



The Regulation and
Quality Improvement
Authority

Boarding Department Inspection Report
IN045923
26 March 2025

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1.0 Service information

Service Type:
Boarding School

Provider Type:
Independent Provider

Located within: – South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Brief description of how the service operates:

This service is a school which provides accommodation for children and young people.

Children and young people will be referred to collectively as young people throughout the remainder of this report.

2.0 Inspection summary

An announced inspection took place on 26 March 2025 between 10 a.m. and 4.15 p.m. The inspection was conducted by a care and nurse inspector.

The inspection assessed progress with all areas for improvement identified during the last care inspection and to determine if the service was delivering safe, effective and compassionate care and if the service was well led.

The inspection found that two areas for improvement identified at the last care inspection were met. These were in relation to the recording of incidents and complaints.

No new areas for improvement were identified during this inspection.

The inspectors concluded there was safe, effective and compassionate care delivered in the boarding department and this was well led by the management team.

The findings of this report will provide the boarding school with the necessary information to improve staff practice and young people's experience.

3.0 How we inspect

RQIA's inspections form part of our ongoing assessment of the quality of services. Our reports reflect how they were performing at the time of our inspection, highlighting both good practice and any areas for improvement. It is the responsibility of the service provider to ensure compliance with legislation, standards and best practice, and to address any deficits identified during our inspections.

In preparation for this inspection, a range of information about the service was reviewed to help plan the inspection.

A range of documents were examined to determine that effective systems were in place to manage the service and deliver safe care.

RQIA inspectors seek to speak with young people, their relatives/carers, visitors and staff for their opinion on the quality of care and their experience of living, visiting or working in this service.

Information was provided to young people, relatives/carers, staff and other stakeholders on how they could provide feedback on the quality of care and support in this service. This included questionnaires and an electronic survey.

The findings of the inspection were discussed with the person in charge at the conclusion of the inspection.

4.0 What people told us about the service

The inspector spoke with young people and staff on the day of inspection. Feedback was also received from young people, relatives/carers and staff through questionnaires.

Young people provided positive feedback as regards the support provided by boarding staff and opportunities to influence and contribute to the operation of the boarding department through the boarding committee. They felt comfortable raising issues, as needed; and were confident that issues would be taken seriously. The young people were content that there were sufficient opportunities to take part in a variety of activities.

Young people reported that group consequences, such as locking down communal rooms, had been used in the boarding department in response to the actions of individuals. The inspectors raised this with the boarding department management who provided assurance that group consequences were not used in response to the behaviours of individuals. The management agreed to engage with the young people through the boarding committee regarding this issue.

Feedback from young people was also received via questionnaire responses. Young people reported that staff helped them to feel safe; staff were there when they were needed; they were involved in decision making about their health and lifestyle; and, staff were aware of what was important to them.

Feedback received from relatives/carers via questionnaire was also positive. They reported that young people were safe and well cared for, with staff keeping them informed about their welfare. Relatives/carers referenced that staff were supportive, attentive and conscientious towards the young people.

Staff demonstrated a caring and compassionate approach when speaking about the young people; they came across as committed, enthusiastic and attuned to the needs of the young people in the boarding department. Staff were positive as regards support from management and the effectiveness of communication amongst the staff team.

Staff responses via questionnaires indicated that they were satisfied that young people were safe and treated with compassion; that the care provided was effective and that the boarding department was well led.

5.0 The inspection

5.1 What has this service done to meet any areas for improvement identified at or since last inspection?

Areas for improvement from the last inspection on 17 May 2022		
Action required to ensure compliance with The Quality Living Standards for Services: Children Accommodated in Schools with Boarding Departments		Validation of compliance
Area for improvement 1 Ref: Standard 4 Stated: First time	The head of boarding shall improve the completion of incident records to evidence that there has been a review of the circumstances that led to the incident, the details of the incident and outcome, any learning and action taken to reduce the likelihood of recurrence. This will support the head of boarding with monitoring of incidents, identifying trends, patterns and areas for learning.	Met
	Action taken as confirmed during the inspection: This area for improvement was met.	
Area for improvement 2 Ref: Standard 6 Stated: First time	The head of boarding shall ensure that all complaints are accurately recorded and reviewed. Records should include details of the area of dissatisfaction, any actions taken to resolve such issues, the outcome reached, the complainant's satisfaction with the outcome and any learning identified.	Met

	Action taken as confirmed during the inspection: This area for improvement was met.	
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5.2 Inspection findings

5.2.1 How does the boarding department promote and make proper provision for the welfare, care and protection of the young people?

