

Queen's College

Inspection report for Boarding School

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Inspector	Wilfried Maxfield
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Date of last inspection	09/10/2007

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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

Queens College is one of the nine schools owned by the Methodist Church and is administered by the board of Management for Methodist Residential Schools. The school is a long-established, co-educational Independent School. There are four boarding houses in the senior school, two for boys and two for girls aged from 12 to 18 years. In addition, there is a co-educational junior boarding house for children between the ages of seven and 12 years which includes boarders in Year 7 at senior school. All the houses are on the school's campus except for one of the boy's houses, which is located a short walk away. A total of 823 pupils were on roll at the time of this inspection.

Each house is managed by a resident housemaster and housemistress with the assistance of resident and non-resident house tutors, a matron and gap year students. Boarders are allocated to one of the boarding houses depending on their age and gender. There were 175 full-time boarders at the time of this inspection consisting of 103 male and 72 female boarders.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an announced inspection of all of the boarding and boarding related provisions at the school. The reason for this visit was to look at the progress the boarding school has made with the three recommendations made at the last key inspection conducted by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in January 2007.

All of the key national minimum standards for boarding schools were inspected and evaluated during this visit. As part of the inspection process boarders and parents were offered the opportunity to anonymously complete pre-inspection questionnaires. An almost full return of questionnaires was received from boarders. Sixty one questionnaires were returned by parents. Views expressed by boarders and parents contributed to the good and satisfactory comments and judgements contained in this report.

The outcomes being healthy, enjoying and achieving and positive contribution for boarders at the school are rated as good. Staying safe, economic well-being and organisation are rated as satisfactory. The overall quality of boarding is judged to be satisfactory.

Improvements since the last inspection

The school was last inspected by the Commission of Social Care Inspection. A total of three recommendations were made. They required improvement in the recruitment and vetting of staff, the availability of child protection training for all staff and the general maintenance of boarding houses.

It was noted that the school has made good progress relating to child protection matters and now provides training for all of its staff in safeguarding. Improvements have also been made to the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of the boarding houses. This process is still ongoing and a need for further action has been identified in this report. The school has implemented a number of new procedures regarding the recruitment and vetting of staff. However, further action is recommended in order to ensure full compliance with the national minimum standards and the safer recruitment practices as detailed in the 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' guidance.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Pupils and boarders benefit from the school's clear and comprehensive approach to ensure their personal, social and health education. Staff follow a good range of policies and procedures and are able to protect boarders from behaviour and substances that pose risks to their health.

Boarders are provided with good health care. Record keeping is good and ensures detailed and comprehensive medical information. In depth care plans are provided for boarders with significant health and welfare needs. Staff are kept well informed about boarders health and welfare needs and are able to work together effectively as directed by the school nurses. Boarders benefit from good communication between medical and senior boarding house staff regarding their welfare needs. There is a good and continuous exchange of information between parents and the school in order to compile, reach agreement and effectively implement individual health care plans.

Boarders have good access to medical care and services. A group of experienced and well qualified registered nurses oversee all medical arrangements. The nurses benefit from professional guidance and regular consultation with the school's medical doctors. Good and up-to-date electronic medical records are held for boarders needing medication. Medication is kept securely and individual regimes for all pupils are constantly monitored and updated. The school has a sufficient number of staff who have been trained in first aid. First aid equipment and boxes are widely available in all areas of the school and boarding houses. Boarders who are ill are well looked after. They are checked and monitored regularly and are able to summon staff for assistance.

The school provides pupils with satisfactory catering provisions. In discussions

groups boarding pupils agreed that the school provides a good choice of well-prepared meals during the school day. However, out of the 157 boarders who returned a questionnaire prior to this inspection 100 expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and/or quantity of food provided. Catering staff have received a wide range of appropriate food handling and hygiene training. The kitchen and catering department has recently been awarded the full five stars food safety award as a result of an environmental health inspection. Children are provided with a range of suitable snacks and drinks outside the set mealtimes.

