



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Regulatory Compliance Inspection Report
For Schools with Residential Provision**

West Buckland School

May 2023

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School's Details

School College	West Buckland School			
DfE number	878/6032			
Registered charity number	306710			
Address	West Buckland School West Buckland Devon EX32 0SX			
Telephone number	01598 760000			
Email address	enquiries@westbuckland.com			
Headmaster	Mr Phillip Stapleton			
Chair of governors	Mr Andrew Boggis			
Proprietor	West Buckland School			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	665			
	Day pupils	530	Boarders	135
	EYFS	13	Prep	138
	Seniors	348	Sixth Form	166
Inspection dates	17 to 18 May 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 West Buckland School is a co-educational independent day and boarding school situated in rural North Devon. It was founded in 1858 as a boys' boarding school on the present site and is now fully co-educational. The school has four sections: the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the prep school for pupils in Years 1 to 6, the senior school for pupils in Years 7 to 11 and the sixth form.
- 1.2 The school has three boarding houses: a co-educational sixth-form house and two boarding houses for male and female pupils aged between eleven and sixteen years. The school is a registered charity managed by trustees who form the governing body. Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed in December 2020. The new headmistress of the prep school took up her post in April 2023.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school sets out to provide a forward-thinking education, consisting of personalised development, innovative experiences and excellent learning. It strives to help all students to be the best they can be, offering equal rights and opportunities, whilst respecting different strengths, abilities and interests.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Day pupils come from a range of professional and other family backgrounds. Boarders come from the UK and a number of countries overseas. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils in the senior school is above average, and that of pupils in the sixth form is broadly average. The school has identified 119 pupils as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), mainly dyslexia and dyspraxia, all of whom receive support. There are four pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language for 50 pupils who are supported according to their level of need. There are 99 pupils on the more able register and the curriculum is appropriately modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the National Minimum Standards for Boarding ('boarding NMS'), where applicable. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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 specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school does not meet all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 In the senior school, the school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2021 to 2022 confirm that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place. Boarders have access to a suitable programme of activities.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Boarders are supported to develop good relationships with fellow pupils and staff which are based on mutual trust and respect. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 13, 17 and 21 are met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.11 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils in most areas by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance. However, not all recruitment checks have been carried out correctly. The school has not carried out the required prohibition checks on all relevant staff prior to them starting work. These were completed during the inspection and no staff were found to be prohibited. The school has not assessed the appropriate supervision required for staff whose original

enhanced criminal record certificate has not been seen prior to them starting work. The school has not ensured that suitable references are always obtained prior to staff starting work.

- 2.12 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9-16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 and NMS 3, 5, 9-12, 15, 16 and 20 are met, but those in paragraph 7 [safeguarding], 8 [safeguarding of boarders] and NMS 8 are not met.**

Action point 1

The school must ensure that checks on prohibition from teaching are carried out on all relevant staff before they take up their role [paragraphs 7(a) and (b); 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.7 and 3.9].

Action Point 2

The school must ensure that, in the case of late acquisition of an enhanced criminal record certificate, appropriate supervision arrangements are in place [paragraphs 7(a) and (b); 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.7 and 3.9].

Action Point 3:

The school must ensure that suitable references are received for all staff before they begin work at the school [paragraphs 7(a) and (b); 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.7 and 3.9].

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.13** The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.14 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 19 and 22 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.15** Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.16 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 4, 7 and 23 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.17** A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of

the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.

2.18 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.19 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.

2.20 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 14 are met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.21 The proprietor has not ensured that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensures that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.

2.22 The oversight of recruitment checks has not been sufficiently rigorous and, because of this, leadership and management are not fulfilling their responsibilities effectively to actively support the wellbeing of pupils at the school.

2.23 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 and NMS 2 are not met.

Action point 4

The school must ensure that leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently and they actively promote the well-being of pupils. In particular, the proprietors must ensure that effective arrangements are implemented for the oversight of recruitment checks [paragraph 34(1)(a)(b) and (c); NMS 2.1, 2.2, 2.4 and 2.5].

3. Inspection Evidence

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor, a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Hilary Wyatt	Reporting inspector
Miss Nisha Kaura	Compliance team inspector (Headteacher, IAPS and HMC school)
Mr Jeffrey Shipway	Team inspector for boarding (Former headteacher, ISA school)