

Dallam School

South Westmorland Multi Academy Trust

Haverflatts Lane, Milnthorpe, Cumbria LA7 7DD

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

South Westmorland Multi Academy Trust operates this school. The school is a state school and so all tuition is free. Children's parents pay for the cost of boarding, which is an affordable attraction of the school.

The school is located over two sites, a day school and a separate boarding facility. The Heversham site accommodates the boarders. The main school campus is located on the edge of the local town centre.

There are 753 children on roll at the school. A total of 139 boarders can be accommodated at the school. At the time of the last inspection, 39 children were boarding.

The head of boarding has been in her role since September 2023.

Inspection dates: 19 to 21 May 2026

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: good

Date of last inspection: 30 January 2024

Summary of findings

Children enjoy their boarding experiences; they feel well cared for and have positive relationships with boarding staff.

Children are provided with opportunities to learn new skills, gain new experiences and engage with the wider community. A long-standing and experienced staff team supports children in the boarding provision. They have a good understanding of individual children's needs and vulnerabilities and, because of this, children feel safe and are kept safe.

Leaders, the head of boarding and the trustees work collaboratively. They have a shared ambitious vision for the boarding provision and changing children's lives.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children enjoy their boarding experiences. They feel well cared for and have positive relationships with boarding staff. They develop strong friendships with each other and have a sense of belonging in the boarding provision. They are supported to explore their individual identities, cultures and beliefs. Parents reported positively about the experiences their children have while boarding. One parent said, 'It is fantastic. It has given my child the independence we wanted in a safe and structured environment.'

Children take part in a wide range of activities both on-site and in the community. Children's hobbies and interests are widely promoted. They participate in choosing and planning activities. They have engaged in the local parkrun and group residential trips. The boarding provision also works in partnership with an external football academy. This provides children with opportunities to learn new skills, gain new experiences and to engage with the wider community.

Boarding staff have a good understanding of each child's emotional needs. Children benefit from a consistent approach to their emotional wellbeing across the school, which means there is a swift response to any signs of anxiety when children are struggling with their mental health. Boarding staff collaborate with external professionals who provide additional support for children to help improve their emotional health and wellbeing.

Children are encouraged to develop their independence skills in line with their age group. Boarding staff promote skills that children can take into their daily lives, such as cleaning, laundry and spending time independently with friends in the local community. Some of the older children also have part-time jobs to prepare them for employment.

The head of boarding has been pivotal in increasing independence for children and ensuring that they are involved in day-to-day decisions about the boarding provision. Children's views, wishes and feelings are captured through the 'student voice', known as the boarding leadership team, tutor group meetings and informal discussions with boarding staff. Key information about the boarding provision is shared with children in daily morning meetings and via electronic sharing platforms.

Children are provided with a rolling menu, which is changed each term. It includes a variety of different food options and caters for children with specific dietary needs or allergies. Children are encouraged to share their suggestions about menu choices through the student voice, which is shared directly with the catering team for consultation.

The boarding provision has a variety of communal areas that are warm and welcoming. There has recently been an upgrade to boarding facilities, including new doors, a heating system and furniture. Children have their own personal space with all the necessary furnishings. They are supported to personalise their rooms and make themselves at home.

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

The welfare and safety of children are a priority. Boarding staff have a good understanding of individual children's needs and vulnerabilities. Children are encouraged to take age-appropriate risks that are proportionate to their age and developing maturity. Consequently, children say they feel safe in the boarding provision and when they go out in the local community.

Alongside the designated safeguarding lead and the safeguarding trustee, leaders and managers have effective oversight and monitoring of all records relating to safeguarding concerns. The relationship between the head of boarding and the designated safeguarding lead is fluid. They have a shared vision and work proactively together to safeguard children.

Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and appropriately. Children can identify a trusted adult to go to if they need support or to raise a concern.

Children are educated to keep themselves safe online. The boarding provision works in partnership with the school to educate children about any potential dangers of social media and the action they can take to protect themselves.

