

School inspection report

14 to 16 January 2025

Queenswood School

Shepherd's Way

Brookmans Park

Hatfield

AL9 6NS

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders provide an environment where relationships are characterised by care and respect and pupils' academic, physical and emotional wellbeing are prioritised. The varied and diverse backgrounds of pupils are valued and celebrated. Governors work closely with leaders and maintain close oversight of the school. They ensure that leaders consistently meet the requirements of the Standards and continue to act in the best interests of pupils.
2. Pupils experience a curriculum that develops their knowledge and skills across a broad range of subjects. Most teachers adapt and prepare lessons carefully to ensure effective teaching, so that pupils make good progress. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are provided for by well-trained and proactive staff who give carefully targeted help. Leaders use a highly thorough system of tracking to support pupils in need of any additional help. This helps pupils to achieve high standards by the end of Years 11 and 13.
3. Pupils are happy, responsible and diligent. They trust their staff, show courtesy to one another and interact respectfully with each other. In lessons, teachers create an enthusiastic and supportive atmosphere. In most cases, teachers ensure that pupils make the most of their lesson time to apply their learning with independence and complexity. In a few lessons, however, this is not the case. When this happens, pupils are not challenged to work as hard or make as much progress as they could.
4. Leaders prioritise pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing. The curriculum includes age-appropriate programmes of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, including the requirements for relationships and sex education (RSE). The physical education (PE) and co-curricular programmes are extensive and diverse and ensure that all pupils benefit. Pupils find activities that match their interests.
5. Leaders support and encourage pupils to be positive citizens in British society. The curriculum teaches pupils about the importance of economic understanding and principles such as the rule of law and democracy, and provides precise careers education so that pupils are prepared for their next stages. Pupils are taught to be respectful towards those of different faiths, beliefs and lifestyles.
6. Boarders feel secure, happy and cared for while at school. Boarding staff are experienced and well trained, and boarding is well organised and well led. Accommodation for boarders is comfortable and appropriate. There are a wide range of recreational activities on offer for boarders both within the structured school day and during evenings and weekends, including sports, wellbeing, music and creative arts. Although now resolved, there has been a historic gap in the appointment of an independent person.
7. Leaders ensure that the school is safe and well maintained. All necessary checks are carried out and the medical provision is suitable. Health and safety policies, risk assessments and fire management systems are in place to mitigate risk and safeguard members of the school community.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that teachers help pupils to make best use of their lesson time, so that they make the progress of which they are capable across lessons
- ensure that there is continuity in the appointments of staff related to the position of the independent person.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Governors and leaders work collaboratively to prioritise the wellbeing of pupils and ensure that the requirements of the Standards are consistently met. Together they actively foster a safe and supportive environment where pupils feel valued and cared for. They routinely take account of a wide range of views and opinions, including those of pupils, parents and staff. This work is closely aligned to the school's aims and vision.
9. Governors with specific skills and knowledge work closely with leaders to ensure that the school's aims and ethos are delivered effectively. They check on the effectiveness of leaders' work. They constructively challenge leaders, where necessary. Governors ensure that leaders' actions are making a positive difference to the school's provision. Governor oversight and regular visits, discussions and external evaluations ensure that policies are understood by staff and pupils and are effectively implemented.
10. Leaders provide appropriate information to parents and other relevant agencies. Policies and procedures are made clear through the school policies and on the website. Parents are provided with information about how their children are faring through regular reports. The school provides the relevant local authority with an annual statement of funds received and how they are allocated for any pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Leaders fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. A suitable and up-to-date accessibility plan is in place which considers access to both the curriculum and the school site.
11. Leadership has ensured effective links with other agencies to promote the wellbeing of the pupils, including boarders. Decisions prioritise the welfare and development of each pupil by promoting a warm and inclusive environment where pupils are provided with a range of different ways through which pupils can voice their concerns. Boarding handbooks, with pertinent information for all age groups, along with policies relating to the safeguarding of boarders, are provided to all new starters and shared on the school website. Although now resolved, there has been a historic gap in the appointment of an independent person.
12. Leaders have a thorough understanding of how to manage risk effectively and use this in their daily work with pupils. There is a robust and comprehensive approach to risk management. Strategic, physical, situational and educational risks are managed consistently and thoroughly. Clear policies and rigorous risk assessments for safeguarding, fire safety and health monitoring ensure a well-organised and secure environment.
13. Complaints are managed appropriately and within the timeframes stated in the school's policy, and thorough records are kept. Senior leaders review whether there is any wider learning from which they can gain or anything that they need to consider in future planning. Governors check on leaders' work related to complaints and the ongoing appropriateness of the complaints procedure.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 14. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

