

# St Margarets School

Inspection report for boarding school

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC019551          |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 27 September 2007 |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Kay Mehrrens      |
| <b>Type of Inspection</b>      | Key               |

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| <b>Registered person</b>       | St Margarets School   |
| <b>Head of care</b>            | Lynne Crighton  |
| <b>Head / Principal</b>        | Lynne Crighton  |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 7 February 2006   |

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## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Outstanding:  | this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality |
| Good:         | this aspect of the provision is strong                        |
| Satisfactory: | this aspect of the provision is sound                         |
| Inadequate:   | this aspect of the provision is not good enough               |

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

St. Margarets School is an Anglican based, independent boarding and day school, set in extensive grounds, which provide a country setting for the school. The school provides places for girls aged between four and 18 years, with full or weekly boarding available for those over 11 years. Boarders are accommodated in the main school building, and are organised by age, under the supervision of housemistresses. There are currently 46 full, seven weekly and four flexi boarders in the school, a high proportion of whom are from overseas. The school is sited in a residential area of Bushey, and has become part of the local community over the years. There is a local library and small shops nearby and Watford town centre, with its extensive facilities, is a short bus ride away. There are also easy transport links to London near to the school.

### **Summary**

This visit is the first Key announced inspection of the service looking at standards identified by Ofsted as key areas of care. In addition, standards covering boarders records, crisis management planning, catering and activities were inspected. The inspection took place over three days. Feedback was given to the head teacher and senior staff on the third day of the inspection. The overall judgment is based on the outcomes of the standards inspected. The service is judged to provide good care for young people.

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

There were no recommendations made at the last monitoring inspection in February 2006

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

The young people are provided with advice and guidance on keeping safe and healthy. The school has clear policies with regard to alcohol and substance abuse. The young people are aware of the school's policy with regard to drugs and alcohol. The school nurse has a positive and proactive approach to supporting and educating the young people. Presentations from outside speakers on topics that include drug awareness, anorexia and depression are organised by the school. The young people told the inspector that they had also attended classes about personal health. The staff were aware of the school's policies and procedures with regard to social and health education and support for the boarders. The health and welfare recording is well written, informative and positive in content. However, some recording in the boarding house is kept in shared notebooks, not on individual files, and so the confidentiality of information is compromised. The health centre is staffed by qualified staff during the school day. They are also available, on-call, for boarding staff out of school hours. The qualified nurse is supported in maintaining her training needs. The health centre staff were observed to attend to a young person, who was not feeling well, in a very gentle and caring manner. The young people are treated with respect and in a way that ensures their privacy and dignity. The systems for medication administration, audit, storage and stock control both in the health centre and the boarding house are excellent. The nurse has a very good understanding of the individual needs of the young people and has built good links with their families and the independent counsellor provided by the school. Health promotion, advice and support are well promoted

