

Queenswood School

Inspection report for boarding school

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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

Queenswood School provides education to approximately 400 girls aged 11 to 18 years. At the time of this inspection Queenswood School was providing places for approximately 220 boarders. The nearby town of Potters Bar has mainline rail links and taxis can reach the school in approximately 10 minutes. The school is in a rural setting and has 120 acres of gardens and parkland. Boarding accommodation is provided in two main buildings. There is separate 6th form accommodation. Year 7 and 8 girls join the junior lower school house and Years 9 to 11 are accommodated in four mixed-year middle school houses. A flexi boarding system is offered with girls going home after their last commitment either on Friday evening or on Saturday, returning in time for Monday morning. The school has extensive sporting facilities including a swimming pool and has links with the Lawn Tennis Association.

Summary

All of the key National Minimum Standards (NMS) were assessed and the overall judgement is that Queenswood School provides a satisfactory level of care to boarders. The most impressive aspect of the visit was the enthusiastic atmosphere between boarders. The surveys completed by parents were generally positive and included comments, such as 'the school is well run, the girls are beautifully cared for' and 'staff work beyond the call of duty for which we deeply appreciate'. Good levels of healthcare are provided. Boarders are able to have a balanced experience where enjoyment is valued alongside achievement.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed or partially addressed. Improved arrangements for the administration of medication are noted, however, the records maintained in the boarding houses are not consistently maintained. A new recommendation has been made. Recommendations made in relation to fire safety, water temperatures, window restrictors and first aid training have all been reviewed and addressed.

Recommendations regarding the child protection policy and training have been partially met. The policy requires further clarification with regards to the timescales for notifying the appropriate authority to provide a clear procedure for the action required by staff in the event of a disclosure or allegation being made. A new recommendation has been made.

Recommendations in relation to recording of sanctions and accidents have been partially met. A new recommendation has been made. A recommendation regarding Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks has been partially met. A new recommendation has been made. A recommendation was made that there is a statement regarding the use of restraint, discipline, sanctions and rewards. This recommendation is now met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Boarders receive Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons through the school curriculum by designated staff with particular areas of expertise. Boarders are clear about the school's rules on smoking, alcohol and illegal substances. Only very small amounts of alcohol are permitted for older boarders at special occasions. Policies and guidance in place promote

boarders health. The school holds a medical history of each pupil and the health of boarders is monitored and screened on arrival. Parental consent to medical treatment and first aid is obtained at the point of admission. The on site medical service allows boarders access to medical services as required. Surgeries are held during the week by a female General Practitioner (GP). A counsellor visits the school weekly provides specialist confidential support to boarders. The boarders have access to medical treatment that remains confidential and is only disclosed to parents or significant others with the boarders permission. The nurses and GP are involved in health promotion within the schools PSHE lessons. Additionally, boarders have access to off-site health professionals to address any specific health needs. Safeguarding and promoting boarder's health and welfare are supported by appropriate health records. The health of boarders is promoted and they generally receive health care as necessary. Systems are in place for the safe storage and administering of medication. Most medication is administered by the trained nurses from the medical centre. Medical centre staff maintain records of medication received into the medical centre and record the amount of homely medicines they transfer to the individual boarding houses. House staff hold a small supply of homely medication which they administer when required. Records are not consistently maintained, for example, running totals are not recorded so ascertaining that the medication stock is correct is difficult. Where boarders are known to be keeping and administering their own medication they are assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so. First aid training is made available to staff. Without accurate record keeping of all medication in boarding houses the monitoring of some aspects of health care can not be completed effectively. Two medical centre nurses provide on-call cover and are available to support staff 24 hours a day. This includes cover in the medical centre if boarders require constant care. The medical centre provides a comfortable facility if boarders need to be separated from others. Such facility and medical support enables boarders to be appropriately accommodated and supervised if ill. Boarders are provided with three meals a day, with a good selection of choice of main meals including and a vegetarian option and a freshly cooked chef special. Meals are very well presented with a wide variety of fresh salads and fruit. A food committee meets each term to discuss any issues that boarders may have. Boarders have snacks available twice daily and are able to have access to their own individual 'tuck' in the evenings. Upper sixth boarders have self-catering facilities in their houses which they may use for breakfast and supper in preparation for independent living. Water fountains are accessible throughout the school. Boarders say that the food is very good. Boarders receive a good quality catering provision and have access to food and drinks in addition to main meals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The school's countering bullying policy is available for staff, boarders and parents. Boarders have a clear understanding of what they should do if someone is making them unhappy. Results from questionnaires issued to boarders prior to the inspection show that bullying is not an issue within the school. Less than one percent of the 204 boarders who completed the boarder's survey reported that they were sometimes bullied. Boarders identify a wide range of adults within the school whom they would go to with any problems. Boarders say that one of the best things about the school is the relationships between boarders. These findings demonstrate that boarders enjoy positive and harmonious relationships. There is a designated child protection officer who provides training for boarding staff during induction and refresher training for all staff at the start of each academic year. Boarding staff are generally clear about their responsibilities to report concerns. Some staff are not clear whether they had received appropriate training within their induction. The child protection policy is not detailed enough

