

School inspection report

28 to 30 November 2023

Queen Anne's School

6 Henley Road

Caversham

Reading

Berkshire

RG4 6DX

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 have a clear vision for the implementation of the school's aim to empower girls to develop 'kind hearts, fierce minds and strong spirits'. Governors are actively involved in school life. They work in collaboration with the school's leadership team to decide what is best for the school. They ensure effective management of risk through close communication with leaders and they regularly check the arrangements in place. Governors provide both support and challenge to leaders.
2. Leaders provide trained staff to support pupils' mental health. Pastoral leadership has recently been strengthened. Newly introduced weekly wellbeing surveys enable pastoral leaders to respond quickly to any worries or concerns raised by pupils. However, in relation to wellbeing lessons, which incorporate relationships and sex education (RSE) and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), inconsistencies in staffing and curriculum planning have meant that some wellbeing lessons covering the RSE curriculum do not consistently engage the interest of pupils and some areas are not covered in sufficient depth.
3. Leaders have crafted a broad curriculum and co-curriculum which is valued by pupils. It offers them opportunities to develop their interests and make progress in their knowledge and skills in sport, music and drama. Attainment in public examinations, including for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is above average at both GCSE and A level.
4. Academic leaders collaborate on cross-curricular projects that enable pupils to take a creative approach to their learning. Care is taken to build pupils' technological skills and this supports their independent learning. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and are eager to explore and articulate their own ideas.
5. The experienced boarding team makes boarding an enjoyable and enriching experience. Boarders take pride in supporting younger pupils through 'house families', so that everyone feels valued and included. Trained sixth-form peer mentors take their responsibilities seriously. The supportive, community feel of house life is replicated across the wider school.
6. Effective management of health and safety across the school's extensive facilities ensures that pupils enjoy a suitable environment. Pupils feel safe and happy. Safeguarding and pastoral records are accurately maintained.

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 and managers should:

- revise the planning and delivery of the relationships and sex education curriculum, to engage all pupils and further develop pupils' age-appropriate understanding of relationships and sex education.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. The promotion of the school's aims and ethos is central to governors' and leaders' work. They listen carefully to the views of pupils, parents and staff and take them into account when devising plans for the school's future development. Leaders and governors focus strongly on empowering pupils to reach their full potential. As a result, pupils are ambitious, they work hard and they enjoy their learning.
8. Governors, school leaders and the proprietor, The United Westminster Grey Coat Foundation, ensure that the safeguarding policy and implementation meet current regulatory requirements. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies, as required, to safeguard the welfare of pupils.
9. The school's recently updated website provides all the required information to parents and prospective parents. Parents receive regular reports informing them of their child's achievement.
10. Governors challenge and support the school's leadership team effectively. They ensure that the school's policies are implemented. Governors play a central role in overseeing the educational provision. Teachers present new initiatives to them and communication between governors and academic staff is strong. This helps governors to make well-informed decisions about the school.
11. Governors work closely with leaders to ensure that a strategic approach is taken to the mitigation of risk. Effective management of the site ensures health and safety practices meet requirements. Care is taken at every level of management to keep pupils safe from physical and emotional harm.
12. Leaders take their responsibilities for ensuring pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing very seriously. For example, leaders have recently introduced a weekly wellbeing survey for pupils to complete. Leaders monitor responses to the survey carefully and use them to help identify pupils who might be at risk and provide timely support for them. Pupils are reassured by this focus on their wellbeing and rightly have confidence that their responses are listened to and acted upon by pastoral leaders.
13. The complaints procedure is clear and easy to follow. Complaints are handled within the timescales set out in the school's policy.
14. Leaders at all levels understand their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The proprietor ensures that leaders, governors and staff are provided with high-quality training in this area. For example, attending a recent equality, diversity and inclusion conference supported governors to take steps to further embed the school's inclusive ethos and environment.
15. Leaders have implemented a highly effective house leadership team which enhances pupils' experience of boarding. For example, a carefully structured schedule of interactions and meetings between the new head of boarding and house staff ensures that all staff are aware of any relevant issues that may arise about individual boarders. Appropriate staffing levels, effective appraisal and reliable two-way lines of communication help to ensure that boarders enjoy an active, welcoming and safe environment, which caters well to both their physical safety and their emotional wellbeing. Leaders' investment in refurbishment of the boarding houses has had a very positive impact on the boarding experience. The houses provide bright, homely and suitable spaces for boarders to socialise, study and relax in.