15. Leaders provide pupils with a curriculum that is effectively planned to take pupils' ages and aptitudes into account across a broad range of subjects. There are detailed plans and schemes of work for subjects across all year groups, which help pupils develop their knowledge, expertise and skills over time. This curriculum prepares pupils well to achieve high standards in a range of qualifications and accreditations in Years 11 and 13. Leaders constantly review the curriculum to see how they can bring improvements, for example through the recent development of the 'super-curriculum' to offer more scholastic opportunities to pupils.
16. Knowledgeable teachers prepare lessons well and many use the broad range of good-quality resources available to help pupils to learn. While many lessons ensure that pupils make the most of their lesson time and are well supported to learn effectively, on occasion teaching does not check on pupils' understanding and application of their learning. These lessons lack the opportunity for the pupils to participate critically with topics, hypothesise or engage in the higher-order thinking that is seen elsewhere.
17. Pupils are self-motivated, articulate and confident learners with industrious attitudes to their studies. Their learning engages with a variety of media, and they work precisely, moving between digital technologies and paper resources. Teachers create a supportive atmosphere in their classes and know their pupils well.
18. Leaders are knowledgeable and skilled in supporting pupils who have SEND. There are appropriate processes in place to support the accurate and timely identification of pupils' needs. Staff are provided with clear guidance about pupils' needs and the best strategies to support them effectively, both academically and in their wider social development. Staff provide enhanced support to ensure that pupils can access the curriculum effectively and that their specific needs are well met. Pupils who have SEND work with leaders to evaluate the impact of any support received and how best to help them to further aid their learning. As a result, they learn effectively alongside their peers.
19. Pupils who speak EAL have a programme of support such as tailored terminology lists, co-curricular drama and oracy sessions. This programme is supplemented with personalised support, including one-to-one sessions, small group lessons and in-class assistance. They learn well in lessons and go on to achieve well by the end of Year 11 and Year 13.
20. Pupils achieve above national averages in most subjects at GCSE and A level. The school curriculum is underpinned by a systematic, thorough and well-tracked assessment programme. Teachers use precise and regular assessments to personalise feedback and identify next steps for pupils. Pupils are taught and know how to implement this feedback in their study routines. The depth and detail of academic data tracking, which leads to specific feedback for individual pupils, helps them to achieve high standards at the end of their courses of study.
21. An extensive programme of recreational activities forms the co-curricular programme, including sports, theatre, music, chess, ancient Greek and global perspectives. The co-curricular curriculum takes account of pupils' needs, and the school actively monitors the accessibility to and participation of all pupils, including those who have SEND and those who speak EAL. As a result, there is a high take-up of co-curricular activities.

22. Boarders use their study sessions effectively. The majority of boarders take advantage of the appropriate programme of daily and weekend activities, including a range of sport and exercise, as well as visits and excursions to places of interest.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation.

