

Queen Anne's 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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

Queen Anne's School is an independent boarding and day school for approximately 400 girls aged between 11 and 18 years.

The school was founded at its current site in 1894. The campus occupies 35 acres of land just north of the river Thames, in Caversham. The school remains a part of the Grey Coat Hospital Foundation which was granted a royal charter by Queen Anne in 1706.

Girls can attend Queen Anne's School daily or on a full, weekly, flexi or occasional board basis according to individual family needs. Each girl, whether day or boarding, belongs to one of seven houses. There are four boarding houses, three of which are near the main school buildings, and the upper sixth house which is a short distance away. The school provides extensive learning, sporting, arts and recreational facilities and a chapel with choir loft.

At the time of this inspection, 148 girls boarded at the school. The inspectors had conversations with many of them. Boarders' views contributed significantly to the outcome of this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was a stand alone Ofsted inspection. It followed the inspection that was carried out by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in February and March 2011. The Ofsted inspector was accompanied by two boarding schools additional inspectors. The main aim of the Ofsted inspection was to assess the quality of the boarding and welfare provision at Queen Anne's School. This was done in line with the full range of the key national minimum standards for boarding schools. The visit was announced.

The main inspection finding is that this is an outstanding boarding school. The outcomes for boarders as described in the Every Child Matters document and underpinned by the nationally agreed standards are excellent. The school has an exceptionally high commitment towards enabling girls to fulfil their potential. This commitment is fully realised through the exemplary leadership and highly competent staff at all levels of the organisation. Boarders receive highly individualised support that facilitates their development exceptionally well. While achieving excellent results, the boarders report that boarding at Queen Anne's School is about friendships, spirit and having a good time. They value highly the opportunities they have for learning and engaging in a very wide range of activities. They themselves describe the school as outstanding. The school prepares them exceptionally well for

the future. The management continues to self-evaluate the boarding provision effectively and drive further improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection of the school's welfare and boarding provision was carried out in January 2008. The overall quality of the provision, as well as each individual outcome, was judged as good. However, nine recommendations were made in relation to the weak aspects of the boarding and welfare provision.

The school has taken into account all recommendations made. It fully addressed all the issues identified as requiring attention and improvement. The medication policy has been reviewed. A more detailed document has been produced to aid good practice. The provision for sick boarders has been reviewed and has been increased. Boarders can always summon help when sick. The sanctions policy has been reviewed to aid a fairer and more consistent discipline at the school. The boarders and their parents have been provided with information on how to contact Ofsted regarding any complaints concerning boarders' welfare. The staff recruitment procedure has been consistently implemented to ensure that the staff files fully evidence that all required checks have been completed. The use of the gym has been reviewed to ensure that members of the public do not use these facilities at the same time as unsupervised pupils. Effective measures have been put in place to ensure that boarders have direct access to outside support if needed. The school's systems for the induction, supervision and appraisal of boarding staff have been reviewed and improved.

The welfare provision at the school has improved enormously since the last Ofsted inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Boarders receive excellent support to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles. They are given comprehensive information on how to promote their health through a well-developed school programme of personal, social and health education.

Clear policies on smoking, alcohol and drugs are well known both to boarders and staff. These policies are very effectively implemented in practice. The frequency of the incidents relating to cigarettes, alcohol or drugs at the school is negligible.

Boarders are encouraged effectively to lead active lives. They have extensive opportunities to engage in different forms of exercise in accordance with their preferences and abilities.

The school encourages boarders to eat well. They can make choices from a selection of healthy meals. For example, lunch usually includes a soup of the day, meat or fish dish, vegetarian option, vegetables, jacket potatoes with various toppings, pasta and

a range of salads. A selection of desserts including delicious yogurt made on the premises is always available. Queues for food are orderly and short. Meals are not rushed. Boarders eat in pleasant surroundings and the sixth form boarders enjoy having their own café. Boarders appreciate the social aspect of eating communally. Staff monitor boarders' attendance at meals. Appropriate additional measures are put in place to provide effective support to the boarders with food intolerances, allergies or those who have issues relating to eating. Fresh fruit is always available in the boarding houses. There are good opportunities for boarders to learn about safe food preparation and cooking.

Staff across different departments pay great attention to boarders' well-being and health. The school has very good arrangements for seeking and maintaining health-related records, including records of parental consent for treatments. Boarders have direct access to excellent medical advice and support when they feel they need it. An exceptionally experienced medical sister runs the school's medical centre very efficiently. Another qualified nurse has recently started working at the centre to ensure that better medical cover is available at all times. A female doctor holds surgeries at the school twice a week. The medical centre works in a close partnership with other health professionals to ensure that boarders receive the medical attention and treatment they need. The boarders report that they feel very well looked after. In addition to having significant general paediatric expertise, the sister has a deep understanding of issues that affect girls in a boarding environment. The balance of protecting each girl's privacy while appropriately sharing significant information with other staff on a need-to-know basis is sensitively achieved. Excellent communication is supported by well-organised record keeping that includes written welfare and care plans for individual boarders with a particular need. Clear and comprehensive procedures for dealing with boarders' non-prescribed and prescribed medication including controlled drugs are in place. The sister provides regular training for boarding staff and visits the houses to ensure that the procedures are robustly implemented. The school is very good at enabling boarders to take responsibility for their own health. Some boarders have been assessed as able to self-administer their medication and receive good support to do so safely.

