

Dollar Academy

Service name
Dollar Academy

Service address
Dollar
Clackmannanshire
FK14 7DU

Type of care service
School Care Accommodation Service

Provider name
Dollar Academy

Service number
CS2006114865

Date of inspection
20 March 2007

Type of inspection
Unannounced

Period since last inspection
9 January 2006

Care Commission Office
Central East, Compass House,
11 Riverside Drive, Dundee. DD1 4NY.

Inspection Report for Dollar Academy

Introduction

Dollar Academy, an independent boarding school, was deemed to be registered with the Care Commission as a School Care Accommodation Service from 1 April 2005. It provides accommodation for pupils from the UK and overseas within four boarding houses located in premises on the periphery of the school grounds. These comprise Argyll and Heyworth for girls and Tait and McNabb for boys, generally accommodating junior and senior pupils respectively within the age range from 9 to 18 years. The maximum roll for boarding was confirmed as 99 in 2006, with the school operating towards full capacity at the time of the inspection, owing to the facility for temporary boarding. The school is located in the town of Dollar. Most senior pupils occupy single study bedrooms. Pupils have access to a range of facilities including the new Maguire building (an arts centre with fitness suite), recently refurbished dining hall, medical centre, library and computer areas as well as numerous sports facilities and pitches.

The last inspection of Dollar Academy boarding provision took place in January 2006 as part of a programme of integrated inspections of mainstream school care accommodation services by HM Inspectorate of Education and the Care Commission, following commencement of regulation under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 on 1 April 2005.

Basis of Report

In accordance with Care Commission inspection guidance for 2006-07, the service was inspected after a Regulatory Support Assessment was carried out. This assessment assisted the Care Commission Officer to determine the level of support necessary and took into account: new registrations, complaints activity, changes in the provision of the service, the nature of any notifications made to the Care Commission and action taken upon requirement made at previous inspections. This service was assessed as requiring a low level of support.

This inspection was one of the twice yearly inspections undertaken by the Care Commission, one of which must be unannounced. The report was written following an unannounced visit, which took place on 20 March 2007.

Information was obtained from the following:

- Interviews with the deputy rector, registered manager with responsibility for boarding provision;
- Discussion with four house parents and a house tutor/school librarian providing care for pupils;
- Discussion with two boys from McNabb and most girls individually from Heyworth during tours of these two houses;
- An evening meal shared with staff;
- Examination of records, policies and procedures and
- Inspection of premises and resources.

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Views of Carers

The views of parents and carers were not sought on this occasion.

National Care Standards

National Care Standard Number 99: Other Issues Related to National Care Standards and Regulations

Strengths

There was only one main point for action in the last report, namely to continue to maintain the high standard of boarding.

The deputy rector had ensured some additional measures were put in place shortly after the inspection. These included the following:

- Liquid soap and paper towels or hand-dryers had replaced soap and towels in all public areas.
- Arrangements for records of administration of medication now followed the same format throughout the houses. Health issues for each pupil were collated in one discrete place, ensuring confidentiality.
- Records of routine incidents were now recorded on separate pages within a bound book. These continued to be regularly monitored by senior management.

The senior houseparent, located in Argyll, had retired from this role at the start of the academic year. Her successor, a houseparent at McNabb, stated that the new houseparents at Argyll had been fully integrated into Dollar's team approach to boarding, taking full advantage of the school's formal and informal support networks.

Houseparents confirmed that while there were good systems in place, such as regular redecoration and prompt repairs, the school was responsive to proposals to ensure continuous improvements. For example, staff and pupils in Heyworth were pleased with their newly-refurbished kitchen extending from the common-room. Pupils indicated that they were often involved in colour selection at the final stages. Accommodation and furnishings were generally of a high standard, homely and fresh. A rolling programme of refurbishment included replacing bedroom furniture and some institutional lighting.

A new catering manager had extended the range of the salad bar as part of wellbeing national recognition of the importance of a healthy diet for general wellbeing and responsiveness to pupils' preferences. Internal improvements contributed to a focus on encouraging pupils to view the dining hall as a social centre. Older pupils were observed to linger, while others had more pressing commitments.

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The focus of the inspection was to follow up issues identified within the report of the integrated inspection referred to above. The Care Commission Officer took all of the above into account and reported under Other issues in relation to National Care Standards for School Care Accommodation Services. The inspection also takes into account the Regulation of Care Act (Scotland) 2001 and the Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002/114.

Action taken on requirements in last Inspection Report

Not applicable.

Comment on Self-Evaluation

Not applicable.

Views of Service Users

Overall, pupils felt that that Dollar Academy was a very good school to belong to and that relationships between staff and pupils were very positive. Social interaction in various settings was relaxed, warm and mutually respectful. Spontaneous comments from pupils commonly referred to the strength of Dollar Academy in facilitating contact with pupils from a wide variety of social, cultural and international backgrounds, where diversity was positively welcomed, with no discrimination on the basis of disadvantage. Pupils said they very much valued the opportunities through boarding for making good friendships which were sustained during holidays and beyond school.

Older pupils expressed appreciation of single study bedrooms for exam preparation. It was observed they continued to offer moral and practical support to fellow pupils. Pupils of all ages were generally in favour of set times for prep to ensure they gave priority to academic study, while still finding time for activities to develop other talents and interests. The school's social and cultural programmes were viewed as one of the school's strengths, a recent family ceilidh organised by the parents' association reported to have been very popular. In addition to the school's sporting achievements, there was an established tradition of recognising success in all areas of school life. For example, during the week of the inspection, all pupils were noted to be supporting their friends in the school's annual drama production of two short plays.

Pupils did not express any specific concerns about how the school operated. Arrangements for meals and snacks, laundry and general running of houses were said to run smoothly, with pupils happy to share in a few house chores on a rota basis. Notice-boards displayed a range of avenues to pursue any grievances or access support or guidance. House staff were accessible and approachable, though older pupils tended first to look to each other for advice.

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Areas for development:

Further suggestions to improve the format for recording of incidents were made, for consideration.

Enforcement

There has been no enforcement action taken against this service by the Care Commission in the last year.

Other Information

None.

Requirements

A requirement is a statement setting out an enforceable action required of a service provider in order that the service comply with current legislation, usually within a specific timescale.

There were no requirements made at this inspection.

Recommendations

A recommendation is a statement setting out proposed actions to be taken by the service provider aimed at improving the quality of service (based on good practice and professional judgement) but which would not be subject to enforcement action if not actioned.

There were no recommendations made at this inspection.

This report was written by Rachel Gillespie, Care Commission Officer,
23/03/2007