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

16. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. The curriculum includes a wide choice of subjects. Pupils value the breadth of the curriculum, particularly in the sixth form where A-level options include animation and film studies. The strong co-curriculum offers extensive opportunities for pupils to pursue their interests and improve their performance skills in sport, music and drama. For example, a Year 7 interdisciplinary collaboration enables pupils to draw on knowledge gained in music, art, drama and English to take fresh, creative approaches to Greek myths.
18. The curriculum progressively develops pupils' linguistic, mathematical and scientific skills. In mathematics, pupils make confident use of software to quickly create graphs which illustrate their answers. Academic leaders have reviewed the curriculum so that the topics covered in the humanities engage the interests of all pupils, including international pupils, and promote understanding of different cultures and beliefs. For example, in history, all year groups study at least one module of non-European history.
19. The curriculum builds pupils' subject-specific technology skills step by step. This enables pupils to use their personal electronic devices to undertake progressively more intellectually demanding independent projects. Consequently, pupils are highly adept at using technology to organise and enhance their academic work.
20. Leaders have high expectations of pupils. They take pride in pupils' work and their own role in ensuring that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Heads of department foster a spirit of shared purpose that encourages pupils to become self-motivated learners. This is reflected in the consistency of pupils' effort and behaviour in lessons and in the pride that they take in their academic and creative work.
21. Teachers know their pupils well and plan lessons that take account of pupils' learning needs. For example, where pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), teachers use online glossaries effectively to enable pupils to have full access to the curriculum. Effective communication between subject teachers and SEND specialist teachers ensures targeted support meets individual needs.
22. Lessons are well organised and resourced. Leaders provide opportunities for teachers to undertake the role of a teaching and learning advocate for a year to research into a topic, for example, retrieval practice, and present their findings to colleagues.
23. Teachers provide pupils with feedback on their work. This helps deepen pupils' understanding and promotes good progress. Pupils make expert use of their 'learning logs', which help them to reflect on their own learning, incorporating teachers' feedback in their plans for their personal improvement.
24. Parents receive regular academic reports. Pupils understand the framework of assessment and its importance to their academic progress. In a Year 7 assembly, pupils were encouraged to reflect on the significance of comments on their attitudes to learning as well as on their attainment in forthcoming academic reports.
25. Learning development lessons and lunchtime clinics support pupils' academic progress. The one-to-one support pupils receive is effective in promoting their self-development and enabling them to learn well.

26. Leaders successfully extend pupils' learning experiences beyond the classroom. The proprietor provides additional opportunities for pupils to participate in competitive and collaborative events with pupils from schools across the foundation in music, writing, art and sport. The well-balanced structure of boarding life enables boarders to pursue their academic ambitions whilst meeting their physical, social and emotional needs and developing their creative interests.

