

# St. George's School for Girls School Care Accommodation Service

Houldsworth House  
Garscube Terrace  
Edinburgh  
EH12 6BG

Telephone: 0131 3118015

Type of inspection: Unannounced  
Inspection completed on: 24 November 2016

**Service provided by:**  
St. George's School for Girls

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003003567

**Care service number:**  
CS2006136083

## About the service

St. George's School for Girls is registered as a School Care Accommodation Service. Its conditions of registration are as follows:

1. To provide a school care accommodation service for a maximum of 58 pupils at any one time.

A maximum of 15 pupils may be accommodated in the Bungalow.

A maximum of 43 pupils may be accommodated in Number 15 and Number 17 Ravelston Park.

2. The school care accommodation service will be provided during the school terms.

3. To comply with the current staffing schedule dated November 2008 which must be displayed together with the certificate.

On its website, St George's states:

"In Houldsworth and its surrounding private grounds, we aim to create a 'home from home' environment for our boarders in which they can feel secure and be all that they can be academically, socially and emotionally.

Although we offer a British boarding experience we very much pride ourselves on being an international community and enjoy sharing and celebrating each other's customs and festivals".

## What people told us

We spoke with students informally in groups, at mealtimes and as we met them in the boarding environment. They consistently told us that they felt safe, comfortable and well cared for at St. George's.

Students described the boarding house as feeling homely and relaxed. They said it was very much a community where they felt they were able to spend time with friends and enjoy a great range of social occasions. They also confirmed that they could find places for time away from others if they needed it and that they could have privacy when this was wanted.

We heard from individual students that they were able to access support from staff if and when they needed it and that they could speak to trusted adults whenever they wished. They said that this gave them reassurance that they could get help and support if they needed it. Staff promoted the idea that Houldsworth was a home from home and students confirmed that they felt this to be the case and gave us described examples of events and celebrations which they had enjoyed.

We were told that staff listened to comments and suggestions about boarding life and where feasible, ideas were put into practice. Students told us that this meant they felt properly consulted and that their views were clearly taken into account.

We heard some sense of dissatisfaction with minor aspects of technology use such as the school wifi filtering out different parts of social media or younger students handing in their phones but the safety reasons for these was understood.

## Self assessment

The self assessment was fully completed and noted the service's strengths while identifying potential areas for improvement.

## From this inspection we graded this service as:

<b>Quality of care and support</b>	6 - Excellent
<b>Quality of environment</b>	6 - Excellent
<b>Quality of staffing</b>	not assessed
<b>Quality of management and leadership</b>	not assessed

## What the service does well

Throughout our inspection we consistently saw evidence of excellent relationships between pupils and staff across the boarding environment which promoted a real sense of community within the boarding house.

Students told us that they had clear and easy access to a range of staff at any time. They said that they could speak to adults they trusted about a wide variety of issues and concerns and that they had first-rate relationships they could use to allow them to confide in staff about personal and private matters if they needed specific support, advice or help. This gave them confidence to tackle a range of issues and allowed them to feel secure about asking for advice and assistance.

There was a wide range of ways in which students could participate in the daily running of the boarding facilities and make suggestions and comments about ensuring it met all their needs, preferences and aspirations. On a formal level there were committees which dealt with matters such as food, activities, IT, charities and recently a new eco committee looking at the house's contribution to sustainability and eco-friendly operation. These forums ensured that the students felt that their voice was properly and consistently heard about all aspects of boarding which gave them a clear sense of responsibility as well as a sense of pride in their achievements.

House meetings were regularly held to share information and discuss any aspects of the day to day routines of the house. These meetings also allowed suggestions and discussion about different events or celebrations and how they would be run. Students and staff told us that meetings were used to openly and honestly discuss any matters affecting the day to day life of boarding students and that outcomes from the meetings were used to influence developments in the boarding house which would meet all students' needs as fully as possible.

There was a student head and deputy head of boarding who represented boarding students across the whole school as well as having regular meetings with senior boarding staff. This meant that boarding life and any issues arising from it were fully considered by school managers including governors. Feedback forms, questionnaires and surveys were routinely used to gather information and comments. These opportunities meant that students felt fully involved and included in the daily life of the boarding house and also felt completely confident that their views were taken seriously and acted upon.

Underlying the formal systems for student participation was a very clear understanding that individual students could discuss anything with staff at any time. During our inspection we saw very positive interaction between students and staff about a wide range of individual, house and community matters. Students were clearly confident in their involvement in these discussions and happy to share their views. Informal interaction within

the boarding house showed clear evidence of an overall ethos of inclusion and nurture for students of all ages. New students were allocated a 'buddy' who helped them get to know the house routines and made sure they felt comfortable in the house. Those we spoke to said it had been an excellent introduction to the house.

