

The Swedish School Society

The Swedish School Society, 82 Lonsdale Road, London SW13 9JS

Inspection dates	10/10/2016 to 12/10/2016	
The overall experiences and progress of children and young people	Good	2
The quality of care and support	Good	2
How well children and young people are protected	Good	2
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is good because

- Young people enjoy living in host families. They are made to feel welcome and cared for, and many young people describe how they are encouraged to 'feel at home'.
- Young people describe how living with a host family helps them to immerse themselves in British culture. They integrate well with their host families and enhance their social skills and confidence by learning to negotiate and share.
- Young people understand that with freedom comes responsibility. They are well behaved and respect the rules and boundaries of the school and of their host families.
- If young people have difficulties or are unhappy, residential staff notice and provide excellent pastoral support. They are responsive to complaints and communicate effectively with parents.
- The school ensures that health information is shared appropriately with host families. Young people receive health advice and guidance from the school nurse. They are supported by their host families to access health services if they need to.
- Young people report that they do not experience bullying. They get on well with each other and provide mutual support. The school works in partnership with young people to make sure that they are integrated with their peers, so they do not become isolated or excluded.
- Young people are able to talk to a trusted adult in confidence if they have any concerns. They have access to a school counsellor who provides professional support for students who may be experiencing difficulties.
- Young people are safe. They do not go missing and there have been no serious incidents of concern regarding their welfare.

- The school is judged to be outstanding as a result of a recent school inspection. Young people have high aspirations and the school has high expectations. Host families support young people to make progress in education by encouraging healthy routines and providing a suitable space for independent study.
- The school does not have a statement of purpose for its boarding provision. Host families do not undergo a rigorous induction and they are not provided with training in safeguarding. This has not had a negative impact on the safety or well-being of young people, but creates vulnerabilities and a lack of accountability in safeguarding systems. As a result, the judgement for the leadership and management of the boarding provision is not yet good.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools:

- A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available to parents and staff, is made known to boarders, and is seen to work in practice. (NMS 1.1)
- The school ensures that all adults providing lodgings for pupils on its behalf have undergone safeguarding training that is updated regularly as advised by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, and that they understand the school's policy in relation to pupils going missing and their role in implementing that policy. (NMS 20.6)

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that toilet and washing facilities provide appropriate privacy for boarders. (NMS 5.3)
- Ensure that the school nurse completes her application to become registered with the relevant professional body for nursing in England.
- Ensure that the school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell. These include dealing with medical emergencies and the safe administration of medication, including household remedies. (NMS 3.1).
- Ensure that regular health and safety checks of boarding accommodation are undertaken.
- Ensure that recruitment checks for host families include references from employers where possible.
- Undertake written risk assessments to identify the support and monitoring needed to ensure that young people are safe when outside of school or their host families.

Information about this inspection

This inspection was announced at 9.00am and commenced at 1.00pm on 10 October 2016. Two social care regulatory inspectors conducted the inspection. They undertook the following activities.

- Interviews with 18 young people.
- Visits to four host families.
- Interviews by telephone of two parents.
- Interviews with key personnel, which included the head of boarding provision (also vice-principal of the school), the host family coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead for the school, the school nurse, the school counsellor, the school facilities manager and the administrative staff responsible for recruitment checks.
- Examination of safeguarding policies, health and safety checks, recruitment records, welfare concerns, complaints, training and supervision records and appraisal and induction records.
- Consultation with the designated officer for safeguarding. The inspectors evaluated feedback from Parent View, and 80 parents contributed views over the 12-month period leading up to the inspection. This figure includes 30 parents who responded during the inspection.

There are currently 139 students enrolled at the school, of which 106 are residing in host families. The residential provision has 86 families approved to host up to 110 young people.

Inspection team

Lee Kirwin	Lead social care inspector
Angus Mackay	Social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The school provides education for Swedish children across two sites in south west London. Younger pupils attend the school in Barnes. The senior student site is accommodated within the American International University, Richmond Hill. The host family scheme is administered from the Richmond site. The school does not provide boarding accommodation but recruits families in the local area to host students during their stay in England. A host family coordinator is employed to recruit host families, administer the scheme and to liaise with students and families when necessary.

Inspection judgements

The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

Good

Young people undergo a rigorous selection process before being accepted to the school. They are required to demonstrate that they are self-motivated and able to maintain high standards in both academic studies and behaviour. They attend a detailed presentation as part of their induction. Young people who have experienced living in host families take part in this and present a clear picture of the realities and challenges involved in living away from home. This means that the students admitted to the school are able to cope with the demands of living away from home and can maintain the high standards of behaviour expected by both the school and the residential boarding provision.

Young people display excellent behaviour. They report that the boundaries are fair and are similar to the expectations that they are familiar with in their own families. They have positive relationships with their host family members and describe the relationships they form as mutually respectful.