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

27. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

28. The school is a welcoming and inclusive community. Pupils can be themselves without fear of discrimination or criticism. Pupils behave in a considerate and respectful manner towards each other. Interactions between pupils and staff are positive and courteous.
29. Leaders focus well on boarders' health, safety and wellbeing through rigorous monitoring of well-defined policies and through regular house meetings. As a result, the boarding houses provide a caring and supportive environment where boarders' concerns are taken seriously and addressed promptly. The availability of a range of staff, including counsellors and peer mentors, reflects a comprehensive approach to providing pupils with suitable support for their emotional and physical wellbeing. The combination of a nurturing environment and committed staff enables boarders to thrive as confident, welcoming and polite young people who feel at home in their surroundings.
30. The wellbeing programme is designed to enhance pupils' understanding of pertinent issues, at a level appropriate to their age. However, for pupils below the sixth form, RSE topics are not always covered in sufficient depth, and the weekly wellbeing lessons have sometimes been replaced by other activities or have not been delivered in a way that engages pupils' interest.
31. A well-considered induction programme helps pupils build supportive relationships within and across year groups. Staff have implemented an effective anti-bullying strategy. Pupils know how to report bullying and are confident that any issues would be dealt with effectively. Older boarders are given opportunities to mix with and support younger boarders. This helps to ensure bullying is seen as unacceptable throughout the school.
32. Older pupils are appointed to act as peer mentors for younger children, fostering responsibility and leadership skills. In boarding, house staff create 'house families' so that older students can take on pastoral leadership roles with younger pupils. A thoughtful and inclusive programme of boarding activities, shaped by pupils' views, fosters an atmosphere of mutual respect where kindness is encouraged.
33. Leaders encourage pupils to participate in the wide-ranging opportunities to play sport and enjoy physical activity. This contributes to pupils being healthy and happy. Pupils' commitment to practices and matches is commendable. Pupils actively engage in lunchtime activities, including dance, orchestra and singing. The clubs, teams and societies help pupils to develop their confidence and self-esteem effectively.
34. The school has a Christian chaplain and a chapel. The chapel gives space to all pupils for reflection about the non-material aspects of life. This helps pupils to develop a spiritual understanding. For example, during a chapel assembly, a talk on the theme of angels gave encouragement to pupils to offer friendship, kindness and support to their peers.
35. The management of systems to keep pupils safe from harm on the school site is robust. Senior leaders rigorously monitor maintenance programmes, which are well resourced and well established. Staff are trained, appropriately qualified and know where their responsibilities lie. Governors provide effective support and oversight regarding maintenance and health and safety.

36. The school's classrooms and facilities are well resourced, effectively maintained and well looked after. They offer secure, clean environments for learning. The provision of high-quality meals, featuring an array of dietary choices, caters to pupils' wants and needs.
37. First aid systems are appropriate and effective, and associated records are detailed and thorough. The medical centre provides suitable care for unwell or injured pupils as well as administering medicines, when needed. This ensures that the needs of pupils are met, including for those with complex medical needs. Admissions and attendance registers are thorough and well kept. Pupils are appropriately supervised at all times. Fire safety systems are robust and updated regularly.

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

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

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

39. Pupils understand the importance of global citizenship. They provide opportunities for pupils to recognise and celebrate pupils' diverse cultural backgrounds. This creates an environment where pupils exhibit high levels of confidence in sharing their differing views, engaging actively in discussions.
40. Pupils embrace diversity and participate in various societies that promote equality and inclusivity such as the Asian Student Alliance, Afro-Caribbean Society, Gay Straight Alliance and LGBTQ+ groups. For example, the pupil-led Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Society recently hosted a workshop exploring the implications of a lecture on inclusion, identity and intersectionality.
41. The chaplaincy drives moral and social engagement in the Christian tradition whilst embracing all faiths. Pupils are encouraged to embody the school's aim of developing 'kind hearts' by giving generously of their time and creativity to raise money for their chosen charities. The annual Christmas Fair engages pupils in a whole school community event that promotes pupil engagement and participation in a variety of fundraising events across the year groups.
42. In the curriculum and co-curriculum pupils are given the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the social impact of economic policy. At a very well-attended economics and business society meeting, sixth formers engaged enthusiastically in discussing the potential effects of changes to tax, welfare and public service spending policy on the lives of more vulnerable members of society. In computing pupils consider the social impacts of reduced access to the internet for those living in less economically developed countries.
43. The volunteering programme in the sixth form highlights the positive contribution pupils make in their own and the wider community, including when visiting the elderly in local care homes. This supports pupils' personal development and encourages them to take responsibility for supporting others.
44. Leaders have established an effective careers education programme based on the Gatsby Benchmarks. A lecture programme gives pupils an opportunity to hear from a wide range of experts, from a variety of industries, providing greater understanding of wider society and insightful advice to inform and inspire pupils' future choices.
45. The school offers thorough support for university applications. Alumnae are invited back to school to share their experience of university life and this helps older pupils to feel confident in moving on to the next stage in their education.
46. Boarders are progressively given opportunities to develop independence. For example, sixth-form pupils take on increased responsibilities for tasks like laundry and cooking. Activities such as Secret Santa encourage a supportive atmosphere in houses through which mutual support and kindness is encouraged.
47. Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of right and wrong. High standards of behaviour throughout the school demonstrate the mutual respect pupils have for one another and for the ethos of the school.