and offered by the health centre staff. The existing health centre provides accommodation for young people when they are unwell. The facilities were pleasant and 'little touches' by the staff had made them child friendly. The new medical centre has been recently completed but is yet to be furnished. It has facilities for up to three young people, accommodated in one single and one shared room, plus a treatment room, office, waiting room and disabled toilet and showers. Once operational it will provide an excellent medical facility for the young people. The standard of catering at the school was good. The young people are provided with well-balanced nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day. The dietary and cultural needs of the young people are considered by the catering manager when planning the menus. The meals are well presented and mealtimes are pleasant, sociable affairs. The young people's comments regarding the meals provided were varied but generally positive in content. The young people like the variety of food offered and enjoy the opportunity to prepare different snacks in the boarding house kitchens. The report by a visiting Environmental Health Officer confirmed that there were no outstanding matters concerning food safety. However, the inspector came across out-of-date food, unlabeled food and incidents of cooked and raw food being stored together in some of the boarding-house kitchen refrigerators.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The school has clear policies with regard to bullying and these are available for staff, parents and young people. The young people say that they are not being bullied and that bullying is talked about in school. They are clear whom they could talk to if they were concerned about anything. The surveys completed by the young people included comments such as, 'any bullying is dealt with' and 'the school keeps me safe'. The Head of Boarding is the designated staff member for child protection issues. Her awareness, understanding and positive approach to ensuring the safety of the young people is very good. She has recently attended a training programme, specific to the independent boarding sector, which linked in with the local authority procedures. All staff are trained in child protection awareness and further training, on current local procedures, has been organised by the designated child protection officer. Induction training for new staff includes child protection training. The systems and training in place ensure the safety and protection of the young people. Staff spoken to during the inspection were very aware of child protection procedures and the role of the designated member of staff. The staff handbook contains information regarding child protection referral procedures. The young people are aware of sanctions for serious breaches of the school rules. Information is provided for parents and young people. The young people feel that the rules are fair. The house staff are good at encouraging the young people to look at their actions and ways to effect positive changes. The staff approach towards discipline is to encourage and reward positive behaviours and support the young people to look at any inappropriate behaviours in a reflective and adult manner. The school uses a system of positive rewards that the young people like and respond well to. The boarders' handbook and prospectus does not include information on how to make a complaint and the school complaints procedure does not contain clear information for parents about how to contact Ofsted should they have any concerns. However, the young people are clear who they can talk to if they are unhappy. One young person wrote, 'In boarding I feel that there is always someone to talk to if there is a problem' and another said 'they are caring if you are unhappy'. The young people are aware of the procedures with regard to fire drills and said that they had done fire practice at the beginning of term. Fire drills and equipment checks are well recorded. Risk assessments are updated and reviewed annually. The procedures and systems in place ensure that the young people are well protected from the risk of fire. The

young people are happy with their bedrooms and say that their privacy is respected and protected. Staff practice ensures the privacy of the young people. They were observed to be discreet and respectful of the young people's personal space. The staff recruitment files were sampled and are generally well organised though the full employment history, on one member of staff, is not recorded and not all information is transferred to the staff files. Required recruitment checks are done to ensure the safety of the young people. The young people are supervised only by staff that are satisfactorily checked. There are good systems in place to ensure that the grounds are secure and well supervised. The school sports centre is used by the public and the young people are supervised when attending. Risk assessments are in place with regard to public access to the school grounds and premises. The young people told the inspector that they felt safe and that any concerns could be raised with the staff. The policies and practices at the school ensure that the young people are kept safe and secure.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

The young people have access to a wide variety of activities and facilities during the week and at weekends. Their comments include, 'the facilities are amazing' and 'they are good at dealing with different cultures and backgrounds'. The young people are aware of the study times and of the different activities available in their house and outside of school. Day pupils study with boarders and also attend several after school activities. This provides time for boarders to socialise with friends from school that do not board. Access to the internet is provided and safeguards are in place that protect the young people. Staff encourage the young people to join in activities as well as attend to their studies. Staff support and encourage the young people to have fun together as well as relax in the boarding house. The inspector observed lovely interaction between the staff and the young people during a house meeting, at supper time and during an evening activity. The school provides very good pastoral care for the young people. The young people are aware of the name of the child protection officer for the school and the 'independent listener'. Leaflets and posters are displayed around the school advertising the school counsellor sessions and other child protection agencies. The school employs a personal counsellor who attends the school weekly, offering individual and private appointments for the young people at their request. The system for appointments and the sessions with the counsellor ensure the confidentiality of the young people. Older young people are encouraged to support younger people through their role as 'senior sisters'. The support networks are used and appreciated by the young people. The young people's comments are positive and include, 'there is no need to be afraid as you can seek help easily'. 'They help to make foreign students feel less homesick'. 'They help young people grow'. 'They are caring if you are unhappy'. The school offers boarding to overseas students and the majority of boarders currently accommodated are from overseas. Their comments about feeling integrated and supported by the staff and other young people are very positive. They are clear that they are made welcome and do not feel isolated or discriminated against. There are plenty of opportunities for the young people to mix together and share their different cultural experiences, and observation showed this to be a fun learning experience for all participants. The school is good at supporting language training needs for overseas students. The staff have a very good awareness and understanding of the cultural needs of the young people.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

