



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

HEATHFIELD SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Heathfield School

Full Name of School	Heathfield School
DfE Number	867/6000
Registered Charity Number	309086
Address	Heathfield School London Road Ascot Berkshire SL5 8BQ
Telephone Number	01344 898341
Fax Number	01344 890689
Email Address	jheywood@heathfieldschool.net
Head	Mrs Joanne Heywood
Chair of Governors	Mr Steven Bishop
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	189
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 0
Number of Boarders	Total: 189 Full: 189 Weekly: 0
Inspection Dates	10 Feb 2015 to 12 Feb 2015

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing primarily on compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (NMS). The inspection occurs over a period of two and a half continuous days in the school.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, as amended. This inspection focuses on the school's compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgement.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors conducted formal interviews with boarders, held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended registration sessions. Inspectors visited each of the boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and boarding pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Maureen Bradley

Mrs Sarah Godfrey

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding
(Assistant Head Pastoral, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Heathfield School is a boarding independent school for girls aged 11 to 18, located in Ascot, Berkshire. It was founded in 1899 by Eleanor Beatrice Wyatt, who had previously established a co-educational school in London before deciding to focus on 'educating young ladies for a life of service to others'. In 2006 Heathfield merged with St Mary's Wantage, incorporating St Mary's into the Ascot site. St Mary's was founded in 1873 and was run by the sisters of the Community of St Mary the Virgin.
- 1.2 Heathfield and St Mary's had almost identical values, and the school continues to be based on Church of England foundations, seeking to guide pupils to live their lives with a strong moral and spiritual code, and to respect and help others. The school's vision is for staff, pupils and parents to work together to maintain and develop a successful and happy learning community that allows pupils to realise their full potential and be able to make a contribution to the world with their skills and talents. The school is administered by a governing body, with new leadership since the previous inspection.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 189 pupils in the school, all of whom were full boarders. Pupils come from a range of professional and cultural backgrounds, predominantly from Britain and about one fifth from across the world. The school has identified 28 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and 18 of these receive specialist learning support. There are 41 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and 22 pupils are given support by the school to improve their English.
- 1.4 Boarders are accommodated in year groups in the main school building, called Main House, and in Year 13 they move into a separate house known as The Bungalow. A new building for science, technology, engineering and mathematics was nearing completion at the time of this inspection.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
First Year	Year 7
Second Year	Year 8
Third Year	Year 9
Fourth Year	Year 10
Fifth Year	Year 11
Lower Sixth Year	Year 12
Upper Sixth Year	Year 13

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.1 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that a suitable range of times is provided for the younger boarders to contact home during the week.
2. Ensure that boarders in Years 7 to 9 have the opportunity to have a snack and a drink in the evening.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI in March 2012. No recommendations were made in relation to boarding welfare provision.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

