

Reading School
Evaluation Paper 5
Boarding Provision
January 2017

This paper, number 5 in a series of 6, provides Reading School's self-evaluation of our status regarding the effectiveness of boarding provision, including statutory safeguarding measures as adjudged in January 2017. Our ethos and philosophy is to view Boarding as a family community and our strategies and our actions are directed to the delivery of ***Excellence, Integrity and Leadership***, with a renewed focus on continuous improvement.

Therefore, through quality assurance and increasing governance oversight, including increasing boarding governor representation, we aim to ensure that we are fully compliant with the national minimum standards and sustain outstanding provision and outcomes.

This is achieved through the following actions:

- Reading School focuses on continual improvement of Boarding provision, policy and practice
- Reading School encourages all members of the school boarding community to work at their full potential because they are inspired, encouraged and their contributions are recognised
- Reading School ensures that boarders are confident and prepared for life
- Reading School ensures that pupils benefit from effective local, national and international partnerships so that they can achieve better than they would were the institution working alone
- Reading School develops systems in boarding that support improvement as efficiently as possible

As of January 2017, we consider our current key judgements relating to boarding to be as follows:

Overall Effectiveness	Outstanding 1
Outcomes for boarders	Outstanding 1
Quality of boarding provision and care	Outstanding 1
Boarders' safety	Good 2
Leadership and management of boarding	Outstanding 1

As an evidence base for judgements the following documents, including those adopted by the Governing Body, were considered in conjunction with the November 2016 School Self Evaluation Summary (SES) :

- *Academy Strategic Development Plan 2013-2018*
- *Academy Annual Operational Plan 2016-2017*
- *Boarding Self Evaluation Summary/ Review (December 2016)*
- *Equalities Policy*
- *Fire Procedures*
- *FFT December 2016 Data*
- *Headmaster's Reports to Full Governing Body (2016)*
- *Health and Safety Policy*
- *Ofsted Boarding Report (March 2014)*
- *Reading School Scorecard (January 2017 update)*
- *Risk Assessments (Whole School and Boarding)*
- *Safeguarding Policy and external Review (February 2016)*

In addition the following school records were considered:

- Child protection allegations or concerns
- Major sanctions
- Use of Physical restraint
- Complaints
- Personal, health and welfare information relating to individual boarders' records
- Significant illnesses, accidents and injuries
- Parental permissions for medical treatment, first-aid and non-prescription medication
- Staff recruitment records and checks (including checks on others given unsupervised access to boarders or boarding accommodation)
- Staff duty rotas
- Staff performance management, training and professional development
- Fire tests and drills
- Risk assessments including relating to Fire precautions (Workplace) Regulations
- Refectory menus
- Care plans for boarders with additional or special needs
- Parental permission for high risk activities

Furthermore, checks were made regarding the monitoring of matters and records in relation to boarders, as described in the national standards. An analysis of the following was undertaken as to whether review or changes/improvements were needed:

- Records of complaints, including outcomes
- Records of major sanctions
- Records of any use of physical restraint
- Systems and management of medical welfare
- Records of significant accidents
- Records of risk assessments carried out
- Action taken in response to risk assessments carried out

Evaluation Judgements

Overall Effectiveness

Outstanding 1

The Boarding provision at Reading School was judged to be outstanding by Ofsted in March 2014 and continues to be outstanding as judged by analysis and evaluation and undertaken by the Head of Boarding and the Boarding Senior Leadership Team. Scrutiny from the nominated Boarding Governor and parental and pupil perspectives was also integrated in to the report. We aim to have 'excellence as standard' and whilst there are many aspects of provision and practice where this is evident further improvements are necessary. Therefore, significantly, for the leadership of Boarding outstanding does not equate with complacency. This is illustrated by the Boarding SEF and the 2016-2017 Boarding Development plan.

Summary of main findings

- The Boarding provision at Reading School is judged to be outstanding in December 2016 because boarders are confident and thrive in the boarding environment. It is evident that the well-being of boarders is important and their personal and academic development is enhanced by the outstanding level of care they receive. In addition equality and diversity is promoted in order to meet individual boarder needs. Relationships between boarders and staff are positive and respectful.
- Reading School provides boarders with a range of clubs, which has been extended due to increased staffing levels. Operationally, Boarding at Reading School is led by two outstanding Housemasters, ably supported from September 2016 by a reshaped management team. The Chair of Governors, as nominated Boarding governor, with expertise in Health and Safety provides focused support and challenge. The Headmaster, as Head of Boarding, is a member of the BSA.
- There have been improvements since the last Boarding Inspection in March 2014, including increasing staffing levels. Improvements to ablutions and study space provision have been part of the development programme. There is a clear awareness of the need for further improvements. Boarding houses provide good accommodation, including single rooms for pupils in Year 9 and above.
- Good safeguarding arrangements, including regular child protection training, assist staff to keep boarders safe from harm. Boarders say that they feel safe and well looked after. They know what to do and who they can speak to if they have an issue or a problem.
- The boarding provision has areas of strength and no significant weaknesses which have a direct impact on the outcomes for boarders.

