

Dollar Academy

School Care Accommodation Service

Dollar Academy
Dollar
FK14 7DU

Telephone: 01259 742 511

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 October 2023

Service provided by:
Dollar Academy

Service provider number:
SP2006008024

Service no:
CS2006114865

About the service

Dollar Academy is an independent boarding school which provides accommodation for pupils, aged 9 to 18 years, from the UK and overseas.

There are three boarding houses located on the periphery of the school grounds. These are Argyll House and Heyworth House for girls; and McNabb and Tait, a house for boys. The school is registered to care for up to 105 boarding pupils.

Pupils have access to a range of facilities including the Maguire building (an arts centre with fitness suite), dining hall, medical centre, library and computer areas, and indoor and outdoor sports facilities. The school had updated most of its boarding houses.

The school is close to the town centre and is near to local amenities, including shops, and bus routes.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on the 25th - 27th September 2023 . The inspection was carried out by three inspectors from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with 54 people using the service
- spoke with 22 staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with professionals

Key messages

- All children and young people felt safe, and staff were aware of their role in the protection of young people.
- The school had an ethos of 'be kind to one another', this helped minimise instances of bullying.
- Mental and physical health was prioritised, with the school increasing its offering of supports for young people
- Boarding houses were warm and homely and subject to a programme of renovation.
- Care plans required some improvement, including a focus on goals relating to the care of young people.
- Leaders ensured there was an inspiring, supportive, and empowering culture within the school.
- Quality assurance procedures required further improvement, and standardisation across the boarding houses.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children and young people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

All children and young people we spoke to told us that they felt safe. The school had child protection procedures in place, which included up to date guidance. Staff had a clear understanding of child protection procedures and had access to regular child protection training. It was pleasing to hear that the school was considering developing this further, by introducing adult protection training.

The school had an ethos of 'being kind to one another'. Staff took a restorative approach to support young people's relationships with one another. This prevented or minimised instances of bullying. All children and young people we spoke to were confident that the school would support them quickly and appropriately with any instances of bullying.

Children and young people's physical and mental health needs were given priority. The school had established good working relationships with local health services. In addition, we heard that the school offered counselling services and senior pupils received training to become mental health ambassadors. The school knew their children well and ensured young people had access to the support they required.

All boarding houses were relaxed, warm and homely. Young people told us that suggestions they made to improve their boarding experience was listened to and acted upon. The school had invested in improving facilities for boarders, and it was pleasing to hear that the school had ongoing plans to continue this work.

There were many committees in place to ensure the views of pupils were sought, including food committee. We heard that there had been recent changes to the catering provider and that this had a positive impact on the quality of food. We heard that the school had also made changes to the menu following the feedback of young people, and it was pleasing to hear that the school plan to continue to develop this further.

All children and young people had care plans in place, which included self-evaluation and educational needs. We found that strategies to support young people's care were at times unclear. It was pleasing to hear that the school were developing personal planning further to ensure documents were SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound) to reflect young people's needs and how staff will support these needs, by using up to date knowledge, theory, and research. **(See Area for Improvement 1)**

Leaders ensured there was an inspiring, supportive, and empowering culture within the school. Staff told us that this was experienced from Rector level down. We felt that the ethos of the school and direction of boarding was clear.

Young people told us that there were always enough staff. We also heard from a considerable number of young people that 'the houses feel like family, there is always someone to speak to, or spend time with'. Parents told us that the school was keen to hear the views of parents too, to drive improvement.

Young people valued numerous trips and activities arranged by the school. We heard that if young people chose not to participate there was always alternatives on offer. Young people could also get involved in the local area, visiting coffee shops, or for some older young people to engage in employment, or work experience.

Staff had access to training and supports. The school understood the Scottish Government's goal to ensure a trauma informed workforce and were open to progressing this area of training and development further. All staff spoke of feeling supported; however, we suggested the school further develop its formal supervision procedures for boarding staff.

The school had introduced some quality assurance procedures to gain fuller oversight, and consistency of approaches within each of the boarding houses. We felt that this was an area that still needed further development, and standardisation of some systems, including medication stocktake procedures. **(See Area for Improvement 2)**

Areas for improvement

1. To support the young people's wellbeing, outcomes and choice the service should review their care planning processes. This should include but is not limited to:

Ensuring that goals are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely). These should be reflective of young people's words, and should clearly describe the supports required to achieve these. Goals should be actively tracked and subject to regular review.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices.' (HSCS 1.15).

2. To support the young people's wellbeing, outcomes and choice the service should review their quality assurance processes. This should include but is not limited to:

Reviewing the formal quality assurance processes in place across boarding houses. These should be consistently implemented across the service. This should include the roles of both house staff and external managers in reviewing processes, planning and practice within the service. There should be record of the audits undertaken.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes.' (HSCS 4.19)

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

The school should continue to build on systems of quality assurance and self evaluation including an impact evaluation to assure themselves of continued progress.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with health and social care standard 4.19 which states: "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes."

This area for improvement was made on 20 February 2020.

Action taken since then

The school has progressed some areas of its quality assurance procedures, and had plans to further develop more. We found on this inspection that for some areas of practice, such as medication stocktakes and storage this required further improvement. We have placed an area for improvement to address this.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?	5 - Very Good
7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life	5 - Very Good

7.2 Leaders and staff have the capacity and resources to meet and champion children and young people's needs and rights	5 - Very Good
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