3.(a) Boarding provision and care

- 3.1 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 An appropriate process of induction is in place for new pupils. Before joining the school they receive a useful welcome handbook about boarding and Year 7 start the term after other pupils so that attention can be focused on their individual needs. The introduction to boarding includes an opportunity for pupils to enjoy a sleepover in the boarding house and a tea party, which helps to build friendships. A small minority of pupils reported in response to the questionnaire that they did not think there is a member of staff to whom they could turn with a concern or for advice. During interviews, however, they said that there is a wide range of staff from whom they felt they could seek help. Contact details are displayed for various helplines, including the Children's Commissioner, the school counsellor and an independent listener. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school has an effective system to provide healthcare for the pupils. The well-equipped health centre offers comfortable facilities for sick or injured pupils. It is managed by qualified nursing staff and provides 24-hour care. Suitable policies and procedures give staff guidance, but all medical care, including the distribution of medicines, is administered by the medical staff. Medicines are securely stored in the medical centre and are only kept in the boarding houses if older boarders have been assessed as responsible to self-medicate. Boarders' detailed medical records are kept secure, and those with chronic conditions have suitable care plans that are regularly monitored. The school doctor visits regularly and appointments with other specialist medical services are made locally if required. Regular and effective communication is maintained between the nurses and boarding staff, and the confidentiality of pupils is respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Pupils can contact their families during the week and at weekends through the use of house telephones, personal mobile telephones and the internet. During the inspection, many of the younger boarders said they did not find it easy to contact their families and friends. The inspection found that pupils in Year 7 have limited times when they can contact their families during the week because of the school policy on the use of mobile telephones and the school's efforts to guard against homesickness. The school has a suitable 'e-safety' policy, although this restricts the use of the internet for pupils in Years 7 to 9. New arrangements offering more flexibility have recently been introduced for pupils to contact their parents through the safe use of computer technology. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 The majority of pupils are accommodated in the comfortable and appropriately furnished Main House. Year 13 pupils live in a well-equipped separate bungalow, designed to help them gain independence before their move to university, and have comfortable single-study bedrooms with en-suite facilities. Pupils in Main House live in year group arrangements to encourage friendships, and Year 12 rooms are strategically placed close to each year group to help with support and guidance. Pupils can personalise their rooms, and all accommodation is well maintained and clean, with suitable lighting and appropriate heating and ventilation. Social areas are well equipped for relaxation and leisure pursuits, and older pupils have kitchens within their common rooms to enjoy snacks and drinks. Pupils have access to the majority of school classrooms for study purposes, alongside the library and computer facilities. Toilets, showers and bathrooms are clean and appropriate in number, and offer suitable privacy. The boarding house accommodation is for the

sole use of the pupils during term time and no unauthorised access is permitted. Security arrangements do not intrude unreasonably on the pupils' privacy. [NMS 5]

- 3.6 Meals served in the central dining hall are of suitable quality, quantity and variety, and appropriate to various dietary or religious needs. Many pupils reported a lack of satisfaction with the food. During interviews they indicated that they would like more green vegetables and fresh fruit. Inspectors found that fresh fruit is available, but not in sufficient quantity to supply all pupils, and that green vegetables are limited, although salad is always available. Pupils' opinions on food are represented on a food committee and various changes have been made in response to their views. At the time of the inspection, the school was reviewing the catering provision, with the intention of addressing the boarders' concerns. All kitchens are well equipped, clean and hygienic. Drinks and drinking water are available in the common rooms and the dining hall. Pupils in Year 13 enjoy the opportunity to prepare their own breakfast and supper in their accommodation. Years 10 to 12 are given provisions with which to make snacks in their kitchens. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 reported in interviews that similar supplies are not available to them, and would like the opportunity to have an evening snack and drink. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Pupils' possessions can be kept safe in their rooms and in lockers in their common rooms. A few pupils reported in response to the questionnaire that their belongings are not safe. No evidence was found to support this view. Inspectors found that any valuable items and money can be stored securely with house staff, and suitable arrangements are provided for the recording and distribution of pocket money. In Years 7 to 12, the laundry service is quick and efficient, ensuring that pupils receive their own clothes. In Year 13, pupils do their own laundry in the sixth-form bungalow. Pupils can purchase toiletries from the school surgery and junior boarders may discuss stationery requirements with their housemistress. Older pupils can shop locally during the week and at weekends, and younger pupils take advantage of occasional shopping trips when organised for them at weekends. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 A wide range of well-organised activities is offered to pupils during the week and at weekends which suits the pupils' interests. The school has extensive grounds, sports facilities and recreational areas for pupils to play and relax, and there are many areas, including the chapel, where pupils can safely be alone if they wish. A small number of pupils reported that they do not feel that there is an effective balance between activities and free time in the evenings and at weekends. The inspection found that older pupils have sufficient free time in the evenings but that those in Years 7 and 8 have a limited break between prep and bedtime, although no unusual or especially onerous demands are made on them. Newspapers and television allow pupils to remain in touch with current affairs and the school provides a range of appropriate trips at weekends. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 Health and safety procedures are efficiently managed, well documented and frequently evaluated by a health and safety committee. There is a suitable risk assessment policy, and appropriate measures are taken to evaluate risk across the site; any weaknesses are highlighted and quickly resolved. High standards of maintenance provide a safe and healthy environment, and pupils who responded to the questionnaire and those interviewed said that they feel safe in school. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Fire safety is carefully managed, and equipment tested and maintained appropriately. Fire risk assessments are suitably recorded and no significant recommendations from the fire service remain outstanding. Evacuation practices are conducted each term and appropriately recorded. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The school has thorough arrangements to safeguard the welfare of the pupils. The school policy on safeguarding and child protection is in line with the local safeguarding children board and is fully implemented. Minutes show that it is reviewed annually by the governors. Appropriate child protection training is undertaken by staff and governors, and new staff receive induction training in this area. Records are kept secure and care is given to ensuring confidentiality. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school has recently reviewed its behaviour policy, in consultation with both staff and pupils. Many pupils reported that rewards and sanctions are not always fair, although they are clearly defined within boarding provision and understood by themselves and by staff. Inspectors' scrutiny of documentation shows that appropriate sanctions have been applied consistently and fairly within boarding. At the time of the inspection, the school was in the process of resolving any inconsistencies in this regard in the classroom, through the implementation of the new behaviour policy. Measures to guard against bullying are clear, and pupils reported that this is rare and staff and pupils are very supportive if any unkindness is detected. Documentary evidence showed that any incidents that could be considered to constitute bullying were dealt with according to the school's policy and procedures. Incidents of poor behaviour are suitably recorded and monitored, and staff are aware of the correct procedures for using restraint and for searching pupils and their possessions. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school operates rigorous recruitment procedures for the appointment of staff, governors and volunteers, and the central register of appointments is carefully maintained. Appropriate checks are carried out for other adults who live on the school site and suitable arrangements are organised for visitors. The school does not appoint guardians for boarders from overseas. [NMS14]