There are regular boarding house meetings and the young people are supported by the staff to voice their opinions and comments. There is no set agenda for the meetings so the young people are not always aware of what is to be discussed. The boarders are represented on the school council but it does not meet regularly. This is an aspect of boarder involvement that the head is developing. The comments from the young people were mixed as some feel that they need more opportunity to have a voice and others feel that they are well supported and listened to. There are systems in place that ensure the young people's views are sought. The young people have access to telephones that ensure their privacy. However, most have mobile phones and are allowed access to them after school hours. The young people also have access to the Internet and e-mail systems with good safeguarding systems in place. Parents are able to contact the boarding staff to discuss any welfare issues. The young people are supported in maintaining private contact with their families.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

The boarding accommodation is very pleasant. The bedrooms are clean and well ventilated. The young people told the inspectors that they liked their bedroom areas and are encouraged to personalise their space. There is plenty of evidence of young people's personal belongings and pictures in their bedrooms. The boarders are provided with adequate quiet study space in their bedrooms as well as access to the school's library and computer facilities. There are several common rooms equipped with soft furnishing and equipment that are well used and appreciated by the boarders. There are sufficient bathroom facilities for the young people. The bathrooms are clean and ensure the young people's privacy. The young people commented upon the shower rooms stating that 'some showers needed improving'. The Head welcomed the suggestions from the young people regarding the shower areas. The school has a development plan that includes the improvement of shower facilities. Several bath and shower rooms had been upgraded during the school holidays and the young people are pleased with the improvements.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The school provides booklets and brochures with plenty of information for parents and boarders about the boarding provision at the school. The school also has a web site that is well presented and regularly updated. The school boarding statement contains reference to 'boarders experience a great time socially and make good use of their greater access to the school's facilities, often undertaking more of, or becoming more involved in, the wide variety of activities available in the school.' The school achieves this aim and ensures a positive experience for the young people that board at the school. The bursar has produced detailed crisis management plans that ensure the safety of the young people and staff at the school. The young people receive training and advice in fire and health, and safety awareness as part of their induction days at the beginning of the school year. The head monitors records with regard to complaints and punishments in order to identify any actions which are needed. The senior management team monitor risk assessments and accidents. The systems in place ensure that the school is well organised and standards are monitored and shortfalls addressed. The staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the number of boarders accommodated. There are always two staff on duty in the boarding house and the rota is displayed in the house office. The boarding staff operate as a very supportive team and ensure that the young people are aware of activities, events and any

changes in the staff cover. There are procedures in place for visitors and school staff coming into the boarding house. The young people are aware of these procedures. The young people are aware of the signing in and out books that ensure staff are aware of their whereabouts at all times. However, the telephone system in the boarding house limits the young people's access to the staff when they are off site. There are systems in place that ensure the young people stay with approved guardians on their weekend 'exeats'. Boarding staff are aware of their job descriptions and roles in the boarding house. They are provided with a detailed staff handbook. From observation and comment it is clear that the staff enjoy their role and the time spent with the young people. The boarding staff comments include, 'I like to watch the young people develop.' 'I feel job satisfaction and find it fulfilling'. The staff are trained in various aspects of their role though lack on-going review and discussion of their professional development. The Head is aware that the staff appraisal and supervision system is not fully developed. The school does not place boarders in lodgings so this standard was not inspected.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

| Standard | Action | Due date |
|----------|--------|----------|
|----------|--------|----------|

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that full employment histories are recorded as part of the staff recruitment procedures. National Minimum Standard 38
- ensure that all staff are provided with the opportunity to regularly review their boarding practice. National Minimum Standard 34
- continue with the refurbishment of the shower facilities. National Minimum Standard 44
- ensure the confidentiality of information with regard to welfare concerns and incidents. National Minimum Standard 7
- ensure that all the food stored in the young people's fridges is regularly checked. National Minimum Standard 24
- ensure that the complaints policy is made available to parents and young people and that it includes reference to Ofsted. National Minimum Standard 5
- ensure that the telephone system in the boarding house provides sufficient means for the young people to contact members of staff when they are away from the school. National Minimum Standard 31



## Annex

## Annex A

### National Minimum Standards for boarding school

#### Being healthy

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- boarders' health is promoted (NMS 6)
- safeguarding and promoting boarders' health and welfare are supported by appropriate records (NMS 7)
- boarders' receive first aid and health care as necessary (NMS 15)
- boarders are adequately supervised and looked after when ill (NMS 16)
- boarders are supported in relation to any health or personal problems (NMS 17)
- boarders receive good quality catering provision (NMS 24)
- boarders have access to food and drinking water in addition to main meals (NMS 25)
- boarders are suitably accommodated when ill (NMS 48)
- boarders' clothing and bedding are adequately laundered (NMS 49).