Boarders' clothes and laundry are well cared for. A matron/housekeeper and a team of cleaners ensure that boarders' bedding and clothing is washed and maintained to a high standard.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The school's approach to countering incidents of bullying is satisfactory. In boarders' questionnaires 35% of boarders report on low-level bullying. The recording of incidents and possible strategies is satisfactory. Boarding staff can demonstrate a satisfactory awareness of the circumstances of bullying and there is sufficient evidence that victims and perpetrators are known and suitably supported. Boarders do not report any cyber-bullying.

Boarders' welfare is being safeguarded and they are protected from the risk of abuse and serious harm. A designated child protection officer provides teachers and boarding house teams with good guidance and leadership in this area. Clear action is being taken by this senior member of staff in the event of any concerns. Networking with families and external agencies in such an event is good. The school's child protection and safeguarding policies are updated regularly to reflect the latest developments in legislation. All teaching, boarding house and ancillary staff receive good child protection training and benefit from regular information updates and refreshers.

The use of discipline with boarders is fair and appropriate. Staff follow a positive approach regarding all aspects of sanctioning and rewards. Boarders consider the method of behaviour management applied by the school to be fair. The school's policy on sanctions and rewards is well known throughout the boarding houses. A comprehensive complaints policy is in place and is available to all staff, parents and boarders. Eight per cent of boarders note in surveys that they do not know how to complain formally. A higher number confirmed this in discussion groups. Complaint policies made available to boarders and parents do not contain the correct telephone numbers for contacting Ofsted and the Local Authority Designated Officer.

The school protects both boarders and staff by ensuring good compliance with health and safety checks and tests. Emergency lighting, fire alarms and fire fighting equipment are regularly serviced. All risks identified are eliminated as soon as possible. The school employs good and rigorous measures to protect boarders from

the risk of fire. Evacuation procedures are practised regularly and fire drills are carried out at day and during the night. Boarders' safety and welfare is also protected during high risk activities. Good safety measures are implemented as a result of good risk awareness and assessments.

Boarders' personal privacy is respected in all areas of the boarding houses. Good procedures ensure that staff are sensitive to gender issues and do not intrude when supervising boarders.

The school has a satisfactory system for the recruitment and vetting of staff. A central register is in place since the summer of 2010. The register is currently not designed to capture all of the elements required by the relevant national minimum standards and the safe recruitment practices as detailed in 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' guidance. The current vetting process does not include all of the recruitments checks recommended in this guidance.

Satisfactory security is in place to prevent any unauthorised access to boarding houses. Areas in regular use by boarders are free from avoidable hazards and no significant hazards to boarders' safety were identified as part of this inspection. The school has a satisfactory health and safety policy and implements a good system of environmental risk assessment in order to reduce avoidable hazards.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The school provides boarders with a good range and choice of activities after teaching time and at weekends. Boarders have good access and the use of the school's excellent information and communication technology, sports, music and theatre facilities. In the survey and in formal interviews boarders rate the range and choice of activities available to them as 'good'.

Good personal and ongoing pastoral support is available to all pupils. Boarders can identify a member of staff they would go to talk to in case of a concern or a personal problem. Boarders know that they can also approach their tutor, an independent listener and speak to the Chaplain. Pupils with a more serious need have access to an external counsellor if agreed by the school's pastoral team and the parents.

Boarders do not report on any form of discrimination and intolerance. The school implements a positive and effective policy on equality and diversity and promotes a strong Christian ethos of enhancing cultural understanding, tolerance and non-discrimination. Good educational and other support is given to pupils from overseas for whom English is a second language. Overseas boarders are very complimentary about the induction and support offered.

The school has good facilities for both organised and private study. Boarding houses benefit from full internet access and wireless networks are available with appropriate filters. Boarders are positive about the range of facilities available to them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Boarders have good opportunities to contribute to the operation of boarding. Formal meetings include the school council and regular boarding house meetings. These forums enable boarders to raise any issues of concern and discuss the day-to-day operation of their boarding house.