Promoting young people's involvement and active participation is essential for supporting young people to influence the way they are cared for and reinforce that their views and opinions matter. Discussion with young people confirmed that there were opportunities for young people to raise any issues, express preferences in regard to activities, and were able to influence the running of the boarding department and delivery of care and support. These opportunities included participation in a boarding committee which represented a cross-section of young people. Staff were also available to young people if they needed support, advice or guidance. Young people reported that they felt confident raising complaints or concerns with staff and had trust that these issues would be thoroughly addressed.

Discussion with staff and young people identified that the young people are facilitated to avail of community facilities, social opportunities, and recreational spaces. The staff team actively supported young people to establish links/connections with the local community, helping them engage in activities that promoted their social and emotional wellbeing. This also encouraged the development of their personal interests and hobbies, contributing to a well-rounded and fulfilling experience within the boarding department.

The behaviour management approach within the boarding department was designed to promote and develop positive behaviours. Young people were actively involved in discussing and agreeing appropriate consequences to actions through the boarding committee. Responses to behaviours were proportionate and reflective of responsible parenting practices. Management provided assurance that group consequences were not used in response to the behaviours of individuals.

Discussions with staff provided assurance that staff were knowledgeable and vigilant in relation to child protection and safeguarding issues; and child protection training was provided to all staff on an annual basis. Evidence was available of robust action and recording in response to safeguarding incidents; in line with the boarding departments Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. There was also appropriate oversight of concerns by the Board of Governors; which contains a designated safeguarding champion.

Discussion with young people and observations during lunch identified that the food provided was of a good standard and there was adequate choice available. There were also facilities available for young people to prepare their own food at certain times of the day. However, there was an issue with adequate ventilation in this room; the boarding department management are aware of this issue and are committed to resolving it.

5.2.2 How does the boarding department ensure staff have the necessary training and support to meet the needs of the young people?

Discussion with staff and review of handovers identified that there were sufficient numbers of staff available to support the young people on a daily basis. No concerns were identified regarding staff availability or the capacity to meet the needs of the young people. A child centred, pastoral care ethos was observed by inspectors which acknowledged and recognised the individuality of each young person. On the day of inspection, the relationships between staff and boarders were noted to be warm, relaxed and supportive. Staff reported working well together and described effective levels of support from the management team and good communication ensured through regular staff meetings and handovers.

Boarding staff had completed necessary mandatory training, to enable the provision of safe and effective care, in key areas such as child protection, fire safety and first aid. Some staff had also undertaken additional training in autism to enhance their skills to better understand and support the diverse needs of the young people in their care. The development of staff knowledge and skills is crucial as it empowers staff to offer personalised, informed care, tailored to individual young people's needs.

5.2.3 How does the boarding department ensure young people experience a safe and high quality environment?

The boarding department provided a well-equipped, comfortable and welcoming environment. Young people's bedrooms were well maintained and they were free to decorate them according to their individual preferences. This allowed for the creation of personal spaces that reflected each young person's identity and sense of belonging. Such opportunities are important as they supported the young people in developing a sense of ownership and comfort, contributing to their overall well-being and emotional security.

Appropriate security measures were in place to ensure a safe and secure environment within the boarding department. The use of CCTV, facial recognition access and established routines were used to help staff maintain awareness of the young people's whereabouts and ensure their safety. The boarding department had an established missing boarder policy and evidence was available of staff taking robust action when young people did not return to the boarding department at the expected time. These arrangements enabled young people to participate in age-appropriate activities and outings outside the boarding department.

Fire records evidenced that fire safety checks and drills were completed regularly and consistently. The fire risk assessment was up to date and the associated action plan had been completed.

5.2.4 How does the service promote and protect the health of the young people?

Young people were registered with a local General Practitioner and were supported to access medical and dental services as required. There were processes in place to manage medical emergencies and support access to specialist medical and counselling services.

Robust arrangements were in place for the storage and safe administrations of medicines to young people as required. There were individual health action plans in place for any young person with identified health needs and training was sourced with records maintained by the Head of Boarding. Assurance was provided that young people were supported to participate in a range of activities that could contribute to their physical and emotional health.

Young people's nutritional requirements and preferences were respected and prioritised with menu choices available. A room was available to young people with food storage areas and cooking facilities. This approach not only supported young people to feel respected, valued and encouraged, but also supported young people to take age appropriate responsibility for, and develop independence in relation to their diet and nutrition.

6.0 Quality Improvement Plan/Areas for Improvement

This inspection resulted in no areas for improvement being identified. Findings of the inspection were discussed with the person in charge as part of the inspection process and can be found in the main body of the report.

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