

# Royal Alexandra & Albert School (The)

Royal Alexandra & Albert Junior School, Gatton Park, REIGATE, Surrey, RH2 0TD

<b>Inspection dates</b>	18/11/2014 to 20/11/2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Outcomes for boarders	Outstanding	1
Quality of boarding provision and care	Outstanding	1
Boarders' safety	Good	2
Leadership and management of boarding	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### The boarding provision is good because

- The boarding provision is an integral feature of the school. Staff across all disciplines places the safety and welfare of boarders at the centre of their practice. This is ensured through clear policy and procedural guidance which is consistently implemented.
- Boarders enjoy caring and respectful relationships with staff and each other. A valuing culture of acceptance and tolerance is embedded. Boarders are treated fairly and in response to their own unique needs and personalities.
- Since the previous inspection in June 2011, the head of boarding has driven improvements with rigour and energy. Improvements are evident with regards to specific aspects of welfare provision and the professional development of the boarding team. A supportive governing body ensures proposed changes are diligently monitored and evaluated in terms of their impact upon the boarders.
- Boarders thrive within an environment which encourages and assists their personal growth and development. The school ensures that boarders' health, welfare and academic needs are equally prioritised. Boarders achieve in all aspects of their growth and development because of this approach.
- Feedback from boarders, parents and carers is overwhelmingly positive. Boarders speak about feelings of safety and security. Parents thank the school for its care and support. Concerns and negative comments are attentively explored by the school in the interests of making continuing improvements.
- All of the national minimum standards for boarding schools are met. Areas for further improvement are made from this inspection to encourage the school to continue with its drive for excellence.

## **Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools**

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

## Information about this inspection

This inspection was conducted over three days by three inspectors. Information from current compliance cases was factored into the planning and dialogue was held with the Local Authority Designated Officer. All of the physical provision was visited and various groups of randomly selected boarders were interviewed. In the main, boarders present as extremely happy in the boarding environment. There is a wide range of staff and support mechanisms available to them.

The head of boarding took up post very soon after the previous inspection and was able to demonstrate a very clear and targeted action plan.

## Inspection team

Sophie Wood	Lead social care inspector
Lolly Rascagneres	Social care inspector
Sharon Lewis	Social care inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

The Royal Alexandra and Albert School is set in a rural area of Redhill within a large estate. The school is a maintained school which is primarily a boarding school for over 460 young people. The school also has places for day pupils. The school provides residential care for pupils from seven to 18 years old in a range of boarding accommodation across nine boarding houses. The school opened a Sixth Form in 2010 and now has 160 Sixth Form students, the majority of whom board. There is a wide range of facilities provided including a gym, riding school and swimming pool.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- establish improved working practices with the local safeguarding agency with specific reference to the development of robust safeguarding risk assessments.

## Inspection judgements

### Outcomes for boarders

### Outstanding

Boarders make excellent progress within an environment which enriches their experiences across their academic, social and personal development. The school is comprised of boarders from a wide range of ethnic, cultural and social-economic backgrounds. This aspect is celebrated and boarders learn tolerance, acceptance and understanding.

They speak very positively about their boarding experience and comments include, 'I love living here alongside my friends' and 'I've met some fantastic people.' They fully appreciate the new and continuing experiences and activities which are routinely provided. Comments from parents and carers support this view. Examples include, 'we have seen a huge development in [child's name] confidence' and 'my child has had opportunities at this school that they would not have had anywhere else.'

The majority of boarders make favourable comments about their input into the running of the school. Their presentations to governors and at pupil council meetings ensure they make and are able to influence tangible changes within the boarding community. Comments include, 'all of our houses now have their own computer rooms' and 'they keep changing the activities because we ask them to'. Other comments include, 'the food isn't always great but they keep on trying to offer things that we have asked for'.

Boarders grow and mature in terms of their emotional resilience and well-being. They benefit from a wide variety of people and a range of resources which provides them with the guidance, help and support they need. Boarders learn to take control of their own health needs through an educative provision. With their increased age and understanding, boarders make their own decisions which are appropriately supported and respected, particularly by the nursing and welfare teams.

