

Kings Brighton

27-33 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 4SB

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Kings Brighton is part of Kings Education, which runs international colleges in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. This independent boarding school is based on the edge of Brighton city centre. Students come from all over the world and undertake a range of academic and English language courses. Students under the age of 18 stay in the boarding provision on site or with host families. There are currently 112 students on roll, and 67 of these are either staying with host families or boarding on site. The head of boarding has been in post for four years and has an appropriate level of experience and training to undertake the role. The school was last inspected in March 2018.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 September 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers good

The boarding school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Date of last inspection: 14 March 2018

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

The boarders at this school enjoy a positive day-to-day experience and make good progress in terms of their social skills and learning. They receive a warm welcome to the boarding provision and benefit from undertaking an induction programme soon after arriving. Consequently, boarders quickly feel part of a supportive and caring community.

Boarders either live in the on-site accommodation or with host families who are recruited onto the school's 'Homestay' service. The on-site accommodation is of a very high standard and provides boarders with a study area, bedroom and en-suite bathroom. This ensures that boarders have sufficient privacy and facilities for private study. Boarders also have their own common room, but the on-site café, which is open for extended hours, is used as a social hub and meeting place.

The Homestay service is well managed. There are procedures in place for ensuring that the accommodation remains appropriate, and the host's approved status remains suitable. One experienced Homestay host said, 'the application and approval process is the most thorough I have ever experienced' and another said, 'the school is very focused on the child's welfare'. The Homestay co-ordinator is responsible for approving the host families. He has not undertaken training in respect of safe recruitment practice which is relevant for his role.

The boarding staff know the boarders very well and they have the skills to quickly build trusting relationships. The boarders who were spoken to during this inspection had no hesitation in naming the staff they would approach if they had any concerns or worries. Boarders are consulted on a range of issues concerning day-to-day life at the school, and a recently introduced school council actively encourages boarders to express their views.

Boarders know about the complaints process and use this effectively to raise concerns. Complaints generally relate to low-level issues which are quickly addressed and resolved.

The physical and mental health of boarders is prioritised. There is close inter-departmental working to promote boarders' well-being. This ensures that there are clearly defined strategies for supporting boarders to manage any medical conditions. Boarders receive the support and guidance they need to manage their medication safely.

The staff can arrange counselling for boarders who would benefit from this provision. The welfare co-ordinator is knowledgeable regarding local services and specialist support for young people. There have been occasions when staff have supported boarders to access some of these services and this has contributed towards the boarders' emotional well-being.

The enrichment and recreational activities programme is very well organised. This provides boarders with the opportunity to gain new skills and experiences and raise their cultural awareness. Activities are arranged after school and at weekends. The boarders speak positively about the opportunities to visit places of interest away from the local area.

The focus on boarders' emotional well-being at this school is exemplary. While independence skills are strongly promoted, boarders are not left to fend for themselves and there is always someone available to support the boarders with any difficulties they may experience.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: good

Overall, practice pertaining to the safety and protection of boarders is good. Boarders say they feel safe in the school and in the boarding accommodation. The parents spoken to during this inspection share this view. However, practice in two identified areas requires further development. This is in relation to safe recruitment procedures and reporting relevant concerns to the designated officer.

A recently recruited member of staff began working before references had been obtained. A disclosure and barring service (DBS) check was not completed for this new member of staff. One established member of staff has not had an updated DBS check within the timeframe specified in the organisation's recruitment policy.

In one isolated case, no consultation took place with the designated officer when concerns were identified in relation to an individual working as a host on the school's Homestay programme. No boarders have come to harm because of these shortfalls.

Other aspects of safeguarding practice are much stronger. There is a highly developed system for staff to raise any concerns regarding a boarder's welfare. This system is widely used, and this ensures that any emerging issues related to the emotional well-being of boarders are quickly identified and addressed. Consequently, issues such as potential bullying, feelings of isolation and difficulties in personal relationships are not prevalent within the boarding provision.

Each boarder meets with the lead staff member for students' welfare every term. This provides boarders with the opportunity to share any concerns they may have. Boarders make good use of this provision and have the confidence to request additional meetings if they are struggling with any aspect of life as a boarder.