The school's excellent first aid policy protects boarders very well when they are in need of first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The school is highly effective in providing a physically safe and psychologically nurturing environment for boarders.

The school's robust staff recruitment process ensures that only thoroughly vetted persons are employed by the school. The school does not allow any person to spend unsupervised time with boarders unless they receive a satisfactory check from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). On an annual basis, the school asks the local taxi firms to confirm in writing that their drivers have had the appropriate CRB checks

completed, before the school uses them. The adult members of resident staff households sign a written agreement that clarifies their responsibilities and protects boarders. Boarders' accommodation is kept secure from public intrusion by the use of keypad locks on each entry point to the houses. The school has recently contracted a specialist company to carry out a full review of the security measures to ensure that the most effective ones are in place.

The school has a meticulous system for carrying out regular reviews of the risk assessments. The risks that cannot be eliminated are minimised through appropriate safety control measures. The very high level of health and safety throughout the school is consistently maintained. The extensive building work that is currently being undertaken within the school grounds has been exceptionally well managed. The school's close liaison with the local fire authority, as well as with the specialist contractors, ensure that the fire safety measures are effective in protecting the school from fire. Regular drills ensure that all staff and boarders are familiar with the evacuation procedure. A large number of staff are trained as fire marshals. The level of the fire safety awareness at the school is high.

The school's policies and procedures clearly promote good safeguarding practice. The written documentation includes excellent guidance on safeguarding children and child protection, countering bullying and cyber-bullying, behaviour management, rewards, sanctions and exclusion, physical interventions, data protection and how to deal with complaints.

The designated child protection officer receives appropriate training regularly and has suitable expertise to carry out this role effectively. Boarding staff, as well as other staff across the school, receive safeguarding training as part of their induction and at regular intervals afterwards. Staff, boarders and parents are aware of the school policies and there is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. All parties are highly committed to ensuring that all boarders are safe. Any high risk activities that boarders engage in are appropriately assessed to ensure that boarders remain safe.

Boarders report feeling very safe. They have knowledge of the potential risks associated with internet use. They are able to make safe choices for themselves in different situations. They are able to recognise if any one of them might have compromised their safety and know what action to take to ensure that everybody is safe. Sixth form boarders receive structured child protection training.

Any bullying or intimidation incidents are robustly and firmly challenged and swiftly resolved. The frequency of bullying incidents is very low at the school.

The general standard of boarders' behaviour is very high and incidents of any kind are rare, but however small, they are always investigated with due attention to ensure that all sides involved receive fair treatment, and the care and support they need. The boarders report that staff are fair when applying discipline. The school has a comprehensive system for supporting boarders' positive, constructive behaviours and achievements. The system is very effective in practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The girls describe their experience of boarding at Queen Anne's School in the most positive terms. They report loving the school and say that the school is fantastic, wonderful and brilliant. Some of them refer to their boarding houses as their homes. They highly value the support they receive. They identify the following as the best things about the school: the friendships, the staff, the spirit of the school, the opportunities to learn and have fun together, and being very safe while having the freedom to be and explore who they are. When the boarders were given the opportunity to rate the overall quality of the school, their unanimous response was that the school was definitely outstanding.

The school enables boarders to gain academic and other achievements exceptionally well. A highly effective tutor system is in place. The staff across different departments work in synergy to ensure that each boarder receives the support that fully addresses all her needs. The school is effective in providing a highly individualised and holistic support to boarders. The school provides excellent additional support to boarders with special learning needs and for those for whom English is an additional language. The physical environment and the resources that include a library and excellent provision of information and communication technology fully support boarders' learning and encourage them to develop independent learning skills.

The excellent school programme of structured learning is complemented with an exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities. The school is highly effective in helping boarders to try different things, including a variety of sports, drama, poetry, music, visual art, design and craft activities. The opportunities on offer and the breadth of the experiences assist boarders to develop into well-balanced, open, confident, positive, creative, successful and fulfilled individuals. The school's 'no limits' policy is highly effective. Boarders demonstrate that they have developed a love for learning, courage to try new things and confidence in themselves.

The boarders describe the pastoral staff as warm, kind, caring and lovely. They feel very well supported in the houses that they live in. They are aware that in addition to the boarding, teaching and medical staff, they can also directly contact the school counsellor or another person who is the independent listener for the school, if they wanted to speak to somebody else in confidence.

The school has a resident chaplain. She is available to provide spiritual direction and pastoral support to boarders. The school is effective in quietly but firmly embodying Christian values through the commitment to developing positive, loving relationships throughout the school community. The boarders who do not have faith or are not Christians report feeling well respected. They confirm being well supported to engage in their own quest for meaningful responses to their own experiences and the world around them.

