

Kings London

United Language Schools Ltd

25 Beckenham Road, Beckenham, London BR3 4PR

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

Kings London is part of Kings Education, which runs international colleges in the United Kingdom and United States of America. Students come from all over the world and undertake a range of academic and English language courses. Children under the age of 18 stay with host families during their studies. There are currently 82 students on roll and nine of these are under the age of 18 and are staying with host families. There are no children under the age of 16. These nine children were placed from several different countries, including Iran, Vietnam and Brazil.

The setting was registered with Ofsted on 1 January 2016.

This inspection involved meetings with seven children, visits to three host families, and discussions with all the staff within the school who support children placed with host families. A questionnaire was also shared for staff and host families who wished to contribute their views. One response was received, and this offered positive feedback.

Due to COVID-19, at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers carried out under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF) on 17 March 2020. We returned to routine SCCIF inspections on 12 April 2021.

We last visited this setting on 31 October 2017 to carry out a full inspection. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 30 November to 2 December 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: 31 October 2017

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good

Children value the opportunity of staying with host families as a means of developing their studies and their understanding of the English language and culture. Children told the inspectors that their host families are 'very friendly' and some children are planning to extend their stays. Children are offered individualised courses specific to their interests and make good progress. Many children successfully transition from the school to further education in this country and across Europe.

Induction is good and expectations are clearly explained to children prior to their arrival. This is of particular significance given the anxieties felt by children travelling abroad without their families and during the pandemic. At present, not all children are given a photograph of their bedroom prior to their arrival. This would help children in preparing for their stay.

On arrival in the country, children enjoy a well-planned induction. This includes prompt access to healthcare services and an orientation of the London area and transport links. Children also receive information to enhance their knowledge of British culture, such as the importance of queuing while in public. This helps children settle quickly into their new environment.

Children's views are regularly sought on important issues such as their relationships with host families. One child told the inspector that his concerns were swiftly acted on after he expressed worries over the quality of his accommodation. In addition, another child attends the student council. This helps children feel heard and represented.

Host families reported that they value the opportunity to learn about new cultures. Training offered by the school offers insight into the different cultural practices, such as particular laundry and food preparation routines. One host family spoke about a recent visit to a friend in China, whom they had cared for 12 years previously. Host families said that they enjoy offering the children a 'home from home experience'.

All host families are within 30 minutes' walking distance of the school. This allows children easy access to a full range of out-of-school activities offered by the school. Activities include bowling, football, pilates, debating clubs and ice-skating. This helps children to build peer relationships and stay healthy.

Host families help children to develop their independence skills. One child spoke of his excitement at learning to cook for the first time. Another child spoke about feeling that he had really 'matured' since his arrival in the country.

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

The school has a good safeguarding culture linked strongly to academic attendance and attainment. Safeguarding concerns are quickly shared with relevant professionals via the school's computer information system. This ensures close communication between academic and accommodation staff.

Host families report strong levels of advice and guidance. This includes a 24-hour emergency helpline which acts as a source of support to families and children. This helpline offers host families advice on the rare occasions that difficulties arise, such as when a child returns home late.

Children are offered good access to independent support. The school's welfare officer is a trained counsellor and is well known to children. Posters around the school building offer photographs and contact details of safeguarding leads and the independent listener. This offers children a comprehensive level of support.

Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and work in partnership with parents to support children. Recently, this included restricting a child from having an overnight stay where it was not possible to fully risk assess the chosen venue.

Staff are proactive and seek creative solutions to help children. During the pandemic, children underwent the required 'quarantine period' together in a home outside of London. This kept children safe and allowed them to acclimatise to the country while building relationships with their peers.

Children's personal safety is prioritised. Children learn important strategies such as limiting mobile phone use in public and remaining alert in the community.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: good

Management of the home-stay provision is good and supported by the effective oversight of the governing body. The headteacher and accommodation manager have each been in post for four years. This helps to create stability and positive working relationships. Leaders understand the complex challenge posed by children moving abroad and away from their families for the first time.

Leaders have continued to develop the school during the pandemic. The numbers of children registered in the school from the United Kingdom have increased. This allows children staying with host families to broaden their friendship groups and their knowledge of spoken English.

Numbers of children placed with host families are low. This enables leaders to have a close working relationship with host families, understand their needs and match children with them appropriately. This is evidenced by the success of placements and the positive views of children expressed to inspectors.

Management monitoring systems are effective. Regular communication with teaching staff carefully tracks attendance, engagement, and academic progress. When difficulties occur, such as a child feeling tired, leaders liaise quickly with host families to seek solutions.

The accommodation manager rigorously reviews the quality of accommodation and the host families' compliance with both mandatory training and safety checks such as annual gas certification. This ensures that home-stay accommodation is safe. Host families receive ongoing support such as refresher training and 'host parent' events at school.

The accommodation manager generally ensures that the recruitment of host families is safe. However, the verbal verification of references is not routinely recorded. This presents a minor shortfall in recruitment practice.

Staff morale is positive. Staff report regular supervision and effective performance appraisal. Staff feel that the immense difficulties posed by the restrictions of the pandemic have brought the staff team closer together.

Leaders advocate strongly for children. They liaise effectively with the headteacher to support children who are struggling. Solutions such as using a 'buddy' system work well and ensure that children enjoy their stay with host families.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that further enhancement is made in safer recruitment practice by recording the verbal recording verification of references.
- The registered person should ensure that improvement is made in the induction process by providing all children with a photograph of their bedroom, prior to their arrival.

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: 1159264

Headteacher/teacher in charge: Adam Whitbread

Type of school: Boarding School

Telephone number: 02086505891

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Inspectors

Barnaby Dowell, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Victoria Jones, Social Care Inspector

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