

Boarding Department Inspection Report
IN045921
16 June 2025

Information on legislation and standards underpinning inspections can be found on our website <https://www.rgia.org.uk/>

1.0 Service information

Service Type:

Boarding Department

Provider Type:

Independent Provider

Located within: – Southern 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 unannounced inspection took place on 16 June 2025 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The inspection was conducted by two care inspectors.

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

The inspection found that one area for improvement identified at the last care inspection was met. This was in relation to the recording of accident reports.

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 inspectors 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 relationships with boarding staff; the support and care provided by boarding staff; and the opportunities to take part in a range of activities. The young people reported positively on the quality of food and the environment; and were happy with the routines in place within the boarding department.

Young people reported that they felt comfortable raising issues, as needed; and were confident that issues would be taken seriously, however, also reported that the boarding council did not meet on a regular basis. This feedback was provided to the person in charge as part of the inspection process and discussed in greater detail in section 5.2.1.

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 involving young people and relatives/carers in decision making. Relatives/carers were kept updated by staff on the welfare of the young people.

Staff spoken to on the day of inspection presented as confident and knowledgeable as regards their roles and responsibilities. Staff demonstrated a caring and compassionate approach when speaking about the young people, highlighting examples of the meaningful relationships built between boarding staff and the young people. Staff reported to having sufficient training to be able to fulfil their role and spoke positively regarding the support from the management team of the boarding department.

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

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 29 September 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 to ensure accident reports evidence that there has been a review of the circumstances that led to the incident, the details of the incident and outcome, and any learning and action taken to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence. This will support the head of boarding with monitoring incidents, identifying trends, patterns and areas for learning.	Met
	Action taken as confirmed during the inspection: This area for improvement was met.	

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?

Discussion with staff and young people identified that the boarding department facilitates regular group activities and is located close to 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.

Young people reported that they had positive relationships with staff members within the boarding department and felt confident raising complaints or concerns with staff and had trust that these issues would be thoroughly addressed. Young people reported that staff were available to young people if they needed support, advice or guidance.

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 and review of records identified that there were opportunities for young people to raise any issues, and express preferences in regard to activities. Records also evidenced that young people were able to influence the running of the boarding department and delivery of care and support. These opportunities included participation in a boarding council which represented a cross-section of young people. Advice was provided on inspection that the boarding council should be facilitated to meet more frequently in order for this process to be more effective and impactful.

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. No concerns were identified regarding the management of child protection incidents. The service had a child protection and safeguarding policy in place and assurance was provided that robust safe recruitment practices were in place. There were mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate oversight of concerns by the Board of Governors; which contained a designated safeguarding champion.

Discussion with young people, review of the menu 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 older students to prepare their own food, to support the development of independence skills.

5.2.2 How does the boarding department promote and protect the health of the young people?

Discussions with relevant staff and a review of healthcare records confirmed that effective arrangements had been in place to ensure that young people received timely and appropriate support for their health needs. Health care profiles had been maintained for each young person, detailing allergies, medical conditions, and any required medications. Medical consent had been obtained from parents, and staff were aware of these consents.

Young people had been registered with a local general practitioner and were supported to access a range of medical services, including dental care, opticians, psychology, psychiatry, and sexual health services, as required. There had been clear processes in place to enable access to emergency medical support and to ensure continuity of care if a young person was unwell or unable to attend school. Staff had also been commended for their handling of a sensitive health case, which had been managed with professionalism, empathy, and appropriate clinical oversight.

Inspectors spoke with a number of young people, who were able to describe how they would access health support and who they would speak to if they felt unwell. However, a small number reported that on occasions when they had felt sick, they had been given pain relief but were still expected to attend school. This feedback was shared with the matron and head of boarding, who acknowledged the concerns and confirmed that processes are in place to support young people who were unwell. They advised that appropriate facilities were available within the boarding accommodation should a young person have required time off school to rest and recover.

Relevant staff reported that there had been good communication between the boarding department and the school regarding young people's health needs. This included regular updates, the use of a shared system for health documentation, and direct liaison with healthcare professionals.

5.2.3 How does the boarding department ensure that safe staffing arrangements are in place?

Discussion with staff and young people 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. Staff reported working well together and described effective levels of support from the management team and good communication ensured through completion of handover records.

Training records confirmed that boarding staff had completed necessary mandatory training, to enable the provision of safe and effective care, in key areas such as child protection and first aid. Assurance was provided that additional training was available to support staff to enhance their skills to better understand and support the diverse needs of the young people in their care as and when required. 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.

5.2.4 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, with communal areas suitable to young people's needs. 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. Adequate storage space was available for young people to store their belongings.

Appropriate security measures were in place to ensure a safe and secure environment within the boarding department. The use of electronic fobs, digital sign out sheets and established routines were used to help staff maintain awareness of the young people's whereabouts and ensure their safety. These arrangements enabled young people to participate in age-appropriate activities outside the boarding department.

Fire records evidenced that fire drills were completed regularly and consistently and there was robust recording of incidents in the fire log book. The fire risk assessment was up to date and the service had a fire safety policy in place.

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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