

Duke Of York's Royal Military School

DYRMS - An Academy With Military Traditions

Duke of Yorks Royal Military School, Guston, Dover, Kent CT15 5EQ

Inspected under the Social Care Common Inspection Framework

Information about this boarding school

The Duke of York's Royal Military School is a state boarding school with capacity for 716 pupils, aged 11 to 18. All students board, and there were 456 students boarding at the time of inspection. They are accommodated across 10 boarding houses.

The inspectors only inspected the social care provision at this school.

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 May 2025

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	outstanding
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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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: 14 June 2022

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

Most children make substantial progress at the boarding provision. They thrive due to the excellent care and support that they receive. Staff recognise that for many children joining the school, this is the first time that they have lived away from home. Since the last inspection, leaders have changed the age ranges for children in the boarding houses, and this has had a significant positive impact on helping new children to settle. Older children provide practical and emotional support for their younger peers.

Children are very settled and happy in their boarding houses. Many children have personalised their living spaces with displays of photos of their families and memorable events at the school. All children have access to a substantial amount of extra-curricular activities and exceptional facilities within the school. This enhances children's progress in areas such as sport and performing arts, as well as providing opportunities for children to expand their interests.

Children benefit from a highly structured day that promotes structure and routine for them. There is an embedded ethos of having high expectations of children and this has a direct, positive impact on their progress and attainment. The school has rich military links and strong cultural traditions. Many children told inspectors that it was a privilege to attend the school.

Although a substantial number of children who attend the school have family links to the armed forces, there is a proportionally larger number who have previously struggled in education. The structure and support networks available within the school provide significant benefit for children with a range of needs, including children with special educational needs and those who experience social, emotional and mental health difficulties. One child's parent said, 'The change in my child has been monumental.' Another parent shared, 'The school has helped me shape my children into the brilliant young people they are today.'

The culture of encouraging children to understand how to be responsible broadens children's aspirations and hopes for their future. Children who move on from the school are very well prepared and develop a strong sense of self-belief about what they can achieve. Children respond positively to the opportunities that they receive to develop their leadership and independence skills, such as prefect and head of house opportunities, or less formally as peer mentors for other children.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to valuing diversity and difference. Children actively participate in organising charity events, raising significant funds for charitable causes. The school embraces inclusivity by celebrating various cultural traditions, allowing children to share their heritage through food, dance and activities. Children value the cultural richness available within the school.

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

Children feel happy and safe in the boarding houses. They benefit from being looked after by familiar adults who know them well. One child stated, 'My housemaster and matron are like my parents. I can go to them about anything. They are the best.' Children who take on peer mentor responsibilities receive specific training, and this further enhances the existing safeguarding culture.

There is a strong framework in place for the management of safeguarding across the school. Leaders demonstrate a sound understanding about the importance of curious safeguarding practice and track the welfare and progress of children through effective monitoring systems. This safeguarding ethos begins right from the admissions stage and expands across the entire school.

The boarding house staff teams demonstrate a strong, well-structured approach to managing student health and medication, with nurses actively reviewing policies, ensuring students understand how to safely self-administer their medications, and working closely with staff, parents and local GPs. The low rate of medication errors, coupled with a proactive, dynamic approach to risk management and ongoing staff training, reflects a deep commitment to children's safety and well-being.

Leaders recognise the importance of helping children and their families, and this extends beyond the school. Consequently, many parents and carers receive excellent additional support from school staff to ensure that their children are kept as safe as possible. For example, the school provides resources and sometimes training for parents during school holidays.

Safeguarding practice within the school is underpinned by the most up-to-date statutory guidance and best practice principles. Senior leaders are forward thinking and continually update their knowledge, meaning that creative and well-informed strategies are used to promote children's welfare, and this is shared across the school. In one example, children have benefited from support around artificial intelligence, the impact of strong political figures and the impact of toxic masculinity.

The school has a comprehensive system in place to appraise staff who join the school and ensure that safe adults are recruited. The single central record is well maintained, and leaders invite oversight and scrutiny, which has enabled both peer and trustee audits. Safer recruitment practice exceeds guidelines set out in relevant statutory guidance and the national minimum standards.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

Child-centred leaders have a strong and meaningful connection with the purpose of the school and the role they have in improving children's outcomes. They understand their responsibilities as custodians of children and culture carriers of the school's

history. Leaders understand the school's strengths well and recognise that the decisions they make are seminal to the progress and attainment of children.

Staff are unanimous in their strong feeling of pride at working at the school. They feel supported by leaders. One staff member said, 'This school has allowed me to be a third parent to thirty-eight children, and it is a true privilege to work here.' Another staff member shared, 'The military ethos of the school is uplifting and makes me feel proud of the work I do and the family I am part of.'

Since the last inspection, leaders have worked diligently to ensure that practices have been established, and training programmes have been implemented that support them to identify and respond to concerns regarding bullying. Children themselves have had training, and ambassadors for anti-bullying have been established in each boarding house.

Highly skilled managers maintain excellent oversight and management of all health and safety matters. A strong emphasis on safety and proportionality ensures that children and staff are afforded excellent opportunities while risks are appropriately managed. For example, children enjoy accessing an on-site firing range, climbing walls and challenging hikes, as well as an extensive range of local community activities and international excursions.

Leaders are aspirational and continue to pursue ways in which to improve on and widen experiences and progress for children. This commitment is threaded throughout leadership monitoring processes and demonstrates the school's ongoing dedication to children's welfare. Leaders can demonstrate through a range of quality assurance and monitoring systems the positive effect that the school has on children's lives.

Staff are provided with a comprehensive induction, with regular reviews throughout their probation. Training and supervision are provided regularly, and training records demonstrate staff keep up to date with all relevant training, both face to face and online through National College. Senior leaders regularly analyse performance, training requirements, professional development and practice concerns to ensure that staff are prepared and able to meet children's needs.

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: SC023666

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Type of school: Boarding School

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