- 23. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

24. Leaders prioritise inclusion in the school community. Adults model kindness, respect and tolerance in their relationships with one another. These positive relationships are evident in lessons, in chapel sessions, in the pastoral system and in day-to-day interactions. Pupils are encouraged to express themselves, including through the house system, which promotes community, teamwork and healthy competition. As a result, pupils are polite and respectful, and have a strong empathy for and appreciation of the perspectives of others.
25. The PSHE curriculum is structured so that pupils learn, in an age-appropriate way, about important topics including those related to consent, healthy relationships and mental health. Teachers deliver this curriculum effectively, encouraging pupils to reflect on topics thoughtfully. The school engages proactively with parents on RSE curriculum content, and around sensitive topics.
26. Pupils are taught to accept responsibility for their actions. Leaders have established clear expectations for pupils' behaviour through the fair and consistent application of the behaviour policy, reflecting the school's aims and ethos. Restorative practices play a key role in managing behaviour, with pupils having the opportunity to engage in reflection and dialogue. Leaders promote a strong anti-bullying culture through a variety of measures, including support from wellbeing prefects and peer mentors. Pupils feel confident approaching staff about concerns, and the school responds swiftly and effectively to incidents.
27. Leaders value the views of pupils. They provide pupils with a range of ways to share their views and ideas, such as through the school newsletter, a suggestions box and feedback to curriculum leaders. Leaders seek ways to give them opportunities to take on responsibility. For example, the well-established prefect system is highly regarded by pupils. All prefects are provided with training and guidance so that they can undertake their duties with confidence. Additionally, the school council actively advocates the views of pupils, recently establishing a food committee based on pupils' feedback.
28. Curriculum planning and staff delivery of PE are robust and thorough. Pupils access a range of activity and learning, including fitness and skills training. In addition to the planned curriculum, leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to be involved in extra-curricular physical activities, exercise and sport. Many pupils participate in sporting activities, including team sports. This ensures that most pupils enjoy exercise, which builds their self-confidence and supports their wellbeing. Many pupils also take part in competitions, including elite-level sport.
29. The school's premises, including boarding houses, are well maintained. Regular checks and maintenance are carried out across the premises. Appropriate records are kept. Effective health and safety mechanisms, including staff training, are in place. These checks include those related to fire safety, including regular fire drills and comprehensive risk assessments. Leaders have developed systems to ensure that pupils, including boarders, are properly supervised, including systems for the control of traffic on site.
30. Regular training in first aid ensures that staff are well prepared to respond to emergencies, in appropriate accommodation. The well-equipped medical centre offers both nursing and counselling services. Leaders manage sensitive medical information and medication appropriately. Boarders are

provided with high-quality medical and wellbeing care including through house parents and tutors. Leaders communicate effectively with parents.

31. Boarding accommodation is designed to prioritise safety, comfort and the emotional wellbeing of boarders. A homely atmosphere is created. Boarding houses are clean and well maintained with modern shower, toilet and laundry facilities. A keen sense of community is fostered through shared spaces and appropriate staff presence. Boarders are confident to share concerns, and understand that staff take their concerns seriously. Boarders feel safe, valued and well supported.
32. The school has appropriate admissions and attendance procedures in line with statutory guidance. The school informs the local authority of any pupils leaving or joining the school at non-standard transition points.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 33. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

34. Leaders proactively promote mutual respect for those with different faiths, beliefs and lifestyles. Pupils learn about diversity in the world through a range of ways, including PSHE lessons, global awareness initiatives, cultural festivals, and through language lessons on local customs and traditions in French, Spanish and Chinese society. In lessons, teachers support pupils to discuss and debate ethics and justice, promoting mutual respect and inclusivity, including for those with protected characteristics. Pupils are confident to discuss complex topics and value diversity in themselves and in others.
35. Teachers promote discussion related to respect, healthy relationships and the importance of principles such as right and wrong. Teachers use real-life scenarios, with a range of views on societal issues, such as freedom of speech and gun control. They encourage an understanding of and respect for laws and the importance of taking responsibility for actions. Teachers use these discussions to widen pupils' understanding of democratic processes, for example, through elections on debated topics. This helps to create a respect for democracy and an understanding of institutional processes, thereby preparing pupils, including boarders, for life in British society.
36. Pupils engage positively in wider community engagement and activities. Pupils undertake a range of fundraising and charity activities for worldwide causes. Pupils also undertake work in the local community, through engagement with a nursing home, helping at a local primary school and litter picking. Pupils understand that these opportunities help them to be positive citizens in their community and are aware of the wider importance of growing into responsible adults in society.
37. Pupils enthusiastically engage with the extensive number of positions of responsibility that are available to them in the school. They are keen to represent one another and contribute to the school community and wider society. Such positions are achieved through pupil election, and often require representation and engagement with other pupils, serving to develop a strong sense of social responsibility and leadership.
38. Impartial careers guidance is provided, offering a broad range of information related to post-16 and post-18 opportunities. Pupils benefit from lessons that enhance their understanding of the world of further education, training, career options and pathways. Leaders also provide pupils with opportunities to prepare for adulthood and independence in other ways, through activities such as practical cookery lessons focused on understanding how easily food can be made with low-cost ingredients or through the on-site facility, which allows pupils to practise for independent living.
39. Pupils are provided with an appropriate and well-planned economic education. In PSHE lessons pupils analyse a range of information such as societal roles and the impact of ethical choices. This helps pupils to develop a deeper understanding of their responsibilities in the global community. Teachers incorporate precise and well-considered examples to help pupils understand economics in society, such as studying the economic implications of global trade. Pupils also have opportunities to run business competitions and fundraising initiatives, thereby enhancing the awareness of economic wellbeing, critical thinking and social awareness.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