A very effective system was in place for identifying needs of individual students and how these needs could best be met across the whole school. A range of meetings and the use of the school's communication system enabled appropriate staff to have a clear understanding of any actions needed to ensure that care and wellbeing needs were promptly and consistently met across the different areas of the school which the pupils experienced, including academic and sports environments. Written notes of actions taken were kept and shared with those involved in the provision of supervision and care. The content of communication and discussions with the student and with parents was also recorded and shared as appropriate. At the time of the inspection, the format of support plans was being further developed and we will be consulted as these progress. We saw that the outcomes for students who had identified needs were of a very high quality.

The school had its own medical staff and close links with a local GP medical practice. This meant that students had prompt and direct access to medical treatment for routine matters or any identified medical concerns. Attention to the medical needs of students was very well resourced and we saw that systems were consistently implemented for the benefit of boarding students. If needed, some members of staff in the boarding accommodation were first aiders who could deal with minor matters. Access to local dental practices and other medical agencies was enabled and students were able to have easy and prompt access to appointments as required. The system for sharing information across the school enabled medication administration records to be accurately kept and these were routinely audited to ensure they were of a very high standard.

Students told us that meals and snacks were first-rate and we saw that catering staff chatted to pupils about their likes and food preferences. Students we spoke with said they always had options and could speak to the chef whenever they wished, as well as contributing ideas through the food committee. We saw that the chef had an excellent relationship with students and was always willing to provide special meals and alternatives to suit all needs. The kitchen area in the Bungalow was kept stocked with basic snacks and was kept clean and tidy by students with helpful advice from staff. Students were encouraged to choose healthy food options wherever feasible but treats were also provided so that they had a high quality nutritional diet which they really enjoyed.

An exemplary range of activities was provided for students which included outings, visits, sports, games and celebrations. There were healthy outdoor activities and sports which pupils were encouraged and enabled to participate in and there was access to school sports facilities and a locally located gym. We saw that there were notices in the house of an excellent variety of options for students to experience new interests, hobbies and pastimes which helped them to develop interests and skills as well as some linking to areas of academic study. The 5 o'clock club was an excellent example of an inclusive activity group for younger students which helped them to come together as a group and learn new skills and have fun together.

The house had 'The Holly Award' which was a trophy awarded to a pupil who had contributed towards the care provided in the Houldsworth House community. Students nominated their peers for the award which resulted in the presentation of the Holly Award trophy to the student with most nominations. This was an admirable means of promoting a sense of community in the house.

Students told us that they always felt safe in the house and on the school campus. We saw that there was a complete range of safety systems in place including controlled access to the boarding accommodation and adjacent areas and CCTV which monitored parts of the house and campus. Staff were aware of any visitors to the house and their presence was noted and monitored. Relevant testing of equipment was routinely carried out and daily checks were made of household areas including catering equipment. The host local authority had

carried out appropriate tests on all school catering processes. These systems and checks meant that boarding students were living in an environment with an excellent overall level of safety.

All boarding students had easy and clear access to showers and toilets across the boarding environment. We saw that these areas were kept clean and tidy. Students confirmed to us that they felt their privacy and dignity was very well preserved while using the shared facilities. They also told us that they were happy and satisfied that there was sufficient capacity in them to fully meet their needs, even when the house was busy.

The different rooms and communal areas across the boarding environment were used as flexibly as necessary to meet the needs and interests of the students as fully as possible. This meant that they had a say in who they shared bedrooms with and how communal rooms were used for activities, events and celebrations. We saw that different areas could be used for social activities or private study, depending on the different demands on individual students and those in different year groups. This sense of adaptability was appreciated very much by resident students.

The house was properly maintained and we heard from staff and students that any repairs or maintenance issues were dealt with promptly and effectively. All areas of the boarding house were well decorated and this was regularly assessed and refreshed where necessary. Students were encouraged and helped to personalise their own rooms and we saw that pictures of friends and family and items from personal celebrations were in place across the house. Students we spoke with said they thought the house was an exceptional place to live.

## What the service could do better

Within its self assessment the service had noted a number of areas for development which it felt would enhance and improve the boarding experience for students. During our inspection we did not identify specific areas for improvement but were pleased to see that managers, staff and students shared an intention to continue to look for ways to develop the overall service.

## Requirements

Number of requirements: 0

## Recommendations

Number of recommendations: 0

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
7 Mar 2014	Unannounced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	6 - Excellent
		Staffing	6 - Excellent
		Management and leadership	6 - Excellent
18 Jan 2011	Announced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	Not assessed
		Management and leadership	Not assessed
3 Mar 2009	Unannounced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	Not assessed
		Management and leadership	Not assessed
31 Oct 2008	Announced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	6 - Excellent
		Staffing	6 - Excellent
		Management and leadership	6 - Excellent

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