Boarders frequently behave in a way which demonstrates exemplary conduct, a pride in their school and respect for each other. On rare occasions where this is not the case, boarders learn valuable life lessons which include appropriate consequences. Boarders develop a strong sense of responsibility which sixth formers describe as, 'you grow up and become mature.'

The school's creative use of the 'Pupil Premium' ensures boarders with the most need receive additional support and resources. Their learning, and in many cases, their social development is enhanced as a result. The vast majority of boarders achieve well in all areas. They make excellent progress with regards to their own aspirations and leave the school very well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

### Quality of boarding provision and care

### Outstanding

The school's drive to ensure the welfare and positive experiences of boarders underpins the ethos of the senior leadership team. Staff across all disciplines and departments utilise effective communication systems to ensure boarders' individual and unique needs are prioritised and provided for. A highly sensitive and confidential weekly forum, attended by key senior personnel, diligently tracks and monitors concerns about boarders as these arise or are on-going.

Boarding staff are fully apprised by teachers of academic concerns and vice versa. This information is complemented, where necessary and appropriate, by the nursing and counselling team. This group of staff produce comprehensive welfare plans which target the specific support mechanisms needed to assist individual boarders. Boarders are however assured that their very personal and confidential needs are only shared in extreme circumstances and in their best

interests.

Boarders enjoy and participate in a wide and varied activities programme. This aspect receives overwhelmingly positive feedback from boarders across all age groups. New boarders quickly establish meaningful friendships with their peers and older mentors. They readily grasp the boarding regime due to the excellent and well implemented induction procedures. Throughout their time at the school, all boarders enjoy regular and meaningful contact and communication with their family members through letters, telephone and social media, regardless of their family members' physical whereabouts in the world.

Boarders demonstrate a real sense of pride and ownership about their specific boarding houses. They say, 'I love my house' and 'it's really homely.' Boarders are influential with regards to décor and equipment; individual houses truly reflect the tastes and resources of their occupants. A small number of boarders refer to a lack of storage space; some voice concerns about the safety of their possessions. Responsive action is implemented by the school upon the receipt of such feedback. This includes the rolling programme of refurbishment which takes full account of the views and opinions expressed by the boarders about the safety and protection of their possessions.

Boarders thrive within their inclusive and accepting boarding community. They are actively encouraged to develop their own unique personalities. Incidents of racism and homophobic bullying are extremely rare because of the open and accepting culture of the school.

Boarders' health needs are highly prioritised through excellent health arrangements and a dedicated health care team. The fully equipped fitness centre is very well used. Suitably qualified nurses are supported by long-standing health care assistants and a growing counselling service. The expansion of this provision demonstrates the school's commitment to ensure that boarders' emotional and psychological needs are promoted and nurtured as much as any other health concern. Good quality catering arrangements strike a measured balance between boarders' wishes alongside their need for a healthy and nutritious provision. Their comments and views reasonably influence menu plans and good arrangements ensure they have reasonable access and good facilities around snacks and drinks in between planned mealtimes.

## **Boarders' safety**

**Good**

Boarders understand that they have a wide range of safe adults to whom they can go for advice, guidance and support. Staff understand and implement clear child protection guidance. They know what to refer and to whom in order that boarders remain protected. External support agencies are widely advertised. Boarders can readily contact independent services if they so wish. Such practice readily invites boarders to make their views and concerns known. It demonstrates the school's desire to invite complaints, concerns and issues in order that it can attempt to offer solutions.

Recruitment procedures have recently been tightened. The school's implementation of sound recruitment practice applies to all persons employed by the school. Where concerns arise about potentially unsafe adults, the school makes prompt notifications and referrals to the local safeguarding authority. The communication between the school and the local safeguarding authority needs to be further developed to ensure that effective action is taken to address potential risks. Some responses from the local safeguarding agency have lacked speed and sufficient guidance. For example the implementation of safeguarding risk assessment. The school is equally responsible for ensuring such guidance is robust and clearly reflective of safer recruitment guidance. The absence of such clarity could place boarders at potential risk.