in respect of the requirement that a referral is to be made within 24 hours of allegations or suspicions of abuse in line with the National Minimum Standards (NMS). Where there is a suspicion of abuse, a delay in reporting issues to the relevant authority could potentially have an affect any investigation that may be required. Where there has been a delay in reporting issues there is no record of the decision making process to show why a child protection referral is not made. Responses to an allegation or suspicion of abuse are not consistent which could impact on the welfare of young people. Boarders are helped to develop appropriate behaviours in line with the school's policy 'Behaviour Management'. The 'Rewards and Sanctions' booklet provides clear information and includes a statement on the use of physical restraint. The behaviour of boarders on all days during the inspection was exemplary. Records indicate that minimal sanctions and punishments are issued. Sanctions are generally earlier bedtimes. The school rewards system is known to boarders and evidence of its implementation on the individual houses is on display. The use of discipline is fair and appropriate; the school focuses on rewards for positive behaviour which encourages positive attitudes between boarders. Boarders are familiar with the fire evacuation procedures. Regular fire drills take place in the boarding houses. A fire risk assessment of the school and boarding provision is in place. Fire fighting equipment is regularly serviced and tested together with emergency lighting and fire alarm systems. Fire safety training is provided to staff and professional advice is sought regarding safety issues. The school works closely with the local fire authority. Boarders live in an environment where they are protected from the risk of fire. House staff are clear on the privacy needs of boarders, for example, knocking on doors and waiting for a reply prior to entering. The boarders say that their privacy is respected and protected. Staff practice is observed to be discreet and respectful of the young people's personal space. Boarder's personal privacy is respected. The selection and vetting of staff prior to them working in the home does not ensure that the boarders are safe or protected from people who are not suitable to work in the home. Records indicate that some staff have commenced employment in the home prior to full and satisfactory information being received. For example, two references and Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are not consistently obtained before an employee commences employment. Staff starting employment prior to full and satisfactory information being obtained potentially, compromises a young person's safety. However, satisfactory immediate action has remedied this situation. The school verifies that the taxi drivers and coach companies engaged by the school have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau. Ancillary and maintenance staff have CRB checks completed. Wherever possible, maintenance and cleaning staff will carry out work in the boarding houses during school hours when boarders are not present. Outside visitors to the boarding houses are kept under staff supervision to protect student's safety. All visitors are requested to wear an identity badge whilst on the school site. Systems are in place regarding the supervision of visitors to the school. The boarding houses have key pads that are used by the Boarders. Boarders feel safe and no concerns have been raised. Following the previous inspection, work on window restrictors is in process and should be completed by the summer of this year. Satisfactory risk assessments are in place and updated. Overall, there are good systems in place for creating a safe environment for boarders.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The questionnaires completed by boarders confirmed that they have access to a wide range of activities and opportunities on offer within the school. The boarders 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 have the opportunity to attend after school activities. This provides

time for boarders to socialise with friends from school that do not board. Individual hobbies and interests are supported wherever possible. Boarders gave examples of staff encouraging their musical and sporting interests. Boarders take part in 'house' events one of the most popular being the drama weekend. Such events provide an enthusiastic atmosphere between boarders. Internet access is closely monitored by the school network manager and there are filter systems in place. Where there are concerns appropriate action is taken through the schools sanctions procedure. Boarders have access to a wide choice of appropriate activities. Boarders readily identify a number of the school's staff that they can turn to including the Head of Pastoral care. The questionnaires completed by boarders confirmed that staff are approachable and available to listen and provide guidance. Less than two percent of the 204 boarders who completed the boarder's survey did not indicate who they would approach if they required support. The school counsellor is available to all boarders via a weekly 'drop-in' clinic at the medical centre and is also accessible via mobile telephone and e-mail. Boarders are clear about how to contact the school outside of school hours and this means that they can get help when needed. All of these systems are conducive to an environment in which boarders can have comments or concerns listened to and taken forward. The school demonstrates a commitment in practice to providing equal opportunities to all boarders. The school positively promotes the integration of all boarders. Staff are aware of the cultural diversities of its boarders and the difficulties faced by overseas boarders attending an English school for the first time. Their comments about feeling integrated and supported by the staff and other boarders are very positive. They are clear that they are made welcome and do not feel isolated or discriminated against. Activities and groups are open to all boarders and there is no sort of exclusion. Cultural differences are recognised and embraced. Special diets are provided for by the canteen when requested. Boarders consistently commented that the relationships between boarders are positive, with no discrimination.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders have a range of means by which they can contribute to the operation of boarding at the school, including house meetings, a school council and a food committee. The Head Girl's team also meets with the Principal weekly. There are regular boarding house meetings and the young people are supported by the staff to voice their opinions and comments. Less than 5% of the boarders who completed the survey stated that they did not have a say about the school. All others replied either always, usually, or sometimes. Boarders gave examples of recent changes made in response to their suggestions. There are systems in place that ensure the views of boarders are sought. Boarders may contact family and friends in private at reasonable times without having to seek permission from staff. Telephones are available to boarders in the boarding accommodation. Most boarders have their own mobile telephones and use them to contact family and friends. All the boarding accommodation provides internet connection which enables boarders to use email as a means of keeping in touch with their family and friends. Appropriate helpline numbers are displayed on notice boards. Staff contact parents about their child's progress and highlight any concerns. Parents are also encouraged to contact the school. House staff are generally available at dropping off and collecting times to talk with parents. Systems in place support boarders to communicate and maintain contact with their families. New boarders and their parents receive a comprehensive information pack prior to entering the school. New boarders are allocated a "Shepherd" to be a point of contact and guide within the school. The boarders are also linked up with a student in the upper 6th known as 'big sisters' who write to the boarders prior to starting at the school. The Year 7 boarders are complimentary

