

# Fettes College School Care Accommodation Service

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
25 September 2025

**Service provided by:**  
Fettes College Limited

**Service provider number:**  
SP2022000157

**Service no:**  
CS2022000225

## About the service

Fettes College is a school care accommodation service forming part of an independent, co-educational school with boarding places for up to 543 children and young people aged from seven to 18. It has a total of 11 boarding houses: two for junior pupils up to 13; eight for senior school pupils up to 17; and one for upper sixth students. Craigleith, the upper sixth house, provides en suite, mainly single bedrooms. The other houses have mainly shared bedrooms. The school is situated on a large campus close to the centre of Edinburgh. It has a range of facilities for pupils, including a dining hall, chapel, medical centre, indoor and outdoor sports courts and pitches, gym, swimming pool, rifle range, theatre and concert hall.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 16, 17, 18, 23, 24 and 25 September 2025. Five inspectors from the Care Inspectorate were present in the service at various times over the course of the inspection from approximately 07:30 to 20:00. 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 survey responses from 433 pupils (it should be noted that some of these were from day pupils), 68 parents and carers and 99 staff
- spoke with 137 children and young people
- spoke with 36 staff in a wide range of roles, members of the leadership team and two board members
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Preventing harm to children and young people was a high priority for the service. Staff and managers were proactive in identifying and monitoring risk, and there was a wide range of inputs for promoting safety, diversity and inclusion.
- Pupils benefitted from positive, compassionate and trusting relationships with the adults responsible for their care. This provided a foundation for them to thrive and make the most of their time at Fettes.
- The service had a comprehensive and well-managed framework for identifying and supporting students with a range of additional needs.
- There was impressive support to maximise young people's health and wellbeing. Pupils also enjoyed an extensive range of stimulating interests and activities to make the most of their time at the school.
- Leadership of the service was strong and effective and provided clear direction. This contributed to the positive outcomes evident during the inspection.
- Evaluation and quality assurance processes were making a difference and having a positive impact on young people's experiences at Fettes. The service was very well placed to continue building on and maximising performance.

## 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

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 applies to performance that demonstrates major strengths in supporting positive outcomes for children and young people and does not require significant adjustment.

Pupils felt safe at Fettes and had adults to turn to during difficult times. Staff knew them well, kept a close eye on them and were proactive in addressing concerns. This included effective support to manage conflict, action to respond to and challenge bullying, which young people did not feel was prevalent in the service, and impressive initiatives for promoting a protective, respectful culture. The service had strengthened risk management processes since the last inspection. However, there was scope for improving the quality of recording in this key area, to ensure explicit documentation of assessment and decision-making. The service should also more consistently follow national and Care Inspectorate guidance for external reporting and notification of protection concerns.

Children and young people enjoyed warm, trusting and nurturing relationships with those caring for them throughout their journey through the boarding environment. These relationships were built on compassion, fun and an interest in their wellbeing. A range of impressive initiatives fostered a strong sense of community, belonging and inclusion within and across year groups, houses and the school.

Pupils benefitted from stable, therapeutic care, supported by boarding and pastoral staff with a wide range of skills and experience. Since the last inspection, the service had taken constructive steps to develop and enhance the quality of planning systems and related documentation. These were reflective of and responsive to young people's changing needs. They would now benefit from more consistent, specific and measurable goal setting and clearer strategies to maximise their potential for achieving the best outcomes.

The quality of the boarding environment and resources available for young people reflected the service's vision and values overall. Some houses would benefit from upgrading and more homely touches, however improvement plans demonstrated a commitment to ongoing development.

There was a very high level of engagement by young people in all aspects of their care and support. The many opportunities to express their views, make suggestions and participate in decision-making helped ensure their experience of boarding at Fettes reflected their preferences. They were confidently able to approach both senior and other staff with responsibility for pastoral, health and education matters. They felt that in most instances they were consulted, listened to, and their views acted on. Young people described most rules as fair, and consequences proportionate.

Pupils received extensive, high-quality support to maximise their physical and emotional health and wellbeing. This was further enhanced by the in-house medical team, who also played a key role in staff learning and development, and access to a range of specialist therapeutic services, as well as external support where appropriate. Management of medication would benefit from some adjustments in line with good practice. A new health and wellbeing centre was an exciting development and one which has the potential for improving the students experience even further.

Young people had a highly impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities for staying active, developing new interests, learning new skills and taking part in the community: 'Everything you can imagine, you can do here'. They benefitted from individually tailored support to engage in and maximise learning. Staff celebrated their achievements and special occasions. The 'whole school' approach provided comprehensive, wraparound support.

Strong, visible and confident leadership reflected the service's vision and values and provided a clear sense of direction for pupils and staff. This had a very positive impact on service delivery and young people's experiences and outcomes. A diverse and experienced board of governors had continued to strengthen links with boarding houses and made an invaluable contribution to high quality care and safeguarding. They provided an appropriate level of 'external' oversight and challenge for managers, though this could be further reinforced by improved communication in relation to protection incidents.

Assessment of staffing arrangements outlined deployment in each of the houses. Whilst some had additional information relating to individual student needs, many were generalised and would benefit from more house-specific detail. Management of staffing generally worked well but a more formal and transparent system is advisable: consideration of how to achieve this was underway. Ensuring that all pupils are aware of staffing arrangements in their house would also be a positive next step and provide additional reassurance.

The service had developed and implemented a framework consisting of a tiered approach to supporting and monitoring young people. Systems for identifying and sharing early indicators of risk were very effective overall. A team of committed, experienced senior staff had responsibility for facilitating prompt and responsive action to concerns. Appropriate verbal escalation of risk should now be supported by improved documentation, as detailed earlier in this report.

Safe recruitment practices meant that the service appointed only those staff who were suitable to work in the setting. A few houses had experienced higher staff turnover than others. However, whilst stability of staffing is desirable for continuity of relationships and consistency of care, this had not had a significant negative impact. There was a culture of learning in the service, and access to relevant training opportunities and continuous professional development underpinned the provision of high-quality care. Most staff felt well supported, though the service should review staff induction and supervision processes and systems. This would support greater consistency across the houses, clarify roles and responsibilities, identify workload pressures and strengthen the staff support and development framework.

Quality assurance and evaluation processes provided a sound framework for identifying what was working well. These supported targeted efforts, in the form of an aspirational service improvement plan, to support ongoing improvement in service delivery and positive outcomes and experiences for young people. Clear complaints processes, reviews of key policies in line with best practice, house improvement plans and proactive contact with parents formed part of a range of other improvement efforts. We concluded that the service was well placed to continue strengthening evaluation in specific areas to maximise consistency of performance: we have identified these earlier in this report.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

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
7.2 Leaders and staff have the capacity and resources to meet and champion children and young people's needs and rights	5 - Very Good

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