41. Leaders are well trained and knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities related to safeguarding. There is an appropriate policy in place that prioritises the interests and safety of pupils and uses up-to-date statutory guidance. Leaders have created comprehensive systems, reporting procedures and risk assessments that they use to safeguard pupils.
42. Staff feel well supported and confident in identifying and reporting safeguarding issues. Staff training is frequent, including induction for new staff, and their safeguarding knowledge and understanding are routinely assessed. Staff are vigilant to any concerns about pupils and report them appropriately. Leaders ensure that any concerns are dealt with effectively, sensitively and efficiently. They work closely with appropriate external agencies in a timely way to ensure that pupils receive the help and protection that they need.
43. Leaders have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard boarders and ensure that they are effectively safeguarded. This includes appropriate strategies to manage issues related to the security of the site, the boarding environment, the use of technology, medication, personal belongings, and the physical, emotional and social needs of boarders across the age range.
44. Safeguarding procedures are known and understood by pupils, who trust staff and are confident to report issues and concerns about themselves or others in need of help. Peer mentor ambassadors are trained to support pupils and help them to report concerns to staff. Parents are confident that leaders can keep pupils safe. Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture among staff, pupils and their families.
45. Teachers ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils are educated about how to stay safe and how to report any concerns they may have. Leaders have implemented effective monitoring and filtering systems, which safeguard online activities in the school and boarding houses. These systems are monitored daily, regularly tested and externally audited.
46. All governors are aware of their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. Governors have effective oversight of safeguarding systems and procedures at the school and the wellbeing of pupils is at the heart of all decisions. Governors have oversight of recruitment and safeguarding arrangements, and those related to the induction of new staff.
47. Leaders and governors understand the checks that they must make on adults before they work with pupils. There are thorough recruitment processes in place that ensure that all appropriate checks are made on adults, and that records of these checks are maintained in a single central record (SCR).

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 48. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Queenswood School
Department for Education number	919/6020
Registered charity number	311060
Address	Queenswood School Shepherd's Way Brookmans Park Hatfield Hertfordshire AL9 6NS
Phone number	01707 602500
Email address	go@queenswood.org
Website	www.queenswood.org
Proprietor	Queenswood School Ltd
Chair	Mr James de Sausmarez
Headteacher	Mrs Jo Cameron
Age range	11 to 18
Number of pupils	463
Number of boarding pupils	207
Date of previous inspection	1 to 3 December 2021

Information about the school

49. Queenswood school is a single-sex day and boarding school for female pupils aged between 11 and 18 years. It was founded in 1894 and moved to its current site in Hatfield in 1925. It is run by Queenswood School Ltd. The governors of the school are the trustees of the charity and directors of the company. The school is a Christian school with a Methodist foundation.
50. The school has four boarding houses on the same site as the school for female pupils aged 11 to 18. The boarding provision is split into three sections, ensuring that there is separate boarding for pupils in Years 7 and 8. Flexi boarding and full boarding are separated for the rest of the school.
51. The school has identified 50 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A small number of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
52. English is an additional language for 77 pupils.
53. The school states its aims are to offer an excellent education through a broad curriculum and a wide range of co-curricular opportunities. It seeks to promote the happiness and self-esteem of pupils, to foster a love of learning, enquiry and debate and to promote international, cultural and political understanding. The school aims to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education and their future lives. It seeks to encourage parents to be fully involved in their children's education.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

14 to 16 January 2025

A team of seven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.

ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.

ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.

For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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