

Erskine Stewart's Melville Schools School Care Accommodation Service

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Edinburgh
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Inspection completed on: 2 November 2016

Service provided by:
The Merchant Company Education
Board

Service provider number:
SP2003003566

Care service number:
CS2005110868

About the service

The boarding facilities at Erskine Stewart Melville Schools are situated on Queensferry Road, near the centre of Edinburgh. The houses are on the school campus and close to each other. Erskine House accommodates up to 28 female boarders and Dean Park House is registered for 32 male boarders. Pupils share dining facilities for main meals and a senior pupils' common room. Their website contains the following information:

"The boarding houses benefit from continual investment and a commitment to providing a nourishing, homely environment for the children.

Both Dean Park House and Erskine House accommodate children in spacious dorms of no more than 5 children per room, with most S5 and Sixth Form children benefitting from sharing with just one other or having their own study bedroom. Children use their own personal large pin boards to make their space their own and are free to use the communal areas which include a television room, air hockey, pool and football tables as well as a computer room with internet as they wish. Music practice rooms are also available for the children to use.

As with any home, however, the kitchen is usually a hive of activity with the children preparing snacks, and chatting with one another and the Boarding House staff. ESMS Boarders have automatic membership to our Sports Centres, which include AstroTurf pitches, a 25m swimming pool and tennis, badminton and basketball courts. Boys and girls aged 16 and over can also use our state-of-the-art fitness suite. The boarding houses are maintained regularly and refurbished each summer holiday".

What people told us

Pupils we spoke with were relaxed and comfortable in the boarding environment and spoke very positively about their experiences.

They consistently told us that they felt safe and comfortable in the boarding houses and across the school campus. They described a wide range of different activities which they could access and which they enjoyed. There were trips and events at weekends, many of which were suggested by the pupils themselves.

Pupils told us that they could always access staff if they needed to and that there were adults who they trusted and who they could confide in when this was necessary. They consistently told us that there were always staff available in the boarding houses and that advice, information or support was freely provided by staff who knew them.

While some pupils suggested that the quality of the boarding house wifi was sometimes limited, most pupils were happy that they could keep in contact with family and friends which they appreciated.

We heard that there were a variety of ways that pupils could be consulted about the running of the boarding houses. There were various house meetings and house committees to discuss activities, rules, meals and daily routines. There were also questionnaires and surveys used when needed and when changes were thought to be required. We saw that pupils and staff had a lot of informal interaction and conversations where comments and suggestions were made and pupils told us that they were confident that their views were listened to and acted upon by boarding staff.

There were very few negative comments. Some pupils had been annoyed when their personal possessions had been moved during cleaning or tidying but this had been easily resolved. It was mentioned that the use of a bell to summon pupils in Erskine House felt a bit intrusive and against the homely atmosphere of the house.

Overall, most pupils' comments were very positive indeed.

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:

Quality of care and support	6 - Excellent
Quality of environment	6 - Excellent
Quality of staffing	not assessed
Quality of management and leadership	not assessed

What the service does well

The quality of care and support for pupils who used this service was excellent. It was based on the positive relationships between those who lived and worked there and was underpinned by clear structures, routines and boundaries. The leadership provided by the housemistress and housemaster and the shared commitment of a skilled and experienced group of staff across both boarding houses ensured very positive experiences for boarding pupils.

The young people who lived in Erskine House and Dean Park House experienced a nurturing caring environment which respected them as individuals and helped them build confidence both in the boarding houses and in the wider school community. Pupils we spoke to described very comfortable boarding houses which, they told us, fully met their needs.

The staff we consulted with spoke positively of the young people living there and we consistently heard about their aspirations for them. Pupils referred to the encouragement that staff gave them and we found that this was displayed in the confidence that young people had in their own abilities and the ambitions they had for themselves. Staff had developed very positive relationships with the pupils and used them to influence, support and engage with the young people in the boarding environment. We saw this in the development of shared interests with staff, the support provided for academic work and the supportive counsel offered to young people on a day to day basis.

Where individual pupils required specific types of support due to identified and assessed needs, this was seen to be planned and discussed with the pupil, their parents and relevant staff. A support plan was drawn up when a concern had been identified and this was overseen by relevant senior staff. Those involved in day to day life in the boarding houses were able to describe specific care needs of individual pupils and how these could best be met. We saw excellent evidence of supportive conversations carried out by staff in discreet situations which maintained the principles of privacy and dignity for the pupils.

The school had developed its systems for gathering, storing and sharing information about pupils. This enabled staff to provide observations and comments about individual pupils which were used to inform the provision of planned care and support. The use of the system had enhanced the care provided across the whole school and ensured that all staff had easy access to information that was relevant to their role and responsibilities. We saw

excellent evidence that staff from across the whole school including boarding, academic and medical staff could share and access information about pupils as needed.

A program was in place to routinely improve and develop the quality of the boarding environment. We heard from pupils that they had a very positive combination of comfortable private spaces and sociable inclusive communal areas. Bedrooms were personalised to suit the needs and tastes of those who lived in them and all had easy and close access to showers and toilets. We were told by pupils about the recently improved shower areas which they appreciated.

In Erskine House, the kitchen was the hub of the house and the centre for daily life. In Dean Park House, the development of the senior pupils' common room for both boys and girls was consistently spoken of with pride by both pupils and staff. The change of use of other rooms in Dean Park House so that none were used as classrooms was an improvement since the last inspection. Facilities staff told us that developments were planned so that pupils returning from holiday periods would be provided with something new that would prompt them to say 'wow'. Pupils confirmed that this was frequently the case.

In the 2016/17 inspecting year the Care Inspectorate is scoping child sexual exploitation (CSE) practice in children and young people's services. This is part of our contribution to 'Scotland's National Action Plan to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation' and focusses on frameworks of CSE practice, staff understanding and care planning outcomes.

The service's child protection policy makes reference to CSE. Staff members spoken with were confident in regard to identifying the risk and vulnerability indicators of CSE and evidenced a clear understanding of the actions required of them in order to protect pupils from potential or further harm. There was clear evidence of staff effectively implementing risk assessment processes to protect pupils in their care.

What the service could do better

We did not identify specific areas of care or parts of the boarding environment which required improvement action. Staff we spoke with from all parts of the management structure, including board members, were keen to maintain an ethos of development and improvement and we would commend this.

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.

Inspection and grading history

Date	Type	Gradings	
4 Mar 2014	Unannounced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	5 - Very good
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	6 - Excellent
18 Jan 2011	Unannounced	Care and support	6 - Excellent
		Environment	Not assessed
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	Not assessed
4 Mar 2009	Unannounced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	5 - Very good
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good
9 Oct 2008	Announced	Care and support	5 - Very good
		Environment	5 - Very good
		Staffing	5 - Very good
		Management and leadership	5 - Very good

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