

School inspection report

5 to 7 December 2023

Queen Mary's School

Baldersby Park

Thirsk

North Yorkshire

YO7 3BZ

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. Governors and leaders possess the required skills and knowledge to effectively carry out their roles thereby ensuring the active promotion of both physical and mental wellbeing among the pupils. Through the school's guiding motto, 'In order that we may serve', leaders foster an environment where pupils contribute positively to both their school and the local community.
2. Since the previous inspection, there have recently been changes to the leadership team. The newly appointed leadership team has identified areas for development, the implementation of these areas was ongoing. The governors ensure that leaders' policies and procedures address the needs of the pupils.
3. Pupils in the school benefit from a well-planned, balanced, and flexible curriculum. Teachers' planning takes into account the needs of the pupils. Across the school, pupils make good progress from their starting points. They have well developed literacy skills. Leaders have identified a need to develop pupils' independent learning skills further, in order to prepare them for their next stage in education. Whilst these opportunities are in place in many subjects, they are not provided consistently in all areas.
4. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to perform in front of others, enabling pupils to develop high levels of self-confidence and self-awareness. As a result, pupils are articulate and express their views clearly.
5. Through well planned pastoral arrangements, leaders provide effective support for the pupils. Leaders have developed a positive behaviour culture within the school that is underpinned by an effective behaviour policy. Where instances of bullying-related behaviour arise, leaders adhere to procedures and offer suitable support to the pupils involved.
6. Leaders successfully promote mutual respect, celebrating the individuality of each pupil irrespective of their personal characteristics. A well-planned curriculum in personal, social, and health education (PSHE) teaching enables pupils to grasp and contemplate social and economic issues in their surroundings, leading to the pupils having a keen awareness of their social development. Pupils value the numerous opportunities afforded to contribute to the school and the local community. Whilst leaders aim to instil a deeper appreciation of the diversity of modern society, this is not fully developed.
7. Safeguarding procedures within the school operate effectively. Leaders overseeing safeguarding have the required knowledge, understanding and training for their roles. The designated safeguarding governor provides professional challenge to the safeguarding team, ensuring effective scrutiny. Staff members are well-informed about their roles and responsibilities, facilitated by regular training and updates.

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:

- provide consistent opportunities for pupils to develop greater independent learning skills, in line with leaders' planned aims
- ensure pupils gain a deeper understanding of the diverse nature of modern society.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders have established effective policies and procedures that support pupil wellbeing throughout the school. They oversee the integration of the school's fundamental values of hard work, public spirit, good manners, and trustworthiness into many areas of the pupils' learning, in line with the school's Christian ethos. Leaders possess the requisite knowledge and skills to carry out their roles effectively, ensuring the pupils' needs are consistently met.
9. Governors have a suitable range of skills and experience to oversee different aspects of the school. They ensure the core aims of the school are promoted. Governors know the school well through the reports they receive from senior leaders and regular meetings with staff and pupils. Governors offer professional challenge and support to leaders and ensure appropriate standards are maintained. Through their self-evaluation processes, governors produce an effective annual development plan to guide leaders and promote the wellbeing of the pupils.
10. Recent leadership changes have strengthened the pastoral care of pupils. Effective policies are combined with successful collaboration between the members of pastoral leadership team. This ensures robust procedures and a more cohesive approach when dealing with pastoral issues. For example, on the occasions when bullying incidents arise, leaders oversee the management of these incidents and ensure appropriate support is put in place. They maintain suitable records and logs to monitor the effectiveness of their procedures, which are overseen by governors.
11. Through the implementation of a broad curriculum, leaders ensure that teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills. Some recently introduced elements of the curriculum, such as the planned development of independent learning skills and increasing pupils' understanding of a diverse society are not yet embedded.
12. Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have created a new leadership position to promote diversity, inclusion and equality, to ensure there is no discrimination in the implementation of the curriculum and pastoral procedures. The school has a suitable accessibility strategy to meet the needs of pupils and fulfils its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.
13. Effective communication is maintained between the school and parents. There are regular newsletters and information events to keep parents informed. For example, parents are invited to presentations on the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) so that they can support their child's learning when topics are covered. Leaders ensure that parents are kept informed of their child's progress through written reports and face-to-face parent evenings. They oversee the maintenance of an informative website where parents can find information about the policies and procedures of the school.
14. Leaders oversee the effective implementation of the complaints procedure. When parents raise a complaint, leaders follow their published policy ensuring issues are suitably considered, and effective records are maintained. Leaders and governors are reflective around any concerns that arise ensuring that, where necessary, remedial action can be taken.
15. Governors are kept informed of the school's approach to safeguarding through regular detailed reports and attendance at termly meetings. Leaders have developed effective procedures and links with external agencies.

