

Ripon Grammar School

North Yorkshire County Council

Ripon Grammar School, 16 Clothholme Road, RIPON, North Yorkshire HG4 2DG

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Ripon Grammar School is a maintained boarding school for 919 boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years. The residential accommodation is provided in two houses: School House for boys and Johnson House for girls. Between the two there is capacity for 95 boarders. The school is located close to the town centre with good access to local services and facilities.

Inspection dates: 15 to 17 May 2017

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 July 2014

Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is outstanding because

- There is a strong boarding community that supports boarders to realise their full potential and provides them with a good springboard to the next step in life.
- Boarders experience significant benefits to their independence, confidence, self-discipline, and personal and academic achievements.
- The school environment is welcoming and friendly. Boarders make strong and lasting friendships. They enjoy a wide range of leisure activities.
- Safeguarding practice is very effective and sensitive to the individual vulnerabilities of boarders.
- Leaders have good working relationships with partner agencies that contribute to the protection of boarders.
- Boarders' behaviour is excellent and they are a credit to themselves and the school.
- Leaders manage very well helping boarders enjoy their time and develop their talents.
- Senior staff ensure that the boarders' individual needs are prioritised. There is excellent coordination between boarding staff, teachers and support staff responsible for health and special needs.
- There is systematic monitoring complemented with effective scrutiny by the school governors.

The boarding school's areas for development

- Ensure all boarders are informed whenever there are any workmen on-site (NMS 14.4).
- Provide timely feedback to parents about accidents and/or illness of boarders (NMS 3).
- Check with 'termly' boarders the quality of weekend arrangements and ensure their needs are fully met on these days (NMS 10.1).

Inspection judgements

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people:
outstanding**

Boarders are part of a strong school community that recognises their individuality and supports them to fulfil their potential. They take an active role in contributing to their progress reports and setting their own targets. This helps them take ownership of and responsibility for their achievements, which is particularly important for sixth formers in preparation for university life. Compared to other schools in the local authority, nearly 30% more pupils from this school aim to go on to university. The school has a very good track record in supporting all sixth formers into higher education or training when they leave. Boarders appreciate the difference that the school makes on their education and they like having teachers that also work as house parents. Boarders consider that this arrangement gives them extra help and support with their studies that day pupils do not get.

Staff promote all-round development, and boarders benefit immensely from the comprehensive range of enrichment activities. These include the economics society, accountancy challenge, school 'Master Chef', music and sporting clubs. Boarders are able to pursue their talents and interests, and boost their personal development and self-confidence as a result. Junior boarders enjoy structured activities, some of which involve the boys and girls socialising together. Older students are more independent and organise their own time, such as by playing for local sports clubs or going running. A parent commented, 'He has so many more interests now, from being here. He chooses what he wants to do. They are very good at tailoring to an individual's needs.' Where a particular interest is home-based, boarders are fully supported to have a mid-week break at home. The majority go home at weekends and there are a number of planned and ad-hoc trips and social events organised for those who remain. Some boarders felt there was enough to do at weekends and liked having extra free time to relax and some felt the school could do more.

New boarders quickly settle in. Admissions are well planned and start with the annual 'Strawberry Tea', when prospective pupils and their parents can get to know others and find out more about the school. Those in their first year commented about how welcoming and friendly it is on arrival. They quickly start to enjoy boarding life.

The quality of care is very good and staff are sensitive to individual needs about privacy, difficulty sleeping and requests for room changes. They work closely with parents' wishes, such as supervising homework and the appropriate use of mobile phones and tablets. There are regular meetings about boarding life, and a whole school council. Food and the quality of wi-fi are regularly talked about. Boarders are able to influence these matters and have a good say in what goes on. Senior house parents have introduced new ideas such as smoothies and a weekly hot chocolate evening, which are popular.

Boarders learn to become more responsible, be trusted to be self-disciplined and commit to the daily routines of boarding life. Their experiences contribute to a marked improvement in confidence and independence, which will be a strong benefit for later life. Sustained improvement in their lives is evident in their achievement records, academic results and their higher education plans after A levels.

Boarders are happy and enjoy being at school. They make strong and lasting friendships. The school environment is very friendly and there is no bullying. Boarders feel able to pursue their own lifestyles free from criticism, such as using the local church and cross-dressing.

Staff promote boarders' health very well. Boarders learn to make positive choices about diet and exercise, and manage their individual health needs safely. There is a wide range of physical activities available and a good choice of healthy food options. Boarders feel they can talk to staff if they are worried. They benefit from good contact with an independent listener and there is support from a local health centre across the road. Boarders' specialist health needs are prioritised. Staff have specific training to support boarders to manage conditions such as diabetes and allergies. There are excellent individual care plans that staff implement in practice and that are kept under review. Weekly boarders usually go home if they are ill, and termly boarders either remain in bed or use a separate sick bay room.

