership.

The management of the boarding provision now assumes an important position within the school's senior management team. There is a very strong commitment to the development of boarding as an integral part of the continuing provision made by The Royal Wolverhampton.

As a result, students are making good progress because staffing in the school is well organised and effectively managed. Boarding House staff are clear about lines of communication and accountability and are involved in monitoring the welfare of their respective boarding houses. Consequently, this enables them to regularly share concerns and achievements with the Head of Boarding. Thereby, demonstrating the schools deep commitment to caring for students living away from home.

Boarding houses can draw from a complement of both resident and non-resident staff to provide good levels of supervision for organised recreation or periods of quiet. Students know how to contact duty staff should they need to do so both during the day and at night. The supervision of boarders is none oppressive, effective and promotes individual self-responsibility. Students confirm this by saying that their relationships with house staff are very positive.

Students receive the care they need from very competent and supportive staff. Their welfare, safety and developmental progress are strengthened because staff receive a planned induction which includes adequate training. Job descriptions accurately reflect the high expectations the school has from its boarding staff. Collective boarding house practice is regularly monitored by the head teacher and head of boarding with boarding responsibility and individual boarding staff practice being effectively appraised.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The school on the whole successfully recognise and promotes students individuality. Although some sanctions as identified mean that only some students are being fined. Whilst the school recognises that some students cannot afford the fines, this has the potential to cause conflict and upset the current harmony between boarders.

The school occasionally arranges accommodation by way of lodgings for students. These lodgings are comprehensively checked before and during use to ensure the welfare of all placed there. The school makes the necessary satisfactory checks to ensure that every person who comes into contact with the student is suitable to do so before lodgings are used. In addition, written signed agreements between the school and the lodgings are in place. The school has an atmosphere of purposeful direction.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that written parental permission has been obtained in advance for the administration of first aid (NMS 15.14)

- develop the smoking policy to clearly show that sanctions given by way of fines does not exceed more than two thirds of boarders available pocket money and sanctions applied for these offences are consistently administered (NMS 4.2, 4.6)