**Ofsted considers 6 and 15 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Staying safe

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- boarders are protected from bullying (NMS 2)
- boarders are protected from abuse (NMS 3)
- use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate (NMS 4)
- boarders' complaints are responded to appropriately (NMS 5)
- the operation of any prefect system safeguards and promotes boarders' welfare (NMS 13)
- boarders' welfare is protected in any appointment of educational guardians by the school (NMS 22)
- boarders are protected from the risk of fire (NMS 26)
- the welfare of any children other than the school's pupils is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated by the school (NMS 28)
- boarders' safety and welfare are protected during high risk activities (NMS 29)
- boarders' personal privacy is respected (NMS 37)
- there is vigorous selection and vetting of all staff and volunteers working with boarders (NMS 38)
- boarders are protected from unsupervised contact at school with adults who have not been subject to the school's complete recruitment checking procedures; all unchecked visitors to the boarding premises are supervised (NMS 39)
- boarders have their own accommodation, which is secure from public intrusion (NMS 41)
- boarders are protected from safety hazards (NMS 47)

**Ofsted considers 2, 3, 4, 5, 26, 37, 38, 39, 41 and 47 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Enjoying and achieving

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- boarders have access to a range and choice of activities (NMS 11)
- boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination (NMS 18)
- boarders' welfare is not compromised by unusual or onerous demands (NMS 27)
- boarders have satisfactory provision to study (NMS 43)
- boarders have access to a range of safe recreational areas (NMS 46)

**Ofsted considers 14 and 18 the key standards to be inspected.**

**Annex A**

## **Making a positive contribution**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- boarders are enabled to contribute to the operation of boarding in the school (NMS 12)
- boarders receive personal support from staff (NMS 14)
- boarders can maintain private contact with their parents and families (NMS 19)
- new boarders are introduced to the school's procedures and operation, and are enabled to settle in (NMS 21)
- boarders have appropriate access to information and facilities outside the school (NMS 30)
- there are sound relationships between staff and boarders (NMS 36)

**Ofsted considers 12 and 19 the key standards to be inspected.**

## **Achieving economic well-being**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- boarders' possessions and money are protected (NMS 20)
- boarders are provided with satisfactory accommodation (NMS 40)
- boarders have satisfactory sleeping accommodation (NMS 42)
- boarders have adequate private toilet and washing facilities (NMS 44)
- boarders have satisfactory provision for changing by day (NMS 45)
- boarders can obtain personal requisites while accommodated at school (NMS 50)

**Ofsted considers 51 the key standard to be inspected.**

## **Organisation**

**The intended outcomes for these standards are:**

- a suitable statement of the school's principles and practice should be available to parents, boarders and staff (NMS 1)
- there is clear leadership of boarding in the school (NMS 8)
- crises affecting boarders' welfare are managed effectively (NMS 9)
- the school's organisation of boarding contributes to boarders' welfare (NMS 10)
- risk assessment and school record-keeping contribute to boarders' welfare (NMS 23)
- boarders are supervised adequately by staff (NMS 31)
- staff exercise appropriate supervision of boarders leaving the school site (NMS 32)
- boarders are adequately supervised at night (NMS 33)
- boarders are looked after by staff which have specific boarding duties, and have received adequate induction and continued training (NMS 34)
- boarders are looked after by staff which follow clear boarding policies and practice (NMS 35)
- the welfare of boarders placed in lodgings is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 51)
- the welfare of boarders is safeguarded and promoted while accommodated away from the school site on short-term visits (NMS 52)

**Ofsted considers 1, 23, 31 and 34 the key standards to be inspected.**