What does Reading School need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all aspects of the Boarding Development plan 2016-2017 are actioned
- Improve approaches to succession planning in relation to Boarding staff
- Improve marketing strategy to ensure numbers continue to be viable in boarding
- Implement planned programme of improvements to boarding provision
- Develop further national and international partnerships to improve practice and increase development opportunities for staff and pupils. E.g. links with Sure24 and Hutchins School.

The outcomes for boarders are outstanding. They are part of an inclusive boarding community and enjoy positive relationships with staff and others. The ethos of a boarding family praised in the Ofsted 2014 report continues to be emphasised as the values are evidenced through actions in practice. The friendly and open environment is encouraged by excellent Housemasters. Boarders are essentially enthusiastic about their boarding experience and feel valued as individuals. They receive excellent nurturing care and support from the Boarding pastoral team. Role modelling is evident and staff are aware of individuals that may need additional support. Staff offer sound advice and guidance to assist boarders to make well-informed decisions during their stay at Reading School and for their future; for the vast majority of sixth formers this means entrance to university. In addition, boarders provide mutual support and encouragement. Subsequently parental and boarder feedback is that boarders are very well prepared for leaving school and the relevant next steps. Perceptive risk assessment including a differentiated approach based on age and linked to reasonable trust ensures that boarders understand road safety and the importance of staying in small groups and communication when going in to the centre of Reading for example. Boarders develop their self-esteem and confidence through positive interaction with staff and other boarders at Reading School. They receive a holistic boarding experience that supports them to develop their life and independence skills. Team building activities, inter-house competitions and theatre visits to the Lion King and Mamma Mia for instance are important approaches to promote SMSC development. SMSC has an important place in the life of boarders at Reading School.

Boarders predominantly behave well and mutual respect is emphasised as exemplified by visits to the local care home. They are afforded a variety of opportunities through leadership positions to demonstrate leadership and trust and across the age range. The prefect system has been extended and improvements have been made to the approach to rewards and sanctions. There continue to be extensive positive views relating to catering and the reward for 'boarder of the week' is the opportunity to choose an evening meal the following week for all boarders. Therefore the positive relationship between food, the catering company and boarders is strengthened further. Boarders talk about the variety of activities and clubs that ensure there is an effective balance between 'prep' and personal development activities. Therefore the boarders develop into mature and well-rounded members of wider society. Boarders' views definitely make a difference. Boarders consider that they have a strong voice and importantly that they are listened to. There are many opportunities available to them to give their opinions and improve aspects of boarding at Reading School. Boarders are increasingly confident that their views are heard and changes are made as a result of this. Boarders' health and well-being is effectively supported by the Boarding Staff team. The School day Matron, two boarding Matrons, Royal Berkshire hospital and the local doctor's surgery are accessible to provide appropriate medical advice and care. Boarders have a variety of opportunities to keep fit and healthy. Many boarders participate in and are enthusiastic about activities including sport and boarders are over-represented in representative sports for the school, school sports teams can consist of 20 percent of boarders whilst they are only 76 out of a total of 960. In addition, House competitions also provide extensive opportunities that are valued by boarders.

At Reading School the quality of the boarding provision and care in December 2016 and adjudged over time is outstanding. Boarders benefit from excellent pastoral arrangements which are supportive and nurturing of their individual needs. There is a sufficient evidence base that staff are committed to providing boarders with quality care and support. The Boarding staff work well as teams and provide an effective system of pastoral provision and care. The boarding family ethos is strengthened by the drive to adopt a holistic approach that is driven by process and compassion. The Housemasters, supported by sound governance, have sought continuous improvement to improve the robustness of policy and practice. This has been exemplified by succession planning and the Boarding Development Plan 2016-2017.

One of the strengths of Boarding provision at Reading School is the effective induction including sleepovers, communication with parents and the effective work of the Boarding Administrator. Boarders are aware of the importance of developing trust and positive relationships. Indeed, one of the further positive aspects of practice is the interaction between different year groups which has a valid impact across all of the two boarding houses, for instance through their input into sleepovers and welcome evenings.

