

Royal Alexandra & Albert School (The)

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

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

The Royal Alexandra and Albert School is a co-educational, non-selective mixed state boarding school for children aged between seven and 18 years old. There are currently 1,030 children on the school roll, 311 of whom are boarding full time.

Inspection dates: 24 to 26 June 2025

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

How well children and young people are helped and protected **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

The boarding school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 10 May 2022

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Since the last inspection, leaders have focused on greater integration across full-time boarding and day-to-day education. This has had a significant and positive effect on the culture, values and feelings across the school, with both students and staff talking passionately about how much better it is to live, study and work here.

Students are making significant progress. All students are supported through a culture of high expectation, helping them to achieve the best they can. As a result, all boarding students consistently achieve well. All Year 11 students go on to further education, the majority staying in the school. Alongside this, almost all Year 13 students are going on to university. Age-appropriate life skills are developed, alongside the focus on academic progress.

The school council plays a vital role in amplifying student perspectives. Staff have made the students' voice central to the school's ongoing development and to the fostering of a more inclusive and responsive community. Over the past two years, the student council has become more structured and effective in empowering the student voice, with clear, actionable targets and a dedicated boarding committee. Regular surveys and reflections, showing high satisfaction with boarding and cultural celebrations, inform council discussions, ensuring student feedback drives meaningful change. Meetings are student-led, documented, and shared with heads of houses to maintain transparency and involve all students. Initiatives such as culture days, diversity committees and new channels for raising concerns demonstrate how students actively shape school life.

The school's transition and induction processes are designed to support students and their families as they join or move through the school. Induction activities are age-appropriate and individually tailored based on year groups, regardless of a student's previous experience with the school, ensuring that all students have a clear understanding of what to expect before arrival. Staff provide the students with booklets containing practical information, including routines and school life. This complements the support from buddies and mentors to provide a well-planned and thoughtful transition for both new boarders and those changing year groups.

The school actively supports students in raising concerns and complaints. Staff display clear information in boarding houses and use a centralised complaints log to manage complaints, ensuring that they adhere to the school's policy. Senior leaders monitor complaints to ensure satisfactory outcomes. In one case, a student raised concerns about inappropriate remarks by other boarders; the initial, informal response left the student feeling unheard. The student then escalated the concerns, leading to a proper investigation and resolution. Senior leaders emphasised the importance of thorough follow-up, and staff have since received additional training on bullying and reporting.

Difference is truly celebrated, and students are encouraged to share their own culture with their peers. The school population is multinational, with students from over 50 countries attending. Staff celebrate and understand how this diversity contributes to the culture within the school. Leaders ensure that all students, whatever their country of birth and personal circumstances, are welcomed and enabled to join and shape the culture of the school. During the inspection, several students of differing faiths raised concerns about having to attend Christian worship several times a year. This was discussed with leaders during the visit, who immediately made proposed amendments to the policy and considered how they would communicate this change with students.

Staff thoughtfully consider the students' individual needs. Through thorough multidisciplinary meetings and reviews, any strategies that are needed to support students are well shaped, implemented and monitored to ensure that they become well established. Boarding staff have positive relationships with students, enabling them to offer informal support to meet children's individual needs if appropriate. Students are unanimous in their praise of this and value these relationships and the importance of house parents.

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

There is a strong school-wide culture of safety that includes both the boarding and education elements of the school. The importance of taking care of each other is woven throughout the boarding experience. Students talk with confidence about knowing who to report concerns to, and they have confidence that any concerns or worries will be taken seriously by staff.

Leaders have placed a renewed focus on positive behaviour and rewards. This has resulted in a significant reduction in potentially inappropriate or negative behaviours across the school. When behaviour of concern does happen, this is managed well by staff. Staff are clear about their roles and always act suitably, in line with current guidance, and demonstrate exceptional knowledge of the students.

The school has a multidisciplinary safeguarding team led by a passionate and experienced designated safeguarding lead. The team includes representatives from every department. This ensures that when there are safeguarding concerns about specific students, they receive support from the best-placed person who knows them well. Given the number of boarders in the school, the importance of these relationships is significant.

Safeguarding leads have good relationships with external safeguarding professionals, including the local police. If concerns are raised that need referral or consultation, this is done immediately and advice is implemented. If staff practice has been below expectations, this has been challenged immediately and managed appropriately. Senior leaders have also commissioned a specialist service to help with the learning and response to key areas, such as self-harm. This means that staff are following the

most up-to-date guidance and practices to provide highly effective support to the students when required.

Recruitment follows robust processes, enabling leaders to feel confident about the suitability of staff who are working in the school. A thorough vetting process, including input from students, assures the suitability of staff. Appropriate pre-employment checks are consistently completed, including checks such as online searches. Previous employment and any apparent gaps are explored well.

When incidents of new behaviour of concern emerge, boarding staff work well with their education colleagues to consider how best to respond. Leaders ensure that staff are fully educated in some potential extreme risks. The staff have reflected on incidents with students to help them to understand potential dangers that they may be exposing themselves to, and how to avoid them.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Since the previous inspection, the leadership team has been focused on the better integration of the education and boarding elements of the school. The headteacher has driven this change, ensuring that everyone throughout the school is sharing his vision and focus; the effect of this has been significant. All leaders, whether this be senior leaders of the school or heads of boarding houses, speak with great confidence of the positive effect this has had, with all staff speaking of 'one school'. Students recognise this and speak positively about how this has affected their day-to-day lives.

Leaders have created a culture of not giving up on students. When a student's boarding stay is compromised due to behaviour, every effort is made to try to safely help them to stay. When it is no longer suitable for boarding at the school to remain an option, leaders work closely with relevant agencies to support students and to identify a new school placement.

Leaders use a variety of methods to evaluate boarding. Alongside surveys of students and general day-to-day feedback, there is comprehensive analysis of relevant data and of the views of students and staff, to help them to ensure that boarding is continuing to achieve its aims. This has resulted in target-setting and constant reviews to ensure that at no point does the desire to develop and improve boarding slow down.

The boarding provision is well organised, with clear processes to support both staff and students. New staff receive a thorough induction and training, including shadowing and regular progress checks, ensuring that they understand key policies such as boarding principles and national minimum standards. Staff have access to a range of relevant training that includes safeguarding, mental health, and supporting students from diverse backgrounds. Regular meetings and appraisals help staff to improve and maintain their well-being and their practice to ensure that development is continued.

Leaders are supported by a well-informed and active governing body. Governors have a good understanding of what is happening in boarding. Regular visits are made to the boarding provision, during which governors speak at length with staff and students, enabling them to have a good understanding of the boarding experience. Governors use this information to challenge leaders appropriately and to support the development of boarding.

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: SC013933

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Morgan Thomas

Type of school: Boarding school

Telephone number: 01737 649000

Email address: head@gatton-park.org.uk

Inspector

Mark Newington, Social Care Inspector
Kelly Monniot, Social Care Inspector
Becky Paradise, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024