Young people are safe and there have been no significant incidents of concern. When problems arise, young people are able to discuss them with host families, residential staff and their school mentors. The boarding staff respond promptly to address any concerns or complaints. On rare occasions when young people are unhappy, the host family coordinator can arrange for them to move to a different family. This demonstrates that the school pays close attention to the well-being and welfare of young people. Young people are able to express their views and have a positive experience of living away from home.

Young people make progress and learn a range of social skills as a result of living with their host families. One young person made the following observation, 'You have to learn how to cooperate with others. It helps improve your social skills and language, it improves the whole package. I prefer this to living with other Swedish students.' Another student remarked that living with her host family enabled her to experience living in London as, 'a citizen, not just a tourist'.

Host families enjoy having the young people stay with them. They talk positively about them and genuinely care about them. One host parent described how they encourage the young people to bring friends round. Young people often stay in each other's host families. When this happens, host families communicate well with each other to ensure that young people are safe.

Host families have direct contact with parents. They are able to discuss any difficulties or concerns and they work together to ensure that young people have the support and guidance that they need. Families report that the school communicates effectively with them. They are happy that their children are well cared for and they seldom have cause for complaint.

The school was recently judged outstanding for education. The leadership, management and governance of the school provide coherent direction across both the school and the boarding provision. Leaders in the school ensure that high standards of care are in place

and deliver strong educational outcomes for all pupils. They have responded to recommendations for improvement raised at the previous welfare inspection. This includes improvements to safeguarding checks on host family members. In addition, newly introduced systems ensure that the views of young people in host families are regularly sought and are used to inform service development.

Two of the national minimum standards for boarding schools (2015) were not met. These are outlined under the leadership and management section of this report. These shortfalls have not had a significant impact on the experience, progress or welfare of young people.

The quality of care and support

Good

The vice-principal of the school and the host family coordinator work effectively as a team. They ensure that the school, host families and parents provide a 'team around the child' to promote the welfare and well-being of young people. Each young person is allocated a teacher to act as a mentor. They value this support and often talk about their mentor as the first point of contact if they need support or advice. Mentors act upon any concerns and actively promote the welfare of young people, both in school and in the host families. This provides a nurturing environment because students have someone who is attentive to their individual needs and is always looking out for them.

The standard of accommodation in host families is good. Young people have their own private space to sleep and study. They are encouraged to feel part of the family and make good use of communal living areas. They have meals with their host families and are included in family trips, activities and celebrations. Young people describe how they are made to feel welcome in their host families. One young person said, 'My host mother always asks how my day has been and how I am feeling – she tells me to help myself to any food when I want it and I feel part of the family.' Young people report a consistent experience of feeling welcome, cared for and part of the family.

The school does not systematically monitor accommodation to ensure that it meets the required standards for health and safety. Several young people reported that the toilets and bathrooms in their host homes did not have a lock on the door. Although young people did not feel that this had a negative impact on their experience of living with their host families, it does compromise their right to privacy.

If students need specialist support to help them with emotional difficulties, they can access this from the school counsellor. She is suitably qualified and experienced. The school counsellor provides expert advice to staff and direct support to young people. The school is careful, when matching young people to host families, that they are able to meet any health needs. The school nurse undertakes health assessments when young people first come to the school. She provides health information and advice and ensures that young people know how to access community health resources if they wish to. The school nurse is experienced and has professional nursing qualifications from Sweden. She has not yet had these qualifications validated for practice by registering with the relevant professional body for nursing in England.

The school does not provide any extra-curricular activities for young people but it does support them to access community clubs and resources. One young person described how she was helped to access football training at Chelsea Football Club, another joined a local handball club and several make use of local leisure facilities. This enhances their experience of living in London and helps them to integrate with the wider community. Young people work hard with their academic studies and make positive use of their free time, often socialising with peers and exploring the wide range of social and cultural activities available in London.

Young people have unrestricted access to contacting their families and do so regularly by phone or social media. When families visit their children, host families welcome them into their homes and will often invite them to have meals. There were 80 parent responses to Parent View over the course of the year and 26 parents used this method to give feedback during this inspection. Responses were overwhelmingly positive, and 100% of parents who commented said they would recommend the school to other parents. One parent described how he was happy that his daughter was well cared for by her host family. No concerns were raised by parents in relation to the quality of care provided to their children living in host families.

How well children and young people are protected

Good

Residential pupils are safe in school, in the community and in their host family homes. The school and boarding staff provide excellent pastoral care and individualised support. This ensures that any problems are noticed early and that young people receive the support and care they need.

There is a strong ethos in terms of respecting confidentiality and practice in the area of protecting children and young people. This gives young people the confidence to share concerns with a trusted adult. They feel safe in the knowledge that this will only be shared with their permission or if this is necessary to protect them from harm. The school obtains parental consent for emergency medical treatment, but these documents are not held by host families. Although this has not had a negative impact on the welfare of young people, this shortfall has the potential to cause a delay in the event that they need urgent medical intervention.

