

# Queen Mary's School

Inspection report for boarding school

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<b>Inspection date</b>	5 March 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Leonard Hird
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<b>Nominated person</b>	
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	25 November 2005

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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## 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 Mary's is an independent boarding and day school for girls aged seven to 16 years. In addition, there is a co-educational early years and pre-preparatory department for children aged three to seven years. It is located on the outskirts of Topcliffe Village near to the small rural town of Thirsk and is situated in its own landscaped grounds of approximately 50 acres. The school's governing body is the Woodward Corporation, an Anglican foundation.

### **Summary**

This was an announced Key inspection of Queen Mary's School and considered all the recommendations made at the last report undertaken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) as well as undertaking an inspection of all of the key national minimum standards. The school had made significant improvements since the last inspection in all of the key standards and the outcomes for boarding pupils living at the school were found to be outstanding. The school is being well-managed and led by the senior management team of the school particularly in the area of boarding house management.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

The school has ensured that any recommendations made at the last inspection made by the CSCI have been addressed.

A new and highly experienced senior housemistress has been appointed since the last inspection made by the CSCI. Following this appointment there has been a significant improvement to the managerial structures operating in the boarding house. All of the school's policies and procedures have been updated where appropriate in line with current regulatory and social developments.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarding pupils are receiving excellent advice, guidance, and support in health and personal care matters. All of this information is conveyed in a very constructive and positive manner by the staff at the school through the personal social health education programme (PSHE).

The health and medication needs of boarding pupils are very well administered, recorded and monitored by the school's registered nurse and boarding house staff. The school's nurse is registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council and receives regular clinical supervision from the school's doctor.

Only staff who have been authorised by the nurse are able to dispense and administer medication to boarding pupils. Medication is being stored securely and is correctly disposed of at the local pharmacy when required.

There is a regular surgery held at the school on a Tuesday morning by the school's own doctor. If necessary the doctor can visit a boarding pupil at the school if they are unwell or pupils can be taken to the local health centre if necessary.

If boarders are unwell they can either stay in the day room or return to their dormitory where they are closely monitored by boarding house staff. When boarding pupils are taken ill parents are kept well informed of their child's illness either by telephone or e-mail.

All of the boarding staff have undertaken a recognized qualification in first aid. A record of this qualification is kept by the school on individual staff files and it is renewed within a three-year period. First aid boxes are located strategically throughout the school and first aid trained members accompany pupils on every trip away from the school. The four day first aid at work certificate has been gained by 11 members of staff and five dedicated house staff have achieved this award.

The school has robust health policies and procedures in place and these are overseen and reviewed by the school nurse. Where appropriate the school nurse consults with the school's doctor for advice in the development of policy and procedure. These procedures take full account of specialist medical requirements such as the emergency use of Epi-pens.

Boarders take all of their meals in a very pleasant and well appointed dining hall. There is an excellent choice of healthy meals to choose from at the school, for example, salads, pasta and more traditional meals such as 'fish and chips' on a Friday. The menus are regularly changed by the catering manager and they are colour-coded to enable boarding pupils to identify healthy eating choices.

The meals are well-prepared from local produce, cooked on site and healthy in content. All of the meals prepared at the school take full account of the specialist dietary needs of individual boarders including those who are vegetarian or diabetic. Boarders spoken with confirmed that the meals are nearly always enjoyable and very good with odd exceptions. Boarding pupils can influence the types of meal being prepared at the school by taking part in the school council and food committees where issues such as the menus can be discussed with the catering manager.

The school has recently introduced a healthy eating policy for 'tuck' on the boarding house and some of the boarding pupils felt that the school needed to review the implementation of this policy. The headteacher indicated that this healthy eating 'tuck' policy would be reviewed in conjunction with the boarding pupil's food committee at the end of its trial period. Boarding pupils are being enabled to live a very healthy lifestyle at the school.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

The school has a clear and up-to-date policy and procedure in place for dealing with the countering of bullying. Information is displayed throughout the school on how individual boarding pupils can deal with bullying and what to do if they are being bullied.

Boarders confirmed that they were aware of the school's countering bullying policy as well as to whom they could talk to about the subject. They identified a number of different people they could go to if they needed to speak to somebody in confidence about any subject and

these included the chaplain, the nurse or the school's counsellor. Boarding pupils both in their verbal and written comments to Ofsted confirmed that bullying was not an issue at the school. One of the senior boarding pupils said that if there were any bullying going on in the school, then staff would be informed by other pupils so that it could be dealt with quickly.

The school has a counsellor who can be easily contacted by boarders initially by dropping a note in the counsellor's locked mail box in the careers (private) room or in person on a Tuesday night in the careers room. Access can also be gained to the school's counsellor in an emergency through the school's nurse. Boarding pupils confirmed that it was easy to make contact with the school's counsellor if they needed to speak to somebody in confidence but who was not a member of staff. Boarding pupils also confirmed that they knew how to contact outside agencies such as Childline if they needed help.

The school has a rigorous Safeguarding Policy and Procedure in place that is compatible with the Local Authorities Safeguarding Children's Board policy and procedures. All staff including non-teaching staff receive a copy of the school's safeguarding policy and procedure and are fully aware of their role in ensuring the safety of the boarding pupils.

The school's designated safeguarding officer is the deputy headteacher who is supported in this role by the school's very experienced Head of Boarding and the Head of Early Years. There is regular recorded contact with the local safeguarding board when safeguarding concerns have occurred. Members of staff regularly undertake in-house training, online training and briefings in the safeguarding of children with the assistance of the designated officer. All of the information relating to safeguarding matters is kept confidentially and securely in the designated officer's office.

