



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ALDENHAM SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Aldenham School

Full Name of School	Aldenham School
DfE Number	919/6003
Registered Charity Number	298140
Address	Aldenham School Elstree Borehamwood Hertfordshire WD6 3AJ
Telephone Number	01923 858122
Fax Number	01923 854410
Email Address	enquiries@aldenham.com
Headmaster	Mr James Fowler
Chair of Governors	Mr Trevor Barton
Age Range	3 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	731
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (503 boys; 228 girls)
Numbers by Age	2-5 (EYFS): 48 5-11: 121 11-18: 562
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 563
Number of Boarders	Total: 168 Full: 36 Flexi: 132
Inspection Dates	22 September 2015 to 24 September 2015

PREFACE

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) 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.

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 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 governor designated as responsible for overseeing boarding, 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 Ruth McFarlane	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Ann Hill	Team Inspector for Boarding (Senior Teacher and Head of Faculty, HMC school)
Mr William Yates	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Aldenham School is set in 120 acres of countryside near Elstree in Hertfordshire. It is a co-educational independent day and boarding school for pupils aged from three to eighteen years. It was founded in 1597 by the Worshipful Company of Brewers. In 1984 it became an educational charity, with a governing body drawn from members of the Company, and other local bodies and individuals. In 2011, it became part of The Aldenham Foundation, which now includes a girls' preparatory school, under a common governance structure.
- 1.2 The school aims to encourage each pupil fully to develop his or her intellectual, physical and cultural talents through appropriately challenging goals. It seeks to emphasise the social, moral and spiritual dimensions of community life in a modern society, and nurture the character and skills with which to meet the challenges of life beyond school. It further sets out to recognise and reward personal and collective achievement. The school aims to forge a partnership with parents and the wider community, and to maintain and develop staff who seek fulfilment through the pupils' progress.
- 1.3 The school comprises a senior school for pupils aged from 11 to 18, which includes the boarding provision, and a prep school for younger pupils which has a pre-prep department for children from the ages of 3 to 5 in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Altogether, there are 731 pupils on roll, of whom 562 are in the senior school. Girls make up about a third of the school. This ratio is reflected in the boarding. There are 168 full and 'flexi' boarders, accommodated in 5 boarding houses: Martineau's, for boys and girls in Years 7 and 8, Paull's for older girls, and Beevor's, Kennedy's and McGill's for older boys. Day pupils are also allocated to one of these houses or to one of the two day houses. In total, 35 boarders come from overseas, including Europe, Africa and Asia. Of the 33 pupils who speak English as an additional language, 27 are boarders, 17 of whom receive support in learning English. There are 125 pupils who have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, including 44 boarders, 20 of whom receive specialist support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- 1.4 Leadership of boarding at the school changed in September 2015, in conjunction with the appointment of the former head of boarding to the new role as principal of the senior school, and the broadening of the role of the headmaster to cover the overall leadership of The Aldenham Foundation.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.1 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Implement the current plans to ensure that facilities in all of the boarding houses are equally well developed.
2. Accelerate implementation of the maintenance plans for boarding as a whole.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI in November 2012. There were no boarding related recommendations.

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 Boarders are satisfied with the induction arrangements. They are guided and informed about the wide range of people that they can turn to for help, including an independent listener, ChildLine and the Children's Commissioner. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 School policies and procedures are implemented effectively in order to meet the care needs of individual boarders who are unwell, promoting their physical and mental health and emotional well-being. Staff understand chronic conditions and disabilities. First aid is appropriately administered and detailed records are kept of medical emergencies. Prescribed and household medications are securely stored and their administration is appropriately controlled. Boarders who become unwell at night have access to qualified nursing staff and stay in segregated accommodation with suitable facilities. Boarders have access to local medical services, dental and other specialists when necessary. They are suitably assessed before being allowed to self-medicate. Their rights to give or withhold consent are also appropriately assessed. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can keep in contact readily with their families and friends in private, using mobile telephones and other electronic means. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 The boarding accommodation affords sufficient individual personalised space, in single and shared rooms. Risk assessments are completed for all accommodation areas, with any findings acted upon. Accommodation is appropriately lit, heated, cleaned and ventilated. Bedding is clean and sufficiently warm. Prompt action is taken, where essential, in order to maintain these standards. Timescales for more general maintenance and refurbishment work are sometimes too protracted. As a result, some furnishings and décor are tired and more extensive refurbishment plans for two of the houses are still to be implemented. Showers and toilets used by boarders are sufficient and private. Any boarders with restricted mobility are catered for on an individual basis. Accommodation for boys and girls, and that for adults, is suitably separated. Boarders' accommodation is used only by them. Use of the school's facilities by the public is organised to ensure the safety of boarders. The security arrangements are not intrusive on boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Nutritious, healthy food of sufficient variety, quality and quantity, and suitable for boarders' dietary needs, is served and prepared centrally in a hygienic environment. A majority of boarders indicated in questionnaire responses that the food is not good. A small minority also expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of snacks outside meal times. Inspection evidence did not support these views. Inspectors found that there are ample basic additional provisions available in the house kitchens for boarders to prepare and consume, in addition to tuck shops. The school is careful to provide, as necessary, appropriate assistance to eat, enabling choice and dignity, for boarders with disabilities. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Boarders' laundry, including bedding, is managed effectively within each house in a system that ensures its return to the correct individual. A few boarders reported in response to the questionnaire that their belongings are not safe. Inspectors found that each boarder has a personal, lockable space, mostly within his or her dormitory, to store personal belongings securely. Boarders can purchase stationery in the school shop and personal items are available from the house staff. [NMS 9]