All boarders are able to maintain contact with their families and all have access to landline, mobile phones and the internet to assist them. Parents report that staff are good at maintaining regular contact with them and provide updates regarding a child's welfare and progress if agreed and requested.

Relationships between staff and boarders are constructive and respectful. Boarders are positive about the sense of community that exists within the boarding provision. Staff know the young people they care for and are committed to providing a beneficial and nurturing environment.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarders feel that their possessions are well protected. They do not report on any missing or stolen items. The school provides suitable lockable spaces in bedrooms to keep valuables. If requested special items are made safe by houseparents. There is a reliable system to record and distribute pocket money.

The school provides boarders with accommodation of a satisfactory standard. Houses are appropriately separated by gender and age. The four boarding houses have seen various degrees of refurbishment over time with some being of a good and other areas being of a satisfactory quality. Although earmarked for improvement and especially mentioned in the last inspection report, the 'junior house' has not seen any major redecoration and refurbishment for some time. The accommodation now shows signs of heavy wear.

Dormitories and communal areas are decorated, furnished and equipped to a satisfactory standard. Young people are able to personalise their bedroom space. Good housekeeping provides a well cared for and clean environment. The numbers of bathrooms and toilets in boarding houses are appropriate for the number of students accommodated. Bathrooms provide adequate privacy and suitable looks, doors or curtains are provided for these sensitive areas. The school provides boarders with suitable changing and shower facilities during the day.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The school has a suitable statement of boarding principles and practice for parents, boarders and staff. There is a good range of policies and procedures which is regularly reviewed and updated by the board of governors and senior staff. All documents reflect the actual current practice of boarding.

There is a good and effective leadership structure at the school. The headmaster and the school's senior management team take an active interest in the development and practice of boarding. Senior boarding staff have adequate experience and training. Roles and responsibilities for the boarding sector are effectively delegated to the team of housemasters and housemistresses. The organisation of the boarding houses contributes to the welfare of the boarders and provides good protection for both genders and all age groups. There is a satisfactory system to monitor the welfare of boarders by the school's governing body.

The monitoring of risk assessments and school records in boarding houses is satisfactory. Frequencies of monitoring arrangements differ and not all records were clearly identified and marked as being regularly scrutinised and monitored. Incident books are currently not monitored for trends and possible action points are not systematically gathered to inform regular reviews and the development of boarding practice.

Staff supervision of boarders is adequate at all times. There are clear and comprehensive job descriptions for all staff roles. A good induction process is in place for new staff including gap students. Boarding staff have a good level of experience and are able to promote and safeguard the welfare of the young people in their care. Staff have good and regular training opportunities with good access to courses from the Boarding Schools' Association.

The boarding handbook provides members of staff with satisfactory guidance. The guidance covers the school's approach to boarding and provides staff with a range of core policies on boarding practice.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The school is committed towards improving and promoting equality and diversity on an ongoing basis. The individual needs of boarders are well identified and their specific needs are being met. All students feel well respected, integrated and supported. The school maintains a clear and successful approach to integrate overseas students into school and boarding life.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Compliance with national minimum standards

The school meets all the national minimum standards, with the exception of any listed below. To ensure that the school meets the national minimum standards the school needs to...

- provide boarders with meals which are adequate in quantity and choice (NMS 24.1)
- ensure that boarders and their parents are informed of how they can contact Ofsted and the Local Authority Designated Officer regarding any complaint concerning their welfare (NMS 5.4)
- ensure that the school's system for recruiting staff includes all of the elements in the national minimum standards and the safe recruitment practices as detailed in 'Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education' guidance (NMS 38.1, 38.2, 38.3)
- continue a programme of refurbishment of the boarding houses (NMS 40)
- monitor the school's records regularly to identify any issues requiring action. (NMS 23.1)