Although staffing levels were described as 'robust' (Ofsted March 2014 report page 5) they have been increased in 2016 and this had led to an injection of positive attitudes amongst newly appointed staff. Role modelling continues but they staff profile is now more balanced in terms of experience, expertise and enthusiasm. Significantly 'Welfare' plans, already judged to be of an excellent standard by Ofsted, have been improved in response to suggestions. There is now pupil input which has had a positive impact where appropriate. Regular review ensures that consultation with the boarders themselves is now much more explicit. This can be considered an example of the drive for continuous improvement, with leadership listening and acting in order to improve practice. There is a self-evaluative and indeed self-critical approach which leads to a drive for continuous improvement with boarding at the heart of the school. Welfare is planned and at the heart of practice.

Boarders have access to a range of varied and meaningful opportunities and experiences. Staff are motivated for boarders to reach their full potential and promote their involvement in social inclusion. Indeed, the professionalism and commitment of staff provides a wide range of opportunities for boarders to engage in and enjoy with enthusiasm. The programme of clubs and activities is renewed in response to student feedback. Sports activities and competitions lay alongside bespoke clubs. Boarding Matrons are available directly and explicitly for pastoral work rather than administration when the boarders need them most. Boarders have commented positively on this aspect of provision and practice. The provision of a Medical Centre, located in South House and the availability of the School Day Matron specifically in the mornings to meet the medical needs of boarders. As part of the quality assurance process relating to Boarding at Reading School the management of medication can be considered to be robust. The Chair of the External Relations and Pastoral Care Committee of the governing body has supported and challenged the school in relation to a raft of health policies, including all relevant to boarders. The questions 'What about boarding?' 'What about the boarders?' is at the centre of the approach of governors especially in relation to welfare.

Furthermore, Boarders are encouraged to maintain regular contact with their family and friends.

Regarding food for Boarders, Healthy options are always available and vegetarians are well catered for. Mealtimes are social and well-ordered occasions where boarders enjoy informal discussions and develop friendships with others. Catering staff are aware of allergies and religious dietary requirements. They ensure that they are met discreetly and effectively. This judgement has been corroborated with boarders, staff and parents.

The importance of being both reactive and proactive characterises the agreed approach between governors, estates and Boarding Housemasters. Operational pressures and the importance of strategic developments should not be in conflict. Boarding staff want boarding to be the jewel in Reading School's crown and this aspiration is shared by the Headmaster and the governing body.

Boarders' Safety

Good 2

The arrangements for safeguarding boarders' welfare are at least good and often outstanding. Boarders' safety is at the core, the heart of Reading School and staff are dedicated to provide them with safe and secure care. Crucially, this is also accurately reflected in the quality of policies and risk assessments that staff are familiar with, understand and put into practice. Staff are vigilant and sensitively support and protect boarders. An analysis of recruitment procedures linked to boarding are robust and essentially follow Department for Education guidance as shown through a survey of relevant documentation. The appointment processes relating to gap year students is now considered to be exemplary. This has been due to the excellent work of the Head's PA, working in partnership with the Housemasters. The close relationship with Auckland Grammar School also ensures that the gap year students are of the highest quality. Indeed, from January 2017 two gap year students are supporting boarding.

The Leadership and Management of our safeguarding practices are effective, especially of 'Student Welfare Board' which meets to discuss vulnerable pupils, including boarders, fortnightly. Therefore, our safeguarding of vulnerable pupils is very good and effective. Reading School staff have appropriate safeguarding training including E-Safety and appropriate levels of Child Protection training. This is updated in line with statutory guidance during each employee's period of employment.

Safety is also a key consideration of governors and this is a high priority in the support and challenge evident. Reading School's use of professional Health and Safety Risk Assessments has enabled us to improve the Leadership and Management of this area of our work, supported and challenged by the governor responsible for Health and Safety. The work is both reactive and pro-active and we aim to reduce and then monitor the number of instances of accidents to a low level. All the required policies and procedures are in place and these are reviewed by the Head of Boarding, the Headmaster, and the Boarding Housemasters. The Boarding Housemasters, supported by the Headmaster, want to increasingly promote inclusion in a boarding environment and strengthen an open and trusting culture as demonstrated by the December 2016 Boarding Self Evaluation Summary and Review.

Predominantly, boarders state that they feel safe while staying in school. They confirm that staff listen to them and are aware of people independent of the school to talk to should they have any matters of concern. Boarders hold the view that staff want them to keep safe in all aspects of their lives, whilst also taken in to account the need to take age-appropriate risks in order to be developing as a person. Boarders are well informed with regard to keeping themselves safe both on and off of the school site, this includes the use of social networking sites. All staff have child protection training. The designated safeguarding staff, including the Head of Boarding and one of the Housemasters have safeguarding training to the appropriate and higher level needed for their role. Importantly, they have purposeful contact with relevant safeguarding agencies to ensure accurate, appropriate and up-to-date information and guidance is available to staff. Safeguarding policies are clear, robust and the Head of Boarding is a member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Regarding bullying, boarders state that staff provide consistent care and fair behaviour management of boarders. Boarders feel safe and well protected by staff. Staff are aware of particularly vulnerable pupils. The Housemasters provide boarders with opportunities to give their views and voice any concerns as individuals or in a group setting.