A wide range of policies and procedures concerned with safeguarding and child protection results

in clear guidance which is implemented in practice by the boarding staff. Boarders are suitably protected from the risks associated with regards to sexual exploitation, being missing and their own behaviours which may cause them harm. Where risks are identified, the school work closely with other agencies to make sure the right level of resources and support is made available to assist boarders such as family support and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Senior staff with designated safeguarding responsibilities undertakes the appropriate level of safeguarding training provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. These staff members understand their responsibilities and ensure that all other school staff undertakes the necessary training. Staff across all disciplines know and understand what to report and to whom.

Boarders and staff confirm incidents of bullying rarely occur but are well managed when they do. Preventive practice is largely responsible because the school understands the risks associated with large group living and changing risks, such as social media, Facebook and cyber-bullying.

Boarders say, 'people do sometimes fall out with each other but it doesn't get really nasty' and 'the staff here don't allow bullying to go on.' Robust monitoring mechanisms actively search for patterns and trends. When incidents do occur, lessons are learnt in order that improved practice develops. Staff receive training and guidance which equips them to effectively manage behavioural concerns. This includes the use of physical restraint which is extremely rare.

Boarders are very rarely absent or missing from school. Such events are appropriately responded to and the school implements agreed joint protocols with the local police.

Boarders live in safe and secure accommodation. Comments include, 'I like the CCTV, it makes me feel safe' and 'we have night time security which means we can't get out and others can't get in!' Diligent health and safety checks ensure the continued safety of the fabrics of the physical environment. Fire safety evacuations are routinely practised and a rolling maintenance programme ensures potential hazards are minimised. Boarders know how and whom to summons for help and assistance during the day and evening; supervision levels provide sufficient protection without being intrusive.

Comprehensive risk assessments cover a wide range of situations and activities which may affect boarders' safety and welfare. Topics include the premises, hazards and accidents, trips and other external activities. Data in relation to such topics is routinely reviewed, monitored and scrutinised through the governing body in order to provide continued safety and protection for the boarders.

## **Leadership and management of boarding**

**Good**

Clear and effective leadership places the boarding provision at the very centre of the school. Welfare policies, procedures and practice are embedded to ensure boarders' safety and well-being is established and maintained.

Recommendations from the previous inspection have been diligently implemented. The school operates in partnership with external agencies and seeks to continually improve. Issues and potential concerns with particular reference to safeguarding risk assessments continue to require further development. These are being prioritised.

Meticulous monitoring by the head of boarding ensures areas for on-going development are reviewed and evaluated. A committed governing body provides additional scrutiny and oversight. The school is held to account. This group is comprised of individuals from a wide range of relevant backgrounds. Expertise across welfare, finance and health and safety benefits the school. A parent-governor vacancy is currently being widely advertised. The school values parental involvement and influence.

Since the last inspection, core areas of boarding practice have been keenly targeted for improvement by the head of boarding. The training, guidance and supervision for boarding staff is an area of marked growth. Professional training sees improved welfare practice and staff are held to account where necessary, in the best interests of the boarders.

Complaints are received by the school. Mechanisms to make representations are openly advertised to boarders, parents and carers, and external parties. Areas of concern or dissatisfaction receive prompt investigation. The school demonstrates a strong desire to learn from positive and negative feedback, in the spirit of driving improvements. Boarders frequently say, 'you just say if you are unhappy with something, you don't need to make an actual complaint' and 'we can tell plenty of people if something is wrong, we can go to the governors if we need to.'

Parents and carers speak of 'excellent communication' from the boarding staff. This aspect is highly valued, especially by those who are farther away or whose child requires additional support. The wrap around provision of the boarding environment is a factor which is routinely commended by family members and boarders themselves.



## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	125279
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC013933
<b>DfE registration number</b>	936/4623

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	460
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	7 to 18
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Spencer Ellis
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	06/06/2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01737 649000
<b>Email address</b>	headmaster@gatton-park.org.uk

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