48. Pupils understand democratic values. Boarders contribute to house decision-making in house councils. Pupils recognise how the available channels to discuss issues and report problems contribute to maintaining a positive school culture.

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

49. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

50. Leaders give safeguarding a high priority and ensure that practices are suitable, thorough and robust. The governing body actively monitors the quality of safeguarding procedures to assure themselves that practice is effective.
51. Safeguarding is effectively managed in collaboration with external agencies where appropriate. Safeguarding records are accurately maintained but, prior to the appointment of the current senior leadership team, information from concerns raised has not systematically informed decision-making and risk management.
52. The recently introduced weekly wellbeing survey has enabled pastoral leaders to begin to identify trends and respond to potential safeguarding issues at an early stage.
53. Both boarding and day pupils know and understand the safeguarding measures in place to protect them. They know how to report safeguarding concerns and are aware how to do so anonymously. They are familiar with the key safeguarding personnel and rightly feel a strong sense of safety in and around the houses, school buildings and grounds.
54. Leaders ensure that all governors, staff and volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding training. Staff know how to report safeguarding concerns. Training is reviewed in the light of contextual risks to safeguarding, for example, a group of staff was recently trained in mental health awareness in response to an identified need.
55. Leaders ensure that pupils are well educated in online safety. Monitoring reports are assessed by the DSL who sends a daily summary to boarding house staff. A robust firewall and filtering system blocks access to inappropriate content and certain social media platforms, promoting a secure online environment.
56. Procedures for the recruitment of new staff are robust and fulfil requirements. A suitable record of pre-appointment checks is maintained.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

57. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Queen Anne's School
Department for Education number	870/6000
Registered charity number	1181022
Address	Queen Anne's School 6 Henley Road Caversham Berkshire RG4 6DX
Website	www.qas.org.uk
Proprietor	The United Westminster Grey Coat Foundation
Chair	Miss Margaret Corbally
Headteacher	Ms Elaine Purves
Age range	11–19
Number of pupils	411
Number of boarding pupils	191
Date of previous inspection	26 to 27 February 2020

Information about the school

58. Queen Anne's School is a boarding and day school for female pupils. The school is affiliated to the Church of England and is part of the United Westminster and Grey Coat Foundation, which maintains oversight of the school's independent governing body. Since the previous inspection a new chair of governors was appointed in September 2021 and a new headteacher in January 2022.
59. There are four boarding houses. Three senior houses are for pupils in Years 10 to 13 and the fourth house is for younger boarders in Years 7 to 9.
60. The school has identified 45 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupil has an education, health and care plan (EHCP).
61. English is an additional language for 128 pupils.
62. The school states that its aims are to educate and enlighten pupils, sparking curiosity through an all-round education. It seeks to guide pupils to enrich the world around them, to find their passion and be a force for good, and to develop kind hearts, fierce minds, and strong spirits.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

28 – 30 November 2023

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

64. 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 head, 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.

65. 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**.

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