

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 929 boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years. The boarding accommodation is provided in two houses: School House for boys and Johnson House for girls. Between the two houses, there is capacity for 110 boarders. At the time of the inspection, 94 children are boarders.

The school is located close to the town centre with good access to local services and facilities. The school has a range of facilities for the boarders to enjoy, including a swimming pool and sports centre. On occasion, these facilities are available for lease by community groups.

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. There is also a new head of boarding provision, who is suitably qualified and experienced.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

Inspection dates: 8 to 10 February 2022

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.

Overall judgement at last inspection: outstanding

Date of last inspection: 15 May 2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy boarding at this school. They make new friends and enjoy socialising with children of all ages. Older children help the younger children, or those new to boarding, to feel at home. Although girls and boys have separate boarding houses, many social activities involve all the children, which they appreciate. Children feel they are fortunate to board at this school. They believe that the experience helps their overall development.

Children are helped to settle as boarders. There is a well-established routine of visits to the school before children begin boarding. Some of these visits had to take place virtually during the most restrictive periods of the COVID-19 pandemic. This does not appear to have caused any difficulties for those children. The head of boarding meets all prospective boarders to ensure that they understand the boarding experience. This means that, when children arrive at the school, they are prepared and are more likely to enjoy their boarding experiences.

Children develop positive relationships with boarding staff, some of whom they also know as teachers. Children feel they can talk to boarding staff and share any issues or worries. Children told inspectors that their boarding houses are like 'big families'. Everyone has someone they can talk to, which means that children feel reassured about being away from family members.

Children make excellent progress with their education. They develop effective routines for their studies and are helped by boarding house tutors. In addition, older children offer support to those younger than them, which is well received. Children studying for A levels are increasingly independent in their learning. They feel this is good preparation for life at university. The guidance that children receive helps them to achieve very good academic results.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities and opportunities. These provide fun experiences and increase children's confidence and team-building skills. Children who stay at school at weekends help to choose what activities they will do. This can include daytrips away, very popular quizzes and activities such as tree planting. Weekend boarders thoroughly enjoy these events, as well as having time to relax. The opportunity for such activities is one of the strengths of the boarding provision.

Children's physical and emotional well-being is promoted. Children talk to their personal tutors about any concerns they might have. They feel able to do so, because of the strength of relationships they develop. Some children talk to the school counsellor.

Staff are trained to give medication and do so safely. However, the arrangements for the auditing of medication are mixed. This reduces the effectiveness of the oversight

of medication that is stored in the boarding houses. The head of boarding accepts this shortfall and plans to improve these processes.

The physical condition of the boarding houses varies. Most parts of the accommodation are well maintained and well presented. However, some bathrooms need improving and one of the houses lacks homely touches. Given that some children stay in the boarding houses for long periods, this is detrimental to their experiences.

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

Safeguarding arrangements for children are effective. Policies and procedures follow statutory guidance and are regularly reviewed. Staff undertake training to equip them with the skills and knowledge to recognise signs of harm. Staff know how to report concerns, and they do so accurately. They feel confident to take action to protect children. Staff are vigilant and, as a result, children's safety is prioritised.

Leaders respond positively to safeguarding reviews. They learn from incidents and act to improve practice. They work openly with safeguarding agencies. Leaders welcome the opportunity to improve their processes. This approach is forward-thinking. It means that shortfalls are not repeated, and children become safer.

Staff prepare individualised risk assessments for vulnerable children. Assessments are informed by the strong, trusting relationships that exist between staff and children. Staff use the school's case management system effectively. There is an emphasis on communicating concerns clearly, so that further support can be arranged if required. As a result, children are protected from harm without any delay.

Children undertake learning to improve their own safety. For example, they are taught about staying safe online. This includes the risks of online gambling. School information technology systems provide additional layers of protection. These are effective in identifying potential concerns. This allows staff to investigate potential issues and, if necessary, take action to protect children.

Children's behaviour is excellent. A system of sanctions is in place, for the rare occasions when children's behaviour falls below the usual high standards. Sanctions are effective and transgressions are rarely repeated. This has a positive impact on children's overall progress in school.

Recruitment procedures are effective. Extensive checks are undertaken on all new members of staff before they begin working at the school. Checks and references are also completed on adult family members of staff who live on site. These checks exceed statutory guidance. This demonstrates that the children's need to be protected is a priority for the school.

The premises team provides strong oversight of the large school site. The team's knowledge of health and safety practice is extensive. Risk assessments of the site are

effective and regularly reviewed. Leaders recognise that there is a potential risk to some children from the siting of the artificial playing field. The premises team is developing plans to improve screening to enhance the protection afforded to children. However, it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of these new arrangements.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The boarding provision is led by an experienced, qualified leader. She is aspirational for children and fosters this approach in boarding staff. She knows the strengths of the boarding provision and where areas for development remain. She has plans to develop the boarding provision further. For example, she wants to extend the activities at weekends in order to encourage more children to board termly. Children board in a setting that continues to develop and to meet their needs well.

The head of boarding has strong relationships with children. She knows their progress as well as their vulnerabilities. She uses this knowledge to identify additional support, such as the school counsellor. This helps to ensure that children receive the support they need, quickly. The head of boarding also identifies children who can rise to the challenge of student leadership. She provides encouragement for them to succeed. Children respond well to her leadership of the boarding provision. This helps them to invest in their boarding experience and to meet their potential.

Staff feel well supported by the head of boarding. They receive regular reviews of their boarding practice. This helps them to focus on their areas for development. Staff who are struggling to fulfil their roles are helped to improve. Leaders take action if staff cannot make required improvements in timescales that are appropriate to children. Staff regularly complete training to develop the skills they need to perform well. As a result of the support and training that staff receive, they improve their ability to understand and meet the needs of children.

The school is very well supported by a skilled, experienced governing body. The boarding provision is highly regarded by governors, who understand how well it performs. Governors visit the boarding provision when COVID-19 restrictions allow. This means that governors understand the issues that need to be raised with the leadership of the school. The oversight provided by the governing body is a strength of the school.

The head of boarding helps children to think about issues relating to equality and diversity. For example, children engage in discussions about the impact of homophobia. This is improving children's understanding of discrimination, including the impact of the language children sometimes use towards each other.

Children contribute their views to the running of the boarding provision. Some children attend regular student council meetings, where they convey the views of the wider student group. All children are encouraged to complete surveys about their experiences as boarders in the school. Leaders analyse these responses and take

action to meet children's requests. As well as helping to improve children's experiences, these surveys show children that they have a right to have their views heard. This is valuable for their developing sense of self-esteem.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Recommendations

- The physical presentation of some areas of boarding houses should be improved, to provide a consistently homely and welcoming environment for children. (Boarding school: national minimum standards 5.4)
- Leaders should take steps to ensure children' privacy, due to the location of sports facilities next to a boarding house. (Boarding school: national minimum standards 6.3)
- Leaders should strengthen the auditing of medication, to provide an accurate understanding of any current or potential issues. (Boarding school: national minimum standards 13.4)

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: SC007938

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Jonathan Webb

Type of school: Boarding School

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Inspectors

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