The school has easy to read policies and procedures in place regarding the school's complaints procedures for parents and staff. The boarding pupils also have their own easy to understand booklet provided for them that explains how to complain and who to.

The school has a robust policy and procedure in place for the recruitment of staff at the school. These recruitment procedures include a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check at enhanced level, a detailed application form, and two written references from previous employers, a formal interview and verbal checks on the relevant information. The school as a matter of good practice has recently undertaken a complete review of all staff working at school to ensure that they have an up-to-date CRB check at enhanced level.

For those members of teaching, support staff and gap students who come from abroad similar checks have been undertaken prior to their employment. For gap students this also includes a 'letter of good conduct' from their local police force in their country of origin.

Visitors and outside contract workers are required to sign in at the school's main office and are escorted by staff when on site.

All of this personnel information is being kept securely and in line with the Data Protection Act.

Rigorous fire risk assessments and health and safety risk assessments have been undertaken by the recently appointed estates manager and this documentation is fully up to date. Boarding house staff and ancillary staff are fully aware of these procedures and implement them. Regular

fire drills and tests are undertaken in the boarding house area and boarding pupils confirmed that these occurred on a regular basis and at different times of the day or night. There have also been evaluation and evacuation practices of the school building by a local fire service team to ensure in case of a serious fire there is an adequate response by all concerned. Boarding pupils are living in a very safe and secure environment.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Members of the boarding house staff are working very closely with the educational and support staff at the school to ensure that boarding pupils are given the maximum amount of help and support they require.

There is an extremely wide range of planned and unplanned leisure activities taking place at the school, for example, horse riding, canoeing, musical concerts, shopping trips to Edinburgh and theatre trips to London. These trips are extremely well supported by staff and take full account of the needs, abilities and backgrounds of the individual boarding pupils taking part in the event. Spontaneous events such as games of 'tag' are organised by the boarding pupils themselves after their evening meal. Boarding pupils were extremely positive in their comments about these different events especially about their trips to the shopping centres and the theatre. Boarding pupils commented, 'that these trips were great and enabled them to see and take part in many different things.'

The school is practising a very clear and supportive policy of equal opportunity for all pupils attending the school.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarding pupils are actively encouraged to take part in the day-to-day running of the boarding house and can influence often major decisions made within the school through the school committee. All of the boarding house staff, as well as the headteacher, have an open door policy for boarders to speak to them about any subject at any time.

There are different types of telephones including internet telephones service made available in the school for boarders to keep in contact with their family and friends. Boarders can also make use of either e-mail or the more traditional methods of letter writing. There are regular games events and exeat weekends and parents are fully encouraged by the school to keep in contact with their child.

Great care and attention is given to the support of boarding pupils particularly those who are very young when they first come into the boarding house. All of the staff ensure that there is a friendly welcome and that a careful eye is kept upon new boarders so that 'homesickness' does not become a problem.

Boarders confirmed in writing and verbally that they could influence decisions in the house and the school by their involvement in the various school groups and committees. Boarding pupils were highly complimentary of the open door policy operated by the school's staff which enabled them to speak to anybody they wanted to about any subject.

Evaluation boarding pupils are able to positively contribute to the running of the boarding house and are encouraged to keep in contact with their family and friends.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is outstanding.

Boarding pupils have access to their own locked facility for storing small personal items and staff can also provide a lockable facility for other valuables within the boarding areas.

The accommodation provided for the boarding pupils was very clean, hygienic and well maintained. The dormitories visited by invitation during the inspection were found to be well decorated, warm and extremely well personalised by the boarding pupils.

There are good levels of privacy for washing, toileting, showering and bathing in the boarding house.

There has been a significant amount of refurbishment and redecoration work undertaken in the boarding house since the last inspection and this has significantly improved the living facilities for the boarding pupils. This refurbishment and redecoration work is ongoing particularly in the bathing areas but the boarding pupils were highly complimentary of the work completed so far and they confirmed that they had been fully involved in the choice and design of furniture and decoration in the boarding house. Parental involvement was also canvassed by the pupils to help in the design and refurbishment of the senior girls common room.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The school's environment is providing many opportunities for boarding pupils to live and work together in harmony. The school provides an easy to understand and well produced Statement of its Principles and Practices for parents, boarders and staff. The organisation and management of the Boarding Houses is creating an extremely safe and very supportive atmosphere for boarders to live in.

There are very good recording systems and up-to-date risk assessments in place to ensure the health and safety of the boarders. The administration systems used in the school are ensuring the safety and welfare of the boarding pupils. Boarders confirmed that there are regular fire drills at different times throughout the term.

There is a dedicated team of experienced boarding house staff employed by the school to ensure the boarding house is well managed and run. All of the boarding house staff undertake an annual formal review with their line manager and informal supervisions are also occurring throughout the year. This informal supervision programme should be formalised to enable the annual appraisal programme to be reflective of the practice of the member of staff concerned.

Staffing levels both during the day and at night are meeting the current needs and numbers of boarders residing at the school.

Boarders confirmed that they felt extremely well cared for and supported by a very dedicated team of house mistresses, nurse, gap students and ancillary staff.

The Head of Boarding and the school's senior management team are providing excellent and very effective management structures' for the boarding house.

Queen Mary's school is well led, pupil orientated, and forward thinking in its approaches to meeting the very diverse needs of its boarding pupils.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that boarding house staff in addition to their annual appraisal receive formal supervision on a regular basis(standard 34).