Reading School is proactive in working in partnership with other agencies and involve governors and parents in all aspects of boarders' safety. Parents are kept informed, as corroborated by Parental feedback in 2016, regarding issues and concerns relating to their son. Risk assessments and checks in relation to the boarding facilities and the site are thorough and a tool to minimise and eliminate health and safety hazards. Significantly boarders are encouraged to take age appropriate risks as part of their growth and development. Boarders are aware of the systems in place to promote their safety, for example, registers are maintained so that staff are aware of boarders' whereabouts. The registers and signing-out books were monitored as part of the review process.

Leadership and Management of boarding

Outstanding 1

The leadership and management of the boarding provision are outstanding. The boarding is effectively and efficiently managed by a dedicated staff team. It has been a priority to build upon the success of the March 2014 Ofsted Boarding report which stated that 'the head teacher, ably assisted by the housemasters, provides outstanding leadership and management of the boarding provision...supported by the governing body, has successfully established boarding at the heart of the school.' (Ofsted Report March 2014 page 7). Crucially there continues to be a strong focus on continuous improvement at the analytical, critical and evaluative Boarding SEF (2016 update) illustrates effectively the quality of evaluation followed by necessary action.

Partnership work is an important element explicitly linked to improved leadership and management outcomes. For instance, the Housemaster of East Wing, Mr C Nicholas has played a leading role internationally in developing links with the International Boys' School Coalition with a specific focus on Action Research and sustainability. In addition, there is a drive to learn from best practice as exemplified by the Peer Review of RGS High Wycombe.

Also the Boarding Parents Association plays an important active role and the boarders themselves are also involved in decision making. Student leadership must also be emphasised as the recent extension of boarding prefects has led to improved capacity, which is valued by staff and boarders alike.

All statutory policies, documents and records are comprehensive and available. The school's 2016-17 statement of principles and practice is shared with parents so that they are aware of the care their son receives as a boarder. In addition, the school has an informative website. Crucially ethos is translated in to regular practice as principles are put into practice. The importance of routine is emphasised and they operate in accordance with published information so that there is consistency evident. Thus there is a framework for a safe community which also is sensitive to the importance of a personalised approach where necessary according to the professional judgement of the housemasters and other staff including the Deputies.

The Boarding management team is reflective and self-critical about practice and motivated to drive forward further improvements and quality which are already of a high standard. The one recommendation from the last inspection has been met. There has been refurbishment of the boarding provision and health and medication arrangements for the boarders have been further enhanced by the provision of a Medical Centre and the appointment of the Day Matron.

Boarders at Reading School are looked after by a motivated and enthusiastic staff team who provide them with quality and equality of care and have their best interests at heart. Boarders confirm that there are sufficient staff available to care for them throughout the school day and in boarding time. The vast majority of boarders confirm that they feel valued and respected by staff and enjoy their boarding experience at Reading School. Boarders receive good support from staff that are well managed and trained for their roles. Therefore staff are up-to-date with boarding matters and receive on-going mandatory training such as first aid, child protection and fire safety. Many staff are proactive and engage in professional development, for example training through the SBSA and the International Boys School Coalition, to increase their knowledge and understanding about the welfare aspect of boarding.

Regarding the importance of Governance, Teamwork and Stakeholder engagement; the Boarding staff and governing body and other stakeholders work well together to drive up standards and fulfil the objectives of the Reading School Academy Strategic Development Plan 2013-2018 and are integrated in to the Boarding SEF (December 2016). The 'link governors' system is clear, substantial evidence of the governing body and Reading School boarding staff working closely together in key areas. This close and effective relationship has influenced practice and contributions providing positive support as well as challenge, celebrating success, encouraging the entitlement to opportunities to improve leadership locally, nationally and internationally, all underpin the sustained excellence in outcomes at Reading School. The governing body hold Boarding leaders to account as demonstrated by the minutes of governing body meetings (2016). The governing body, through the governor link scheme, actively take part in monitoring and evaluation activities.

Furthermore, a strong parental and stakeholder input drives accountability as demonstrated by Ofsted Parent view (February 2016) and Boarding Parents' Group minutes (2016). Positive relationships and regular contact with parents exist. Communications are clear and improved following the appointment of a Boarding Administrator so that parents are able to raise any issues with the school. Boarding at Reading School attempts to be a listening organisation and the views of the boarders are seen as a valuable contribution to their enjoyment and well-being.