16. Suitable regard is given to potential risks. Leaders ensure that a comprehensive approach to risk management is in place. For example, detailed risk assessments are in place for educational visits which consider the appropriate skills and experience of staff leading trips.
17. Boarders thrive in a positive boarding environment. Leaders put in place suitable procedures to ensure that boarders feel safe and that their wellbeing is promoted. Leaders oversee the effective deployment of boarding staff to ensure suitable supervision is in place, and to offer an extensive programme of boarding activities.
18. Teachers in the early years setting are well supported by senior leaders. They work together to meet children's developmental needs. Children make good progress because staff know them well and provide well planned activities matched to their interests.
- 19. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. Pupils benefit from a well-planned, balanced, and flexible curriculum that enriches their learning opportunities and experiences. The range of subjects taught develops pupils' linguistic, literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders actively monitor the quality of teaching and assess the progress of pupils. There is a comprehensive staff appraisal and quality assurance process which improves the quality of teaching and contributes to an environment where pupils make good progress.
21. Pupils demonstrate secure foundations of knowledge, skills and understanding with their literacy. They employ extensive vocabularies to articulate ideas effectively. Reading is prioritised within the curriculum through dedicated weekly lessons, fostering reading and comprehension skills applicable across all subjects. The well-resourced library serves as a valuable space for pupils to broaden their reading choices and for older pupils to engage in independent study. Boarders have library access during boarding time to support their learning or for quiet study.
22. Leaders identify those pupils in need of additional support as a result of an effective framework to evaluate pupils' work. Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress due to the appropriate support strategies implemented. Teachers know the learning profiles of pupils, and plan to meet their needs. Pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) receive targeted support for this aspect of their learning. As a result, they rapidly develop their fluency in English.
23. Teachers provide pupils with constructive feedback, ensuring that pupils receive guidance on further improvement. Pupils know how they can improve their work, for example by using purple pens to show updated and improved work. Pupils actively participate in target reviews against their learning outcomes, identifying achieved targets and setting new ones.
24. All senior pupils attain grades at GCSE level in line with or above the expectations corresponding to their starting points. Younger pupils also make good progress, and leaders monitor their learning with care. The curriculum is suitably adjusted in light of their findings.
25. Leaders within the early years ensure that effective planning covers the key areas of learning and development for the children. Regularly updated planning by staff considers individual children's needs, and adaptations are made where necessary to support their learning. Staff monitor children's progress, implementing suitable support strategies based on gathered information. Effective questioning in the early years, such as framing questions based on children's abilities in phonics activities, challenges independent thinking and enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress.
26. Teachers facilitate good progress amongst pupils through well-planned lessons which support the individual needs of pupils. Leaders have identified a need for pupils to develop their independent learning skills further, to help them to prepare for their next stage of education beyond school. This approach in lessons is not consistently applied, reducing the opportunities for some pupils to think and learn for themselves.
27. Leaders implement an extensive performing and creative arts programme. Pupils perform confidently during the school's varied drama productions, which are supported by the weekly speech and listening activities. Pupils generally display a high level of musical ability and apply their skills in a wide range of choirs, orchestras, and other musical groups. Pupils' artwork displayed

around the school demonstrates their well-developed artistic skills and understanding of different styles and genres.

28. Leaders' commitment to the development of a wide range of interests and skills in pupils is evident in the extensive range of extra-curricular and recreational activities. The programme includes recreational evening activities for boarders, identifying, developing, and fulfilling their potential while offering leisure-time options.

29. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

30. Through a well-planned approach to pastoral care, leaders actively promote pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. Pupils are aware of a range of adults they can turn to for support. Leaders ensure that each pupil has an individual tutor who oversees their academic and pastoral support, ensuring suitable progress is made. Leaders create a nurturing learning environment with close support from staff. Pupils develop a strong sense of self-confidence and self-esteem. The school's Christian ethos and its focus on the pupils' spirituality permeates through the curriculum and is supported by daily acts of worship and time for reflection. Suitable arrangements are in place to enable pupils to raise any concerns or worries, including access to a school counsellor, an independent listener and supportive boarding staff.
31. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their personal health and sporting skills through an extensive physical education and sports programme, complemented by well-attended extra-curricular activities. Pupils value representing the school, and develop teamwork skills, through regular weekly sports fixtures. Pupils represent the school at local and national levels, particularly in equestrian sports. Pupils develop their sense of adventure through the extensive outdoor activities programme, including overseas educational visits.
32. A well-structured curriculum of thematic PSHE lessons is given prominence within the timetable. This programme, starting in the early years, supports the school's ethos to promote and motivate pupils to act responsibly and respectfully. Teaching in RSE is effective, with age-appropriate content and practical workshops, delivered through visiting speakers and specialist teachers.
33. Staff foster a positive learning environment by promoting relationships between pupils and the staff that demonstrate effective levels of respect. Pupils listen attentively to instructions, and listen patiently to the views of their peers. Relationships between pupils are respectful. Throughout the school, pupils exhibit positive behaviour, in line with the school's behaviour policy. Leaders deal effectively with any bullying issues when they arise and maintain suitable logs and records of the investigations. Staff are effectively deployed to oversee the supervision of pupils, and they know what to do in the event of a missing pupil or boarder.
34. Leaders promote the health and safety of the pupils across the school. The premises and boarding accommodation are well-maintained. Boarders benefit from a well-equipped medical centre when they are unwell, overseen by the school's registered nurse. Staff receive regular first aid training, including paediatric first aid for relevant staff. Precautions are taken to reduce the risk of fire through suitable fire risk management plans. Fire evacuation drills occur each term, and boarders know what to do when the alarm is sounded.
35. Boarding leaders ensure the implementation of suitable procedures to support the wellbeing of boarders. There is a suitable programme of induction for new boarders, including being paired with a 'good neighbour' to offer support during the initial period of their boarding experience. Boarders have various means of contacting parents and carers. Boarding staff ensure that boarders have access to a well-balanced and nutritious menu, supplemented by sufficient evening snacks. Catering staff are aware of the specific dietary needs of boarders through individual health care plans. Boarding accommodation is comfortable, suitably furnished and meets the needs of boarders of different ages.

36. Children in the early years value the importance of receiving house points to promote positive behaviour which is supported by their class rules. Through the school's PSHE curriculum, children in the setting spend time considering the characteristics of being good friends and an appreciation of differences.
37. Attendance and admission registers are properly maintained and the relevant notifications in place when pupils join or transfer to another school.
- 38. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