3.(c) Leadership and management of the boarding provision

- 3.15 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The principles for boarding are displayed on house notice boards and in school handbooks, which reflect the school's vision for the boarding community. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Leadership and management of boarding practice are clear. The senior leadership team and housemistresses are suitably qualified and experienced for their responsibilities, and efficient communication amongst staff ensures that pupils' academic work and welfare are carefully managed. The required records and

- documents for each house are kept secure and are maintained appropriately. Governors maintain suitable oversight of boarding development. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Staff have access to training opportunities and an annual appraisal encourages professional development. Job descriptions clearly define roles and responsibilities, and duty rotas are displayed for the pupils. Suitably experienced and qualified staff supervise pupils throughout the day and evening, and a number of staff are resident and accessible overnight. Registration of pupils is frequent throughout the day and evening, and staff know what to do if a pupil were to go missing. Resident staff have suitable accommodation to which no inappropriate access is allowed, and the roles of other adults resident in staff households are clear. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Pupils report that they are all treated equally in relation to their different faiths, backgrounds and needs. Those with SEND or EAL are well supported in an efficiently managed and well-resourced centre. The school is sensitive to the needs of those from overseas. A few pupils reported in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire that they do not think teachers show concern for them as a person. This was not evident during the inspection. In interviews, pupils expressed appreciation for the pastoral care they receive. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 A minority of pupils reported in pre-inspection questionnaire responses that the school does not seek their views or respond to them. The inspection found that pupils have many opportunities to express their concerns and receive feedback. Suggestions from the school council and food committees have led to improvements in accommodation and additions to menus. The senior leadership team encourages pupils to talk by means of an 'open door' policy, which is well used, and breakfast meetings are held with groups of pupils. A number of surveys and questionnaires have also sought pupils' views, which have been acted upon. Pupils reported that they often speak informally with house staff and many of their concerns have been resolved. A small number of boarders' concerns, such as those connected to the use of mobile telephones, have not been resolved due to the school policy. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 A clear complaints procedure is available for all parents. Records show that formal complaints are rare, and most concerns are handled quickly and in line with the school's published procedures. Positive comments in questionnaire responses from parents show high levels of satisfaction with almost all aspects of school life, including how happy and safe their children feel at school and how well looked after they are within the boarding provision. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 The head girl team and school prefects play a supportive role in the boarding environment and undergo an induction process that includes child protection training. They are not permitted to give sanctions but are able to recommend rewards. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for any of the pupils. [NMS20]