

St. George's, Edinburgh School Care Accommodation Service

Houldsworth House
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Edinburgh
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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
16 December 2022

Service provided by:
St. George's, Edinburgh

Service provider number:
SP2003003567

Service no:
CS2006136083

About the service

St. George's, Edinburgh is a school care accommodation service forming part of an independent school for girls with boarding places for up to 54 pupils. Girls are accommodated in two boarding houses: Houldsworth House consists of two adjoining Victorian terraced houses separated by a common room, with shared bedrooms for 42 girls; and the Bungalow, a purpose-built single-storey building with mainly single rooms and a common room for 12 sixth formers. All students share shower and bathroom facilities and the dining room in Houldsworth House. Both properties have gardens. The school campus has a dining hall, playing fields, sports hall, and a wide variety of education and sporting facilities.

The school is located about two miles from central Edinburgh, which has a wide range of attractions, amenities and services as well as public transport links.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 5, 6 and 7 December 2022. We visited the service between 11:30 and 19:05, 09:20 and 19:50 and 09:25 and 15:45 respectively. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection, we reviewed information about the service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. In making our evaluations of the service, we:

- reviewed responses to electronic surveys from 17 young people, 10 parents and carers and seven staff
- spoke with 19 young people using the service
- spoke with 13 staff, managers and council members
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Young people had a very high level of satisfaction with the service overall.
- All young people felt safe, were protected from harm and had trusted adults they felt comfortable with.
- Young people benefitted from strongly nurturing care and relationships that celebrated their diversity and promoted physical and emotional wellbeing.
- There was a strong focus on listening to and acting on the voice of young people.
- Leaders provided highly visible support and direction to maximise young people's outcomes and experiences.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

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| How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing? | 5 - Very Good |
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing?

5 - Very Good

We evaluated this key question as **very good**. This means the service's performance demonstrated major strengths in supporting positive outcomes and did not require significant adjustment.

Arrangements for preventing harm to young people were wide-ranging and very effective. They were prioritised by the whole school and as a result all young people felt safe. They had trusted adults to turn to and opportunities to discuss their individual experiences of safety. Safeguarding initiatives included appropriate use of technology for keeping in touch with boarders, development of a safeguarding committee, plans for implementing new national guidance for governors and safe recruitment practices. The school council could now clarify expectations for members' contact with the boarding houses, following recent resumption of visits following easing of pandemic restrictions, to ensure they have the highest quality information about pupils' experiences. Managers should also ensure all fire safety measures are considered in the risk assessment.

Pupils reported very high levels of satisfaction with the service overall. They had predominantly extremely positive relationships with staff, who showed kindness and commitment to their individual wellbeing. We were impressed by examples of empathy and insight, especially during the challenges of the pandemic. Leaders were highly visible and well-placed to address ongoing practice issues to promote more consistent implementation of routines and expectations. These contributed to a very warm, nurturing atmosphere in which pupils thrived. Overall, the boarding houses provided welcoming and comfortable spaces for relaxation and socialising, including inviting friends for sleepovers, with homely touches and seasonal decorations. Updating bedrooms, in addition to planned upgrading of communal areas, would further enhance pupils' experiences.

Listening to and acting on the student voice was a very strong feature of the service. Young people had lots of opportunities to help evaluate and contribute to improving their boarding experience. Managers used creative ways to report back on how they had taken forward many requests and suggestions from forums such as the student council. A range of other student-led initiatives and consultation activities showed respect for students' views. Impressive, person-centred plans were developed in partnership with young people by staff they had specifically chosen. This innovative approach provided a foundation for supportive relationships and demonstrated pupils being listened to and their rights respected.

Boarding and medical staff worked effectively together to maximise pupils' health. The school also had a creative, holistic approach to mental wellbeing and equality and diversity, and plans to further enhance pupils' awareness of sources of support were well underway. We made suggestions for changes to recording and quality assurance processes for managing medication, though there had been no adverse outcomes for young people. Managers' very responsive implementation of these demonstrated the service's very strong commitment to continuous improvement.

There was a wide variety of meals and snacks, and staff made significant efforts to respect diverse preferences to make food experiences as positive as possible. We shared young people's suggestions about improving aspects of food provision with managers and noted there was ongoing discussion about moving this forward. Staff regularly acted on requests from the student food and health committee.

In addition to high quality support for learning, pupils benefited from an extensive range of activities and outings providing interest and stimulation. The school's proximity to the city enhanced the facilities available on the campus and contributed to enriching young people's experiences.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

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|---|---------------|
| How well do we support children and young people's rights and wellbeing? | 5 - Very Good |
| 7.1 Children and young people are safe, feel loved and get the most out of life | 5 - Very Good |

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