

# Dollar Academy

## School Care Accommodation Service

Dollar Academy  
Dollar  
FK14 7DU

Telephone: 01259 742 511

Type of inspection: Unannounced  
Inspection completed on: 11 January 2017

**Service provided by:**  
Dollar Academy

**Service provider number:**  
SP2006008024

**Care service number:**  
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 residencies 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 maximum registered number for boarding is 99. At the time of the inspection there were 71 boarders.

Most senior pupils occupy single study bedrooms. 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 is close to the town centre and is near to local amenities, including shops, and bus routes.

## What people told us

We spoke with one parent during the inspection, and 15 parents replied to us by email when we asked for feedback for our inspection. We spoke informally with approximately 35 boarders throughout our inspection, and joined them for meals. We spoke with boarders in groups in the boarding houses, and some individually.

Comments made were generally very positive. They told us they were very happy in the boarding houses, and that the older boarders were like older siblings who looked out for them. They suggested that meals could be better sometimes, with less fried food to be healthier. They thought that suppers which were made in the houses were the best food. All the boarders we spoke with liked their rooms, and said that they could change rooms if they didn't like the room they were in. They were appreciative of house parents' pets (cats and dogs) and said they helped to make them feel at home.

Comments made by parents were also generally very positive. Issues were raised concerning the quality of the food, and some individual concerns about personal space and privacy. Comments included:

"The best thing about boarding is the facility itself; the proximity to the school; and the creation of a home-feeling amongst the boarders."

"The boarding feedback is brief but sufficient. Our views were requested once from the school at the end of the school year."

"We have regular updates and communication from the school. I would approach the house parents should I have any concerns."

"There is a focus on making the house a home from home. The house parents and school organise a great deal of activities through the week and at the weekend. Additionally there is a clear structure to the day which helps my daughter to be able to manage her study and free time."

"I believe the school has found a good balance between giving the boarders freedom to learn, try new things and grow whilst setting clear boundaries."

"I feel they keep us well informed. There are occasional requests for input and I find this sufficient."

"All the staff are very helpful, caring and genuinely nice people who are always there to help. Nothing is ever a problem."

"The atmosphere in the boarding house is very homely, warm and inviting."

"I can only praise \*\*\*\*\* and all the staff for the excellent job they are doing."

"My son has really flourished and matured into a nice young man whilst in their care."

"Just wanted to express my gratefulness to the school and boarding house staff. They are doing a great job."

"The children always say warm words about the staff in the boarding house."

## Self assessment

The service sent us a completed self-assessment in which they identified where they thought they showed strengths, and some areas where they planned improvements in the quality themes we looked at.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

Quality of care and support	6 - Excellent
Quality of environment	not assessed
Quality of staffing	not assessed
Quality of management and leadership	5 - Very Good

## What the service does well

Staff in the boarding houses had established very positive relationships with boarders. The senior house parents led boarding house staff teams very effectively, setting a superb example of good practice for them to follow. We saw highly sensitive and caring attitudes from boarding house staff, which helped them to clearly establish the ethos of home from home in a family atmosphere in the houses.

The school had developed and implemented a comprehensive system for assessing and recording the needs of all pupils in line with Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC). This process was based on the SHANARRI indicators (Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible and Included) and a staged intervention approach to support planning, for any pupils who needed them. In an example of exemplary practice, these plans included the views of all those involved, including parents and the young person. The child protection co-ordinator demonstrated an impressive knowledge of GIRFEC and a commitment to ensuring the system worked exceptionally well to ensure the safety and wellbeing of boarders. Clear guidance was in place and shared with staff which meant they all knew what was expected of them.

Very effective systems for health and wellbeing and medication were evident. A fully staffed medical centre was supplemented by access to local healthcare services as necessary. The lead nurse participated in health education across the curriculum and clearly knew the health needs of the boarders very well. This information was used to maintain a very high level of medical care for boarders.

Boarders were provided with an extensive range of opportunities for activities outwith school time. They were encouraged and supported to develop talents including a wide variety of sports, art, music and dancing. Staff made sure that arrangements were made to facilitate each of their interests. In recognition of some previous issues, a budget had been introduced to provide interesting excursions at weekends for all boarders to enjoy equally.

Boarders were encouraged to develop friendships and a sense of community, where they supported each other and looked out for each other's wellbeing. We heard that younger boarders felt they had a choice of older 'siblings' who cared about them and encouraged them. External support was also available through the school counsellor.

A comprehensive range of audits and overview was in place across all aspects of the service. This resulted in managers being very well informed about individuals and incidents, leading to appropriate action plans. All managers and staff were very clear about their roles and responsibilities, and effective systems of support were in place to help staff carry out their roles confidently and well.

Staff met regularly to share practice and ideas. Senior managers visited boarding houses routinely which provided them with an overview of practice and an opportunity to hear the views of staff and boarders.

## What the service could do better

While it was clear that boarding house staff followed agreed procedures for providing alcohol on set occasions, the school should review their policy to clarify expectations and reflect the current practice.

Some parents and boarders identified that the quality of the meals could be improved. The appointment of a new chef provided the opportunity to review menus across 24-hours and ensure nutritional balance, as well as healthy and appetising meals.

The school should continue to build on the significant progress they had made on implementing GIRFEC process, to embed these in practice and increase staff confidence in their use. They could include routine opportunities for governors and senior managers to meet boarders or attend events in the boarding houses.

Whilst the school had made improvements to informing the Care Inspectorate of notifiable events, they should access the guidance provided and ensure they are fully compliant in submission of information. **See recommendation 1.**

## Requirements

**Number of requirements:** 0

## Recommendations

**Number of recommendations:** 1

1. It is recommended that the school provide routine opportunities for senior managers to have a direct overview of the boarding houses with opportunities for boarders to pass on their views. This could include opportunities for governors to have direct contact with boarders.

National Care Standards for Schoolcare Accommodation - Standard 7: Management and Staffing

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings								
9 Jan 2014	Unannounced	<table> <tr> <td>Care and support</td> <td>5 - Very good</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Environment</td> <td>5 - Very good</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Staffing</td> <td>5 - Very good</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Management and leadership</td> <td>5 - Very good</td> </tr> </table>	Care and support	5 - Very good	Environment	5 - Very good	Staffing	5 - Very good	Management and leadership	5 - Very good
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Environment	5 - Very good									
Staffing	5 - Very good									
Management and leadership	5 - Very good									
10 Dec 2010	Unannounced	<table> <tr> <td>Care and support</td> <td>6 - Excellent</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Environment</td> <td>Not assessed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Staffing</td> <td>Not assessed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Management and leadership</td> <td>Not assessed</td> </tr> </table>	Care and support	6 - Excellent	Environment	Not assessed	Staffing	Not assessed	Management and leadership	Not assessed
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Environment	Not assessed									
Staffing	Not assessed									
Management and leadership	Not assessed									
12 Mar 2009	Unannounced	<table> <tr> <td>Care and support</td> <td>5 - Very good</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Environment</td> <td>Not assessed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Staffing</td> <td>Not assessed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Management and leadership</td> <td>5 - Very good</td> </tr> </table>	Care and support	5 - Very good	Environment	Not assessed	Staffing	Not assessed	Management and leadership	5 - Very good
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7 Nov 2008		<table> <tr> <td>Care and support</td> <td>5 - Very good</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Environment</td> <td>5 - Very good</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Staffing</td> <td>5 - Very good</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Management and leadership</td> <td>5 - Very good</td> </tr> </table>	Care and support	5 - Very good	Environment	5 - Very good	Staffing	5 - Very good	Management and leadership	5 - Very good
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