Leaders and managers respond quickly to any significant incidents to ensure that children are kept safe. Internal investigations take place to identify any shortfalls in practice or areas for improvement. On one occasion, leaders and managers did not share information with the local authority designated officer within the appropriate timescale to ensure that there was full and prompt transparency. This was an isolated incident and information was subsequently shared.

Behaviour management strategies are effective. Rules and boundaries are discussed with children. They understand the reasons why these are in place to keep them safe, specifically in relation to the use of door alarms on boarding corridors. However, some children told inspectors that they felt that there is a lack of consistency from boarding staff when some consequences and rewards are implemented.

Children are polite and considerate to each other, members of staff and visitors. There is an embedded culture of mutual respect in the boarding provision. Children and boarding staff say that there is zero tolerance to bullying across the whole school community. Bullying incidents are rare, and when they do occur, the boarding staff take appropriate action.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

The head of boarding has a good understanding of the behaviours and needs of children accessing the boarding provision. She recognises the progress they make and when intervention is required to provide them with additional support. Alongside the senior leadership team, she has worked hard to bring the school and boarding provision together as one. This includes collaborative working with a range of professionals in the wider school and externally to meet children's needs.

The head teacher, head of boarding and trustees work collaboratively. They have a shared ambitious vision for the boarding provision and changing children's lives. Combined, they have the skills and experience to ensure that the operation of the boarding provision is effective. The head of boarding's improvement plan and self-evaluation is realistic but aspirational in how she intends to drive improvements in the quality of care and children's experiences.

There is a stable and long-term team of staff who are appropriately experienced and offer continuity of care and support to children. When changes to the team have been planned due to staff retirement, recruitment has been planned so that new staff can be carefully considered to fill the vacancies. Boarding staff report positively on the senior leadership team and the support they are provided with to conduct their roles effectively.

Boarding staff appraisals are focused on improving children's wellbeing and experiences. Appraisal targets are varied throughout the staff team to ensure that they are multi-skilled and are supported to develop their practice. Team meetings and supervision sessions take place regularly. They are used to share information and reflect on and review individual staff practice.

There is a comprehensive whole-school training programme, which the boarding staff have all undertaken. Leaders and managers have ensured that training that is specific to children's individual needs has been undertaken by boarding staff. This ensures that the boarding staff team has the knowledge and experience to meet children's needs.

Interviews have been held for the independent person's vacancy in boarding. Despite a recruitment advert having been placed, the senior leadership team has yet to recruit a suitable person to carry out the role. Following discussions with the board of trustees, a temporary person has been put in place and their details shared with children. However, they are not independent of the school.

The board of trustees holds the school to account to ensure that the standard of care is good. A separate boarding committee is in place. This ensures that there is a sole focus on children's experiences and an extra layer of scrutiny in relation to the boarding provision. Champion trustees conduct termly visits to gain further oversight of the boarding provision. The boarding leadership team (student voice) attends the beginning of the boarding committee meetings to share views from pupil-voice surveys and to ensure that their views are heard. The board of trustees is invested in ensuring that children's views, wishes and feelings are central to decisions made.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard(s) for boarding schools:

- The school should ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards, 8.1)

Recommendations

- School leaders should ensure that they identify at least one person other than a parent, outside the staff, and those responsible for the leadership and governance of the school, who children may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. This person may be known as the 'independent person'. Children know who this person is, know how to contact them and feel comfortable talking to them. The person is easily accessible. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards, 11.4)
- School leaders should ensure that the school has and consistently implements a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils, including boarders. The school's approach to behaviour is easily apparent to anyone joining or visiting the school and is evident in the actions and messages from all staff and pupils, including boarders. The school behaviour policy includes detail on the behaviour expected of pupils (including boarders) and the measures to promote positive behaviour, including positive reinforcement and reward and consequence systems. (Boarding schools: national minimum standards, 15.1)

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: SC040074

Headteacher: Steven Henneberry

Type of school: Boarding School

Telephone number: 01539 565 165

Email address: enquiries@dallamschool.co.uk

Inspectors

Cheryl Field, Social Care Inspector (Lead)

Katie Tomlinson, Social Care Inspector

Simon Jones, Social Care Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services and inspects services for looked-after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2026