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

Staff are highly effective in keeping boarders safe and free from harm. They know and understand the individual needs of boarders and any associated risks. These risks are mainly linked to the boarders' physical health needs and their emotional well-being. Effective staff practice is in line with the boarders' care plans and has a significant impact on addressing boarders' vulnerabilities. For example, boarders are helped with their emotional outbursts, low moods and attention-seeking behaviour. Boarders have access to counselling services, and are referred for support when experiencing depression, and/or loss and bereavement. Managers are persistent in reviewing the well-being of boarders and achieving positive outcomes for them. Staff have an excellent understanding of the wide range of boarders' needs, and are able to provide emotional stability as well as academic support.

Safeguarding concerns are thoroughly addressed with partner agencies, such as the local authority children's services and youth justice team. This results in excellent multi-agency planning that protects all pupils. Individual boarders learn how to look after themselves, and the school staff closely monitor the impact of plans to keep everyone safe. When home life becomes increasingly difficult, the school provides additional boarding to pupils who are in need of extra support to see them through a crisis period.

Overall, boarders' behaviour is excellent, and they are invested in what the school offers. They do not go missing or run away. There are robust checks on boarders' whereabouts, and staff are thorough in keeping them safe. The school's policies and procedures that cover missing pupils and other safeguarding issues all meet statutory requirements.

Both senior house parents are relatively new in post as a result of internal promotion. They are working closely together to ensure that there is consistency in rules and expectations about daily routines that previously lacked clarity. Although some of the older students preferred the way it was, the feedback from the majority was very positive. There are very few sanctions, which are considered fair by boarders, and staff do not need to physically intervene to manage behaviour. Incidents involving alcohol are rare and the response from staff is appropriate. Staff talk to boarders about their behaviour, organisational skills and independence, helping them to develop and mature. The rules about driving your own car, going off-site and going to friends' homes offer a good level of freedom and are designed to ensure boarders' safety. There is an excellent balance of safe risk-taking and promoting boarders' development and life experiences.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Leaders manage the school exceptionally well. The vision for boarders to achieve well, enjoy their time and develop their talents is significantly successful. There is a strong culture of aspiration, and leaders are ambitious in making a positive impact on the lives of boarders.

Staff prioritise the individual needs of boarders. There is flexibility to give extra support and increase the amount of boarding time when families need it. Staff ensure that specific concerns, such as health and well-being, privacy and exam stress, are all addressed. This improves the experiences of boarders and reassures parents. The majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the way in which staff respond to their concerns. On occasions, there has been a slip in communication with parents when boarders have been ill or had an accident. Leaders are, however, keen to make improvements and address any areas of weakness.

Boarders have a strong sense of community and help each other out. This support exists across different year groups and there are high levels of respect for each other and tolerance of individual differences. This is a strong part of the school ethos and successfully promoted by leaders and managers.

There are comprehensive levels of internal monitoring and audit that sustains high standards of care. This is complemented with external scrutiny and regular consultation with boarders and their parents. Consequently, leaders are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and take action to address any weaknesses. There has been considerable investment in a new extension to the girls' boarding house and improvements to the junior boys' washroom. Leaders are receptive to boarders' views and consequently are buying new beds for the boys, and have improved the quality of the food and wi-fi.

There are high levels of governance. The governing body oversee a number of important areas including academic progress, safeguarding practice and the quality of the boarding provision. There is a dedicated boarding committee that makes a significant contribution to the development of boarding and standards of care, for example by championing the girls' house extension. Governors are effective in holding senior house parents and the head of boarding to account. Governors oversee the implementation of the school's development plan and contribute towards continuous improvement. The recommendations from the last inspection are all in place. Staff performance is monitored through supervision, appraisals and target setting, for example ensuring that house parents contact boarders' parents and provide a regular update about their welfare and progress.

Staff undertake a good induction programme and a wide range of training. There is a high level of training about safeguarding matters such as child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. In addition, staff receive specific training about boarders' specific health conditions. Consequently, staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of boarders. Leaders are mindful about constantly improving professional practice, and further training is being provided about emotional well-being. The senior house parents are enhancing their role through a diploma level qualification in boarding.

Teachers also work as house parents. This provides additional support for boarders with homework and revision. Boarders frequently commented on the positive difference that this made. Communication between boarding and teaching staff is also enhanced by this crossover of role. Combined with the effective role of the school health worker, this gives boarders a very supportive wrap-around service. Leaders have good relationships with professionals in local health services and the local authority safeguarding teams. This gives boarders the best possible support when needed.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the differences made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

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: SC007938

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Martin Pearman

Type of school: Boarding school

Telephone number: 01765 602647

Email address: admin@ripongrammar.co.uk

Inspectors

Simon Morley: social care inspector

Ms Jamie Richardson: social care inspector



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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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