about their 'big sisters'. The systems in place enable new boarders to settle in a planned and organised manner.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The school has an ongoing programme of refurbishment for its boarding accommodation. The boarding accommodation is very pleasant. The bedrooms are clean and well ventilated. The house rooms in each area are comfortably furnished with modern furniture, soft furnishings and colour schemes. The house mistresses add homely touches. All areas visited were found to be warm, clean and well maintained. A good standard of single room and shared dormitory accommodation is provided. Boarders say that they enjoy sharing with other boarders and are happy with the sleeping provision. Boarders move dormitories each term. All boarders have notice boards and personalise their sleeping areas with posters and photographs. Bathing facilities vary between boarding houses. Some facilities are of a good standard. There are problems at times with the water pressures, maintenance staff endeavour to rectify problems as soon as possible. Boarders indicate that this is the case. Some of the facilities allow total privacy when washing and dressing. However, in some showers, boarders say they are not afforded an adequate level of privacy.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school has a clear boarding policy which is available for boarders and their parents. The schools prospectus covers all aspects of boarding life. The staff handbook provides detailed instructions and information about school policies and procedures, the code of practice and expectations. The Queenswood Code and School Rules are printed in the diary every girl receives. Suitable information regarding the boarding principles and practice is available to parents, boarders and staff. Boarders' welfare is promoted by the school's systems for risk assessing. The Head of Pastoral Care maintains central records of incidents and complaints. Only one formal complaint has been made. However, the information maintained on the individual house indicates that other complaints have been made. Such records do not provide information as to how the issues are handled or whether action is taken. Incident reports lacked detail and there are occasions where entries are made using a pencil. The Bursar holds the central record of accidents which is not consistently maintained. Injuries are not always being reported as accidents, such information enables central monitoring of any trends and follow up action if required. The Head of Pastoral Care has a wealth of experience and is fully aware of the day to day issues within the boarding school. However, the lack of accurate records questions the effectiveness of monitoring undertaken. The staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the number of boarders accommodated. Boarders are made aware of who is on duty and who is responsible for them at specific times both within the boarding house and at free time. Boarders also have knowledge of where staff sleep at night and they feel able to call upon staff if necessary. The boarding staff operate as a supportive team and ensure that boarders are aware of activities, events and any changes in the staff cover. The boarders are aware of the signing-in and signing-out books that ensure staff are aware of their whereabouts at all times. Staffing levels in both boarding houses are sufficient for the numbers of boarders, with no negative comments made about the availability of staff by boarders throughout this visit. Boarding staff are aware of their job descriptions and roles in the boarding house. Boarding staff confirm good levels of support. Weekly meetings between house mistresses and the Head

of Pastoral Care provide an opportunity to discuss any issues. However, the lack of recorded individual supervision and annual staff appraisal system detracts from the overall picture of staff support. 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
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that medication records in the boarding houses are maintained accurately and include running totals of medication to enable it to be regularly monitored by an appropriate designated senior member of staff [NMS 15.12]
- ensure that all staff are provided with and understand child protection training [NMS3.5]
- ensure that the written child protection policy is consistent with the National Minimum Standards [NMS3.2]
- ensure that the school follow the policy on child protection and respond to all allegations or suspicions of abuse [NMS3.1]
- ensure that staff members subject to the requirements set out in NMS38.2 do not begin work (or residence) at the school until satisfactory completion of all checks and receipt of references are in place [NMS38.7]
- ensure an appropriate level of privacy for boarders in showers throughout the boarding provision [NMS 44.1]
- ensure that records of complaints, incidents and accidents are accurately maintained and are monitored to identify any issues requiring action [NMS 23.1]
- implement a system of recorded supervision and regular appraisal for all staff with boarding duties. [NMS 34.5]

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.