A sensitive approach is taken to managing behavioural issues with students. The behaviour management approach reflects carefully on the impact of socio-economic, cultural and pastoral issues that could lead to deterioration in a boarder's behaviour. Boarders are given clear boundaries and staff react proportionately but consistently when issues arise. The staff are trained in the effective and appropriate use of physical intervention, but there have been no incidents of this nature at the school since it opened.

There are effective processes in place for the assessment and management of risk. All activities and trips off site have detailed risk assessments, and individual risk assessments for boarders are undertaken when the need arises, such as for known health conditions. There is a risk assessment pertaining to the location of the school which identifies a nearby location where anti-social behaviour is known to take place. One of the strategies within this risk assessment is for an external professional to visit the school and advise boarders on how to keep safe in the community. This strategy has not yet been implemented.

There have been no incidents when a boarder has gone missing from the school. There is a clear policy and procedure for staff to follow should a missing episode occur. There is a system for recording when boarders leave the premises during their free time. Boarders are comfortable with this system and compliance with the requirements for having free time is generally adhered to.

The staff are familiar with the dangers that boarders may face when using the internet and social media. Advice and guidance on how to keep safe online features in the personal, social, health and economic curriculum and further sources of information are well publicised across the school.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

An experienced management team ensures that the boarding provision is effectively and efficiently organised. The head of boarding maintains oversight of the quality of care being provided and is supported well by a highly effective accommodation supervisor. A stable and motivated staff team is committed to ensuring the best outcomes for boarders.

Leaders and managers ensured that staffing levels remained sufficient during the recent COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns. This ensured that overseas boarders who were not able to return home received continuity of care and support and their welfare needs did not go unmet.

There are appropriate systems in place for monitoring the quality of care being provided in the boarding provision. These include regular multi-disciplinary meetings where issues arising from the 'My Concerns' referral process are evaluated. Any boarders whose welfare needs further monitoring are clearly identified. Safeguarding audits are also undertaken, although these did not identify the two issues referred to above in respect of safe recruitment and consulting the designated officer.

Consultation with boarders and questionnaires are used to inform the monitoring process. These indicate that boarders have a high level of satisfaction with the accommodation and the support that they can access.

The small governing body is fully engaged in the life of the school and provides an additional layer of monitoring. It plays an active role in scrutinising standards and is focused on promoting the safety and well-being of the boarders.

Plans that are made in respect of meeting individual boarders' needs are commensurate with the level of support they require. Actions that are needed to promote a boarder's mental health and well-being are clearly recorded. All boarders have a detailed healthcare plan.

Homestay hosts are highly complimentary about the level of communication they have with the Homestay co-ordinator. They receive all the information they need to provide the care and support a boarder may need. An inclusive approach is taken to working with the Homestay hosts and, consequently, they feel a sense of belonging and part of the overall school provision.

The school is well established in the local community and boarders are encouraged to take part in community events. Some boarders recently took part in an event to raise funds for a local mental health charity. This is indicative of a commitment to ensuring that boarders experience various aspects of British life and culture.

A sensitive approach is taken to supporting new boarders who have difficulty in settling. This includes consideration of whether a boarder would benefit from having a change of accommodation provision. Most boarders quickly become integrated into the school's recreation and enrichment activities and this is often used to help boarders settle into the school quickly.

The boarders' engagement with enrichment activities is also used as a measure for how the boarders are progressing in terms of their social skills and cultural awareness. Boarders' progress in terms of their emotional well-being is also monitored through the 'My Concerns' recording system. There are well-established systems for measuring academic progress, and these indicate that the boarders do well and benefit from the availability of easily accessible learning support.

The staff with responsibilities for the boarding provision receive regular line-management supervision and a record is kept of the actions that follow from these meetings. Annual appraisals are conducted in a timely way and these are an effective tool for ensuring that individual staff members' strengths and weakness are recorded, and that professional development opportunities are identified.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

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

- The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (NMS 11.1)

Recommendations

- Ensure that boarders receive advice from an external professional in relation to keeping safe in the local community.
- Ensure that those responsible for approving Homestay hosts are familiar with the principles of safe recruitment practice.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: 1241781

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Mr Nigel Addison

Type of school: Boarding School

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Inspectors

Stephen Collett, Social Care Inspector

Peter Jackson, Social Care Inspector

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