

The Royal School Wolverhampton

The Royal School Wolverhampton Academy Trust

Penn Road, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV3 0EG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

The Royal School Wolverhampton is a state-funded free school. The school is non-selective and non-denominational, offering education for pupils, irrespective of gender, aged from four to 19 years old. Boarding places are available for pupils from 11 years of age.

The residential provision comprises two houses situated on the main school site. Accommodation is in shared and single rooms for up to 100 pupils.

There are 1,499 pupils on roll and, of these, 61 pupils board.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 June 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Date of previous inspection: 3 October 2023

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Boarding at this school has a positive impact on children. There is a diverse mix of boarders, who come not only from the United Kingdom but also from further afield. Staff encourage boarders to embrace their cultures, supporting them to personalise their rooms with their country flags, and images of things that represent them.

Boarders say that they feel happy and safe in the boarding houses and talk about the benefits of boarding. This includes them not having to travel long distances to enjoy being part of the swimming club and enjoying the various activities they do. Boarders spoke about the importance of the relationships they have with their peers and describe feeling part of a community.

Plans to refurbish the boarding houses is in place and awaiting final planning approval due to the listed building status. It is hoped those works will begin in 2026. Staff have supported boarders to personalise the communal spaces and boarders have access to the things they need. However, some areas of the boarding houses are in a poor state of repair and would benefit from general maintenance. For example, some areas have dents in the plaster and there is staining on ceilings from leaks.

Boarders, staff and parents have raised concerns about the quality of the food and say that it can be repetitive and insufficient, especially for boarders who are elite athletes. While some action has taken place to address this, more work is needed to fully explore these concerns and any further action that is needed to improve the quality of food available.

Staff provide good support to boarders who speak English as an additional language and help boarders from abroad to integrate into the school and the wider community. Staff work well with multi-agency partners to assist boarders to form links with community and religious groups that can help them to adjust to living in the United Kingdom.

Boarders are making good academic progress. Staff prioritise education and boarders benefit from a timetable that includes structured time after school dedicated to their ongoing learning and development. The head of boarding has a good understanding of boarders' academic needs, and their progress is clearly tracked.

Staff build positive, trusting relationships with boarders and speak about them with genuine care and affection. All staff are committed to creating a homely environment for boarders and hold them at the centre of their decision-making.

Staff support boarders to be involved in decisions about the boarding houses. Regular meetings provide boarders with an opportunity to contribute their opinions. Staff let boarders know what action has been taken in response to their requests. Staff support boarders to engage in a range of community-based activities and to take part in things they enjoy and are interested in. Boarders also have access to the on-site sports facilities, and they have an opportunity to join clubs and activities there. A swimming programme provides boarders with an opportunity to train and compete at a high level. Staff understand the swimming programme and allow boarders some flexibility to allow them time to focus on their training while also supporting them to achieve academically.

Staff help boarders to develop their understanding of other cultures. They arrange regular cultural nights, which include decorations and food from different countries. Staff arrange whole-boarding celebrations and events, including birthday parties and a prom.

The school has a nurse on site to support boarders' health needs. They provide care when boarders are unwell and offer support and advice when they need additional support from medical professionals.

Staff provide good support for boarders' mental health and well-being needs. Boarders have access to a school counsellor and external services such as child and adolescent mental health services, which ensures they receive the support that they need.

Boarders can maintain links with those who are important to them through regular calls and messages. Staff also keep families informed about their child while they are boarding. Staff encourage visits from families, for example one child's parent visited from abroad for their child's award evening. This was a special moment for this student and gave them a sense of pride.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Staff keep boarders safe. Boarders have positive relationships with staff and leaders at the school and are able to raise any concerns they have. Leaders and staff respond well when boarders raise concerns. When boarders raise a concern about their fellow boarders, appropriate action is taken to support them and to resolve the issue. However, the recording by staff of the actions taken to address the concern of one boarder was not clear or robust.

Staff have effective systems in place to encourage positive behaviours. Consequences are used proportionately and help boarders reflect on what is acceptable and expected while boarding. Staff have not had to use physical intervention to keep boarders safe.

Occasionally, boarders have left the school site without telling staff or seeking permission. When this happens, staff respond appropriately and have followed the

school's protocol for when boarders go missing. Boarders have been located quickly, and none have been off site unauthorised for a prolonged period.

Due to the openness of the school site, there has been one occasion where members of the public entered the grounds without permission. Staff took appropriate action, alerting the police and making sure all boarders were safe. There has been slow progress in making changes to the site to make it more secure due to restrictions on planning.

There are effective systems in place for managing medication. Staff receive training on how to administer medication and boarders' health needs are well understood. When an error occurred with a student who was self-administering a medication, staff took action to ensure the child's well-being. The head of boarding reviewed the incident and identified learning and there have been no further errors.

Recruitment of staff, including gap year boarders and volunteers, is carried out safely. Relevant checks are completed to assess the suitability of these staff.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Leaders and staff have high expectations for boarders and make sure they receive many opportunities outside of their formal education time. They encourage boarders to follow their interests and to actively participate in things they enjoy. As a result, boarders are confident, aspirational and do well in different areas of their lives.

Leaders embrace the ethos of the school. They are inclusive and respect boarders' lived and cultural experiences. This inclusivity means the school makes a real difference to boarders and helps them make significant progress.

At times, staffing in the boarding houses is limited, and this can impact on boarders' opportunities, such as staff being able to give boarders one-to-one time and take them to appointments or other opportunities away from the school. Leaders are recruiting more staff to address the shortfalls.

The leadership team supports staff well. It provides staff with the training they need to carry out their roles. Staff receive annual appraisals and an opportunity to have one-to-one time with the head of care to reflect on their practice and discuss other relevant issues.

The head of boarding has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the boarding service. He has helped forge a link with other similar services, and they have implemented a peer review system that helps to provide additional oversight and opportunities to share good practice. This helps to ensure the provision is continually developing.

Professionals and parents describe effective communication with boarding staff. They recognise the benefits of boarding for their boarders and say that staff work

well with them to ensure boarders' needs are considered and met. One social worker said that the head of boarding is invested in their children and goes over and above to ensure that boarders' experiences are positive.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools:

- 4.4 Boarding houses and other accommodation provided for boarders are well lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned, and maintained, and reasonable adjustments are made to provide accessible accommodation for any boarders with disabilities.
- 6.1 All boarders, including those with special dietary, medical or religious needs, are provided with good quality, nutritionally balanced meals with choice and variety and of sufficient quantity.
- 2.4 The school's leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities consistently and effectively so that the standards are met.

Recommendations

- The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time should be sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and individual needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved.
- The school's written record of complaints should identify those complaints relating to boarding provision, and action taken by leaders as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). The school should keep a record of complaints made but later withdrawn. The school should keep under review any emerging patterns arising from complaints.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: 1267025

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Tom Macdonald

Type of school: Boarding school

Telephone number: 01902 341230

Email address: tmacdonald@theroyal.school

Inspectors

Debbie Bond, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Chanel Bryant, Social Care Inspector

Laura Norcop, Social Care Inspector

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