Where welfare concerns become apparent, the school ensures that these are recorded and carefully monitored. The school works closely with teachers, host families and parents to make sure that young people are protected from harm. The residential manager and host coordinator evaluate the risks in relation to welfare concerns. If young people cannot thrive or cope with living away from home, they are supported to return to their parents. Such decisions are taken in partnership with parents and this means that the best interests of young people remain the primary consideration.

The behaviour of young people is exemplary. There is seldom a need to take disciplinary action as young people know what is expected of them, and they are able to abide by the rules. This is because they have positive relationships with staff, host families and each other. There is a strong ethos and culture within the school of showing mutual

respect and consideration for others. Young people feel that the boundaries are fair and are similar to expectations within their own families.

The designated safeguarding lead for the school has undertaken recent safeguarding training as required for her role. She knows the young people and host families well and acts promptly in response to welfare concerns. She has good knowledge of the potential risks to young people in respect of sexual exploitation and radicalisation. She is aware of her obligations to share information and escalate any serious concerns to the local authority children's services. She also provides telephone support outside of school hours. This means that if host families have any concerns at any time, they can access effective support and guidance. In practice, there are no serious incidents that would indicate that young people are at risk of harm.

Host families are vigilant and attentive when promoting welfare and give good advice to help young people keep themselves safe. They make good common sense 'parental' decisions when balancing the need to keep young people safe and the need to promote their independence so that they can safely enjoy living away from home. Host families also consult directly with parents when they have concerns. This ensures that decisions in relation to risks are informed by a good understanding of the young person's routines and abilities. Young people attend safety briefings at school. These are provided by the local police to help them understand and avoid some of the dangers associated with living in London.

All host families are vetted and checked to ensure that they are of good character and are suitable to provide unsupervised care for young people. The boarding provision undertakes checks with the disclosure and barring service for all household members over the age of 16. They obtain references as part of the recruitment procedure, but do not always seek independent references from current or previous employers. In practice, there have been no serious concerns raised in relation to the standards of care provided by host families.

There are some shortfalls in relation to written policies, procedures and safeguarding training provided to host families. These have the potential to undermine safeguarding systems for young people living in host families. Because of the strong safeguarding culture and practice, these shortfalls have not had any significant impact on the welfare or safety of young people. These issues are raised under the leadership and management section of this report.

The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Requires improvement

The boarding provision does not have a clear statement of purpose to describe how care and support are provided to young people living in host families. This means that there is a lack of clarity in relation to expectations and procedures. This reduces the levels of accountability and creates vulnerabilities in systems designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people. For example, when young people have late curfew times, there is no clarity as to whether host families are expected to wait up for them to ensure that they are home on time. There are no written policies or guidance to describe how

medications are safely administered or handled in host families. Similarly, there is no guidance as to how internet safety is promoted within host families.

The induction and training of host families does not meet the required national minimum standard for boarding schools. In some respects, this is linked to the fact that there is no statement of purpose and practice for boarding provision. This means that it is not always made explicit to host families what is expected of them when they are recruited.

Host families are not provided with relevant safeguarding training for the role and do not undertake any formal induction process. This demonstrates that the leadership and management of the school does not always provide sufficient direction for host families to ensure that they are equipped for the task and understand their obligations. It also suggests that monitoring by managers, to ensure compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools, is not sufficiently robust. The impact of these shortfalls is, as mentioned earlier in this report, mitigated by the excellent safeguarding outcomes, safeguarding culture and quality of care provided to boarding pupils.

The host family coordinator is also the designated safeguarding officer of the school. She knows the young people and the host families well. She is accessible to them for support and has good oversight of any welfare issues or concerns. She works effectively with the vice-principal of the school, who is also the head of boarding provision. They deal effectively with complaints and ensure that young people are able to express their views and opinions. They undertake quality assurance activities and regularly seek feedback from young people. They use these to make improvements to the service.

The governors of the school contribute effectively to monitoring the quality of care provided to boarders. They receive regular reports on complaints and welfare concerns. They meet with young people and teachers, and regularly speak to parents. They evaluate this information and use it to offer a constructive and robust challenge to the leadership team in order to drive service development.

All staff in the school, including those responsible for boarding provision, receive effective formal supervision and appraisal. There is a strong learning culture whereby staff use feedback and self-assessment to identify areas for improvement and set clear learning and development goals.

The leadership and management team is accessible and visible, and creates an open culture where everyone is encouraged to share their views and raise concerns. Staff conduct themselves in a professional manner and work with integrity. They collaborate effectively as a team and contribute to a nurturing, supportive environment. They act as excellent role models for young people. Parents report that they have good relationships with leaders and managers. They are able to raise concerns and feel confident that the residential staff keep them involved and informed in matters relating to the welfare of their children.

What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against 'Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework'.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.
Requires improvement	A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.
Inadequate	A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

School details

Unique reference number	102948
Social care unique reference number	SC017403
DfE registration number	318/6076

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Boarding school
Number of boarders on roll	302
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	3 to 19
Headteacher	Annika Simonsson Bergqvist
Date of previous boarding inspection	26/03/2014
Telephone number	020 8741 1751
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