- 3.8 Boarders take advantage of a varied range of activities on offer to them during the evenings and at weekends. They spoke positively about rehearsals for the production of *The Great Gatsby* that were currently taking place. In questionnaire responses a few boarders indicated dissatisfaction with the balance of free time and activity, and a small minority did not think that teachers set them an appropriate amount of work. On checking timetables and arrangements, inspectors found that a suitable balance is maintained and staff monitor boarders' individual work to prevent overload. Boarders have access to international news and information through readily available newspapers and television news. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 All the parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children are kept safe at school. The safety of boarders is promoted through written policies for risk assessment and health and safety, which are suitably drawn up and implemented. Appropriate risk assessments are reviewed annually, with action plans produced to reduce any identified risks. Accidents, incidents and false fire alarms are monitored by the health and safety committee. Premises, boarding accommodation and facilities are kept safe by the school's estates team and external consultants, so that, as far as practicable, the welfare, health and safety of the boarders are ensured. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school's arrangements to limit the risk of fire reflect current legislation and include regular fire risk assessments, and timely action is taken to address any issues. Evacuations, including some in boarding time, are carried out regularly and detailed records are kept. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The school safeguarding policy meets all the current requirements and it is effectively implemented. The induction for new staff includes all required child protection elements. Training thereafter is at appropriate intervals. The school's safeguarding and child protection records are detailed and show positive links with outside agencies so that appropriate action is taken. The governing body undertakes an annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 There are suitable procedures and written policies promoting good behaviour. These are clearly understood by boarders and staff. The policies include all the required content, including school rules and sanctions, anti-bullying and cyber-bullying measures. A few concerns were raised in questionnaire responses over the school's response to bullying. Boarders confirmed in interviews that bullying is not tolerated and, from the evidence of the school's records on bullying, inspectors found that the few instances of bullying or cyber-bullying are effectively managed. A small minority of boarders also felt that teachers are unfair in the way that they give sanctions and rewards. Inspectors checked records and arrangements, and found no evidence to support this view. Junior boarders are particularly satisfied with the recently introduced 'raffle ticket' system that makes weekly rewards for consistently good behaviour. Staff are clear about the procedures should physical restraint be necessary and those regarding searching boarders or their belongings. The procedures adhere to requirements. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school implements safe recruitment procedures. All the required checks are carried out and entries made on the single central register of appointments. The families of members of staff living on site have written agreements with the school, outlining their responsibilities. All have undergone the required checks. Visitors, maintenance personnel and contractors do not have unsupervised access to

boarding accommodation or boarders. The school does not appoint guardians. [NMS 14]

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

- 3.15 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The school's statement of boarding principles and practice is readily available to all boarders, parents and staff. It reflects boarding life at the school. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The governing body provides effective monitoring and oversight of the leadership, management and delivery of boarding and welfare, and takes appropriate action where necessary. In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, parents were highly supportive of the boarding life of the school. The management of boarding is the responsibility of staff with suitable boarding expertise and experience. Self-evaluation explains accurately how each of the required standards is met. House staff and tutors work in partnership to promote boarders' academic and pastoral development. All parents responding to the questionnaire felt that boarding helps their children's progress and development. All the required records are maintained and monitored, and prompt action is taken to improve, where necessary. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 The boarding houses are appropriately staffed by experienced personnel with suitable job descriptions. There is an induction process for new staff. All staff are appropriately trained, undergo regular reviews of their work and have opportunities for further training. Other adults living on the site have contracts that adequately set out their responsibilities. Supervision of boarders at all times is appropriate and boarders know how to contact staff at night if necessary. All the boarding houses have overnight staff. The knowledge of boarders' whereabouts is assured through regular registration sessions and boarders sign out if they leave the house or have permission to leave the site. Staff know the procedures should a boarder be reported missing. Staff accommodation is suitable and separate from the boarders' facilities. There are appropriate safeguards to ensure no favouritism or inappropriate contacts. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 All boarders are treated equally, regardless of their background. Almost all the parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that the boarders get on well together, and all agreed that their children enjoy boarding. Respect is shown for all religious and cultural backgrounds and dietary needs. Boarders with any particular medical needs have appropriate care plans and are supported to enable them to participate fully in school life. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 The school has suitable ways to seek and act upon boarders' views. A small minority of boarders stated in response to the questionnaire that their opinions are not sought. Inspection evidence did not support this view. Inspectors found that boarders have a number of opportunities to make suggestions or raise concerns, including the school council, boarding committee and dining hall committee. In boarding houses, there are also informal meetings to air suggestions. Boarders can raise any concerns with staff with impunity. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 A suitable complaints procedure is published on the school website. Complaints are appropriately responded to and recorded. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 A very small minority of boarders suggested in questionnaire responses that they do not have the opportunity to take on positions of responsibility. Inspection evidence did not support this view. Boarders are able to take on responsibility in all areas of school life. They have the opportunity in Year 13 to be appointed as prefects, known

as 'Praes'. They have clear job descriptions and training, and contribute to supervision duties. Praes may give out minor sanctions, but only under the authorisation of the housemaster, to ensure that there is no abuse of their role. [NMS 19]

3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for its boarders. [NMS 20].