39. Leaders weave the school's motto 'that we may serve' into the curriculum by providing pupils of all ages valuable opportunities to learn about and contribute to society. Pupils develop their social and economic understanding through thoughtfully planned lessons. Pupils grasp the significance of the decisions they make, recognising that these choices can shape the world around them. They understand the value of money and how to manage their financial affairs.
40. As a result of the effective pastoral support pupils receive, they understand the difference between right and wrong and understand the need to have rules within their community and wider society. Pupils listen to the opinions of others and respect those who come from different cultures. Staff have established a club which is overseen by a prefect that highlights the importance of diversity and inclusion within the school community.
41. Leaders have gained external recognition for the school's approach to supporting refugees through the School of Sanctuary award. Pupils' understanding is promoted through insightful assemblies and close support for pupils who have experienced leaving their own country during times of conflict. Leaders recognise that pupils' understanding of the diverse nature of modern society can be limited. Whilst efforts are made to foster an appreciation and understanding of communities beyond the school, for example through educational visits, the outcomes of these approaches in deepening pupils' understanding are not fully embedded.
42. Regular assemblies and tutor time discussions reinforce British values including democracy and the rule of law. Themed events, such as the 'Awesome Day', emphasise the values of respecting individuality and embracing diversity. Weekly acts of worship provide pupils across the school with an opportunity to reflect on their day and consider the needs of others in their community. Pupils understand the importance of helping others through the implementation of activities such as the Archbishop of York Youth Leaders' award and Sunflower Club. These give pupils a clear focus on supporting the school's aim of serving others, which they do through undertaking activities such as local litter picks, supporting food banks, and running tea parties for local care homes.
43. Teachers deliver PSHE lessons which focus on 'living in the wider world,' which encourages pupils to exhibit openness to understanding and appreciating differing viewpoints. As a result, pupils develop effective communication skills, expressing their views on political issues while respecting opposing perspectives. They understand that ethical and economic choices may not always be aligned.
44. Staff ensure that pupils can develop leadership skills and contribute effectively to positive change through applying for positions within the school and charity councils. Through their roles on the different councils, they develop their sense of social responsibility. Leaders implement an effective leadership programme for older pupils. They benefit from the opportunities to impact the school's running through senior pupil roles where they apply through a formal interview process. Senior boarders take on roles of responsibility within the boarding house to support junior boarders.
45. An effective careers programme ensures that pupils are well-prepared for the next steps in their education. Leaders utilise the experience of professional people to talk about their jobs and the training required through an annual careers fair. There is an informative programme of visiting

speakers to prepare the pupils about their future life in British society and provide the skills or training they may require.

46. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

47. The school's safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective in promoting the wellbeing of the pupils. Those leaders responsible for safeguarding exhibit the requisite knowledge, skills, and training to fulfil their roles effectively.
48. Staff demonstrate a secure understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures and current guidance through regular training and updates. Boarding staff receive appropriate training. Leaders ensure well-understood policies guide staff in the required areas such as raising a concern, recognising child-on-child abuse and understanding the dangers of extremism.
49. Safeguarding leaders collaborate effectively with external agencies, seeking advice and support when issues arise, including the local authority designated officer (LADO). They make referrals when required and maintain comprehensive safeguarding records.
50. Leaders overseeing safer recruitment ensure that there is an effective procedure in place. Staff have a clear understanding of requisite recruitment checks and undergo suitable training for safer recruitment. An accurate record of recruitment checks is maintained, supported by detailed evidence in staff files.
51. There is an effective internet filtering and monitoring system. Through dedicated PSHE and ICT lessons, pupils gain a clear understanding of online safety and the importance of safeguarding personal information. Pupils know how to report and respond to an issue they face online.
52. Leaders in boarding actively promote the wellbeing of the boarders through clear and effective routines.
- 53. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Queen Mary's School
Department for Education number	815/6000
Registered charity number	1098410
Address	Baldersby Park Thirsk North Yorkshire YO7 3BZ
Phone number	01845 575000
Email address	admin@queenmarys.org
Website	queenmarys.org
Proprietor	The Woodard Corporation
Chair	Mr Thomas Fielden
Headteacher	Mrs Carole Cameron
Age range	3 to 16
Number of pupils	235
Number of boarding pupils	52
Date of previous inspection	29 January 2020

Information about the school

54. Queen Mary's School is a boarding school for female pupils, with a co-educational early years setting, located in Thirsk, North Yorkshire. The school consists of a senior school and a prep school, and a co-educational pre-prep, including the early years setting. The school is a charitable trust owned by the Woodard Corporation, which appoints a board of trustees to act as governors of the school.
55. Boarding is offered for pupils from the age of 8. Boarders are accommodated in one house contained within the main building across one floor.
56. There are seven children in the early years comprising one Reception class.
57. The school has identified 29 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Eight pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
58. English is an additional language for four pupils.
59. The school states its aims are for pupils to strive for excellence, love life and enjoy learning, nurture spirituality and personal growth, respect individuality and embrace diversity, enhance character, and build resilience, create independence, and make strong and lasting friendships.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

5 to 7 December 2023

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

61. 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 the boarding house accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

62. 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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