Reading School

Reading School

Reading School, Main House, Erleigh Road, Reading RG1 5LW

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Reading School is a selective maintained school with academy status for boys aged 11 to 18 years. There are 86 pupils who are boarders. Boarders are accommodated in 2 separate boarding houses, South House and East Wing. The school does not offer weekend boarding. The school is situated close to the centre of Reading, Berkshire and has good access to all facilities in the local area.

Inspection dates: 23 to 25 September 2026

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

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: outstanding

Date of last inspection: 21 November 2023

Summary of findings

The boarding provision is outstanding, with a highly dedicated and caring staff team who create a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment where boarders thrive.

Diversity is celebrated, and boarders feel valued, respected and supported.

Moves into boarding are carefully planned with personalised support, ensuring that children settle successfully.

Boarders make exceptional contributions through mentoring and supporting each other, actively shaping boarding life.

Safeguarding is strong, with tailored welfare plans and effective multi-agency working.

Leaders create a positive and aspirational culture. They focus on boarders' welfare and staff development, and promote equality and inclusion. As a result, boarders make excellent progress and enjoy an exceptional boarding experience.

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding

The dedication and warmth of the staff team are instrumental in creating a boarding environment where boarders feel safe, valued and cared for. Staff consistently go above and beyond to support boarders, resulting in a strong community where boarders thrive, develop meaningful relationships and experience a genuine sense of belonging. This is a considerable strength of the boarding provision and contributes significantly to the exceptional progress that boarders make.

The boarding community is inclusive and celebrates diversity in meaningful ways. Boarders are encouraged to learn about and respect different cultures, faiths and backgrounds through a wide range of activities and celebrations. Boarders actively contribute to cultural events, creating quizzes, presentations and activities that promote understanding and inclusion. Staff ensure that boarders from all backgrounds feel valued and supported, including those observing religious practices or requiring additional support. Differences are positively embraced, creating a culture of acceptance where boarders feel safe to be themselves.

The move to boarding is highly personalised with a thorough understanding of each child's individual needs. Leaders gather information from primary schools, children's families and other professionals to identify any additional support requirements at the earliest opportunity. Where concerns are identified, meetings are held with boarders and parents to ensure that effective support strategies are in place before starting at the school. This thoughtful approach ensures that boarders receive the right support from the moment they join the boarding community.

The quality of support provided during the first few weeks of boarding is a significant strength. Staff carefully monitor how boarders are settling and respond quickly to any signs of homesickness, anxiety or uncertainty. Through nurturing relationships, peer mentoring and individualised support, boarders are helped to develop resilience and confidence.

Boarders make an exceptional contribution to the life of the school. Prefects take responsibility for areas such as wellbeing, charity work, academic support, community development and student voice. Older students provide mentoring and study support to younger boarders, helping them to develop effective revision and organisational skills. Boarders confidently seek support from peers and staff, creating a culture where mutual encouragement and collaboration flourish. Leadership opportunities are purposeful and help boarders to develop confidence, responsibility and important life skills.

Boarders have a wide range of opportunities to shape their environment and experiences. Feedback from boarders has resulted in improvements to catering, activities and social events. Boarders are actively involved in the planning of trips, the

development of communal spaces and the creation of boarding initiatives. Leaders are highly receptive to boarders' ideas and encourage them to take ownership of projects. This includes student-led clubs, social events, wellbeing campaigns and improvements to house environments. Boarders are proud of the impact they have on boarding life and eagerly speak about how their views have been listened to.

Parents are kept up to date with their children's progress through discussions with boarding staff at collection times and through termly newsletters that celebrate boarders' success and participation in a range of activities both in boarding and the wider school community.

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

Staff know the boarders well and have a detailed understanding of their individual needs, strengths and vulnerabilities. They work as a team to ensure that boarders receive tailored support that promotes both their welfare and progress. Boarders with special educational needs, health conditions or additional vulnerabilities benefit from coordinated and consistent support from boarding, pastoral and education staff. Staff demonstrate a proactive approach to identifying emerging concerns and implementing strategies that help boarders to overcome barriers and succeed.

Joint working with safeguarding agencies results in swift responses and referrals should there be any concerns for a child's safety or wellbeing. When needed, independent scrutiny of safeguarding responses is commissioned to ensure that staff have responded appropriately to specific complaints or concerns.

Boarders have individualised support in areas that they are struggling with through boarding welfare plans, which are regularly updated and reviewed with boarding staff, the child and other key people. They are proven to be an effective tool in supporting boarders to make better choices about various aspects of their boarding life.

There is a strong culture of recognition and celebration across the boarding provision. Staff consistently acknowledge boarders' efforts, achievements and positive contributions. Reward systems focus on encouraging kindness, responsibility, community spirit and personal growth. Boarders are praised for supporting others, contributing to the community and demonstrating positive behaviours rather than simply meeting expectations. Rewards are meaningful and boarders choose how achievements are celebrated. This approach promotes a collective celebration of successes and strengthens relationships within the boarding community.

Substantial investment has been made across the school and boarding provision. Significant funding has been allocated to major improvement projects, including building preservation works, window replacements, redecoration programmes and upgrades to boarding accommodation. Bedrooms and communal areas across both boarding houses have been redecorated, with ongoing improvements to flooring,

bathrooms and shared spaces. Leaders demonstrate a clear commitment to continually improving the environment for boarders while balancing immediate needs with long-term sustainability.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding

At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had planned leave. The acting headteacher has provided seamless cover, ensuring that boarders continue to have an exceptional experience and that all staff benefit from dedicated and professional support.

The boarding staff describe themselves as working collaboratively to ensure that boarders have a great experience at the school. They are aspirational for each child and want them to succeed to the best of their abilities. Leaders and managers work hard to ensure that all staff are recognised for their skills and that there is not a hierarchal approach in the boarding provision.

Leaders have established a comprehensive induction and support programme that enables staff to develop confidence and competence in their roles. New staff are carefully introduced to boarding routines, safeguarding responsibilities, medication procedures and the wider culture of the provision through shadowing opportunities, training and ongoing mentoring. Staff report that procedures are clear and that support from senior leaders, housemasters and deputies is always readily available. As a result, staff feel valued, well supported and equipped to meet boarders' needs effectively.

Staff are reflective in their practice and continually seek ways to improve boarders' experiences. Their strong teamwork, effective communication and unwavering commitment to boarders contribute significantly to the positive and aspirational culture in the boarding provision.

Records for boarders detail key information to ensure that all staff supporting them provide help and support when needed, and leaders know the progress that boarders are making.

The leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. Staff receive training that helps them to navigate sensitive issues and support boarders to develop respect and understanding of different cultures, backgrounds and experiences. Open discussions with boarders encourage reflection, learning and respectful debate. As a result, the boarding environment is characterised by acceptance, tolerance and positive relationships.

Leaders have significantly strengthened the management of the boarding environment through the introduction of a comprehensive and proactive estates strategy. A detailed long-term maintenance and refurbishment plan is in place, identifying priorities and projected investment needs through to 2036. This has moved the provision away from a reactive approach to maintenance and towards a

planned programme of improvement, ensuring that boarding accommodation remains safe, comfortable and fit for purpose.

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: SC054201

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Chris Evans

Type of school: Boarding School

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Inspectors

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