The school is highly effective in promoting boarders' independence and preparing them for adulthood. All girls go on to higher education and many are accepted to top universities in the United Kingdom and overseas. The older boarders report that they will always have fond memories of their boarding at Queen Anne's School.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

An excellent induction programme for new boarders is in place. Prospective boarders and their parents receive clear, comprehensive and accurate information about boarding at the school. Open days and taster boarding weekends are regularly arranged to give girls the opportunity to try boarding at Queen Anne's School, prior to committing to it. Excellent support from staff and experienced boarders enables new boarders to settle quickly into boarding life. Formal peer mentoring and peer support arrangements are in place to facilitate this process. The school provides a nurturing environment in which each boarder's feelings are sensitively acknowledged. For example, boarders talk about each other's needs, such as being homesick or experiencing family bereavement, with great sensitivity.

Boarders have extensive formal opportunities to express their views. In addition to regular meetings in each boarding house, the School Council and various committees with more specific remits meet on a regular basis. Older boarders have good opportunities to help younger ones and develop caring attitudes. School prefects have special responsibilities within individual houses to help with their smooth running. School officers hold a wide variety of positions, such as being head girls and their deputies, leaders of chapel, sport, charities, drama, art, careers, public speaking and ecological awareness. The school is effective in helping boarders to develop a sense of responsibility and confidence in their leadership skills. Boarders report that they feel listened to and have the power to change things. They are proud to belong to Queen Anne's School and talk affectionately about the spirit of the school.

The school is effective in actively facilitating community cohesion. Clear and safe arrangements that explain when and under which conditions boarders may leave the school grounds are in place. Through various open events, such as fairs, sporting events, concerts, art exhibitions and dramatic performances, the school connects with the local community. The school's extensive charity work offers boarders excellent opportunities to make positive contributions to other people's lives, develop better understanding about the world around them and achieve integration within a wider society.

The school successfully fosters close relationships with parents. The school is flexible and the general customer care at the school is exceptionally high. Parents receive regular updates from the school about forthcoming events and about their child's progress. The communication between the school and parents is excellent. For example, parents who agreed to receive electronic communication from the school, which is 99% of the total, receive a weekly bulletin and a newsletter every half term.

The parents' association plays an active part in the life of the school.

Facilitated by the excellent information and communication technology provision and clear arrangements in place, boarders are enabled to stay in close contact with their parents, while they board.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Boarders live in a clean and well-maintained environment. The boarding houses are organised in ways that promote more independent lifestyles for sixth form boarders. The upper sixth live in one house and the lower sixth boarders live in another. The other two houses provide boarding for younger girls across different ages. The sleeping arrangements, individual accommodation and communal areas are appropriate. The toilet and washing facilities are suitable. The boarders report that everything is maintained in working order. They say that they have what they need to feel comfortable in the houses.

The school has extensive plans for improving the school environment. A new boarding house will be in use at the beginning of the new school year. Another house will be built to be used in the year after. A new medical centre is almost completed.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The school's clear aims and objectives are included in a number of different documents. The beautifully designed prospectus contains contributions from the girls based on their own experiences. The school has also developed a very informative website. All information that has been provided by the school is presented exceptionally well and accurately reflects the school's practice.

Under the exemplary leadership, the school staff across different departments and layers of the organisation are united by the vision of enabling girls to fulfil their potential. Boarders receive excellent support to learn and develop their individuality while remaining healthy and safe and having good times with their peers.

The boarding staff led by the deputy head pastoral provide outstanding pastoral support to boarders. The staff are clear about their duties and receive a comprehensive induction into their job. They continue to receive ongoing support and relevant training. They also have access to excellent written guidance that promotes good boarding practice. The school enables the staff to carry out their duties with great professionalism and competence, while remaining true to the fundamental values of care and authentic emotional warmth. The boarding provision is efficiently organised and highly effective in promoting the best outcomes for boarders. Staffing levels in the houses and the very high calibre of the staff ensure

that boarders are appropriately supervised and supported. At the same time, boarders are given the appropriate level of freedom and choice in line with their age, individual needs and assessed risks.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Excellent policies and procedures that enshrine anti-discrimination and celebration of diversity are fully implemented in practice. The school makes a special effort to help overseas girls to integrate within the school life. For example, international boarders can join the school a term before the formal start of the school year. This gives those girls the additional opportunities to immerse themselves in their new environment, British culture and English language. The integration of boarders of different ages, abilities, racial, cultural and religious background within the school is excellent. The school takes care that girls have opportunities to engage in various activities with boys from other schools. Boarders demonstrate that they have developed respectful attitudes towards others who are in some ways different to them.

The headteacher, her deputies and the other members of the senior management team (SMT) are closely involved with boarders and know each individual girl exceptionally well. The SMT meets on a regular weekly basis to discuss pastoral issues and monitor any emerging trends. The school is honest in its self-appraisal and proactive in moving the provision forward towards achieving an even better service. Providing the best conditions for the girls to learn and develop as much as possible is at the heart of what this school does. The reflective and thinking culture of the school helps this aim to be achieved effectively. The school remains committed to its traditional values, while being firmly anchored in the best achievements of the modern world. Directed and fully supported by an efficient governing body, the quality of the provision at Queen Anne's School continues to grow from strength to strength.