



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**BRENTWOOD SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE**

**INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Brentwood School

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Full Name of School       | <b>Brentwood School</b>  |
| DfE Number                | <b>881/6035</b>  |
| Registered Charity Number | <b>310864</b>  |
| Address                   | <b>Brentwood School<br/>Middleton Hall Lane<br/>Brentwood<br/>Essex<br/>CM15 8EE</b> |
| Telephone Number          | <b>01277 243243</b>  |
| Fax Number                | <b>01277 243299</b>  |
| Email Address             | <b>headmaster@brentwood.essex.sch.uk</b>   |
| Head                      | <b>Mr Ian Davies</b>   |
| Chairman of Governors     | <b>Mr Colin Finch</b>  |
| Age Range                 | <b>11 to 19</b>  |
| Total Number of Pupils    | <b>1134</b>  |
| Gender of Pupils          | <b>Mixed (639 boys; 495 girls)</b>   |
| Number of Day Pupils      | Total: <b>1069</b>   |
| Number of Boarders        | Total: <b>65</b><br>Full: <b>65</b> Weekly: <b>0</b>                                 |
| Inspection Dates          | <b>26 to 28 January 2016</b>   |

## 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 chairman of governors and another governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and an assembly. 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**

Mr Rodney Fox

Reporting Inspector

Mrs Anne Cox

Team Inspector for Boarding

(Boarding Advisor and Former Houseparent, HMC/GSA school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Brentwood School aims to enable its pupils to emerge as intellectually curious, resilient and enterprising lifelong learners who are able to work effectively with a variety of different people, be socially aware and feel a responsibility for the well-being of other people. The school motto, 'Virtue, Learning and Manners', is taken from the school's statutes of 1622. The principle of academic achievement within a caring Christian ethos remains a cornerstone of the school's philosophy today. The school consists of a preparatory school, catering for pupils to the age of 11, and a senior school for those between 11 and 19. It is an incorporated charitable organisation, whose trustees are the governing body.
- 1.2 Founded in 1557 as a boys' school, Brentwood is now a co-educational day and boarding school, catering for some 1500 pupils from the ages of 3 to 19, occupying a 75-acre site in the town of Brentwood, in the north eastern suburbs of London. The school buildings are a mixture of old and new, reflecting the continuous development that has taken place over the centuries. Boarding education is available in the senior school for boys and girls from the age of eleven, accommodated in two houses on the main school site, one for either gender. Each house has its own detached building, staff and distinctive ethos.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the senior school has built a new academic centre to provide additional teaching spaces, computer suites, and library and tuck shop facilities, including a digital learning hub to support the developing use of tablet computers to assist learning. New pastoral and compliance management roles have been created in order to support house staff and form tutors.
- 1.4 Of the 1134 pupils in the senior school at the time of the inspection, 25 girls and 40 boys boarded. Years 12 and 13 comprise 135 girls and 201 boys. Two pupils had an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified a further 124 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities), mostly mild dyslexia, all of whom receive specialist support. A total of 66 pupils have English as an additional language, 39 of whom receive extra help with their English language skills.
- 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 NC 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 12 |
| Upper Sixth | Year 13 |

## **2. SUMMARY**

### **(i) Compliance with National Minimum Standards**

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. Respond to boarders' concerns about the food.
2. Accelerate the training of staff in their awareness of the risks associated with pupils being drawn into extremism.

### **(iii) Progress since the last inspection**

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was within an integrated inspection undertaken by ISI in January 2013. No recommendations for improvement were made that were relevant to boarding welfare or provision.

### **3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS**

#### **3.(a) Boarding provision and care**

- 3.1 The school meets all the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 All new boarders receive appropriate induction. Younger boarders, who are assigned an older 'buddy', spoke appreciatively of how they had been welcomed. In questionnaire responses and in discussions, boarders of all ages expressed confidence that they know who to approach with concerns. Handbooks and notice boards display contact details for appropriate helplines, including two independent listeners and the Office of the Children's Commissioner. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The required medical policies and protocols are implemented effectively to promote the health and well-being of boarders. These include first aid, dealing with chronic conditions or medical emergencies, and the administration of medicines. The sanatorium amenities provide appropriately for the needs of sick or injured boarders, including the provision of suitable toilet and washing facilities, and an overnight facility. Additionally, each boarding house contains an isolation bedroom with an emergency alarm to summon help. The sanatorium staff are suitably qualified and the doctor visits regularly. Access to local dental, optometric and specialist services is available as necessary. All medication is securely stored and careful records are kept of its administration. Prescribed medicines are only given to the named boarder. Senior boarders may self-medicate after suitable risk assessment. Boarders' rights and confidentiality are appropriately respected, including the right, if deemed competent, to give or withhold consent for treatment. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can readily contact family and friends electronically or by using a landline telephone. They are educated about e-safety and cyber-bullying, and appropriate monitoring and filters are in place to protect boarders from internet abuse, bullying, risk of radicalisation or unsafe practice. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarders' sleeping accommodation is suitable, comfortable and well organised. Appropriate measures are taken to minimise risk. Boarders report feeling safe in their houses. Suitable facilities are provided for supervised and private study, and for social purposes. Sufficient toilet and washing facilities are available, readily accessible and affording appropriate privacy. The houses are suitably lit, heated and ventilated. A member of the maintenance staff is exclusively assigned to the boarding houses, so that repairs are carried out promptly. Boarding accommodation is suitably furnished and sufficiently spacious for the number, needs and ages of the boarders. Bedding provided by the school is clean, suitable and sufficiently warm. Boarders are encouraged to personalise their rooms if they wish. Boarding accommodation is reserved for the use of boarders. Visitors sign in and out using the visitors' book. The use of school facilities by members of the public does not coincide with pupils' use. Security cameras do not intrude on boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 A minority of boarders responding to the questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with the food, a view echoed by some boarders in discussions, although the majority recognised recent improvements. Inspectors found the food to be adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality and choice, with a sufficient variety of hot and cold dishes, freshly prepared on the premises. The school is aware of the boarders' concerns and of the need to make further improvements. A separate servery caters for pupils with special dietary needs. All food is prepared and served in hygienic and well-organised conditions. Both boarding houses have suitable kitchens where boarders may prepare snacks and drinks, using an ample range of ingredients provided by the



catering department. A very large majority of those boarders responding to the questionnaire were satisfied with the availability of snacks and drinks. Drinking water is available throughout the day. The school dining hall is readily accessible to pupils with restricted mobility. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 The matron in each house ensures the efficient laundering and return of boarders' clothing and bedding. Boarders can obtain personal and stationery items in the nearby high street shops. Basic items are available in the houses for those who need immediate supplies. All bedrooms contain lockable cupboards for the safe storage of personal possessions. Travel documents are securely kept by staff. A suitable policy governs the procedure for searching personal belongings, which is in accordance with official guidance. A very large majority of boarders responding to the questionnaire were satisfied that their belongings are safe. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarders enjoy a wide variety of activities during the week and at weekends. In discussions, boarders of all ages were satisfied with the balance between activity and free time. The extensive grounds and buildings provide ample choice of appropriate recreational areas, both indoors and outside, where boarders can be alone if they choose. There are no unusually onerous demands placed on boarders. Information about world events is easily available through television and the internet. A variety of daily newspapers is provided in the boarding houses, the styles of which cater for both native English speakers and those whose English is developing. [NMS 10]

### **3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding**

- 3.9 The school meets all the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 A comprehensive written health and safety policy is meticulously implemented so as to maintain the school premises and facilities in a manner that promotes the welfare, health and safety of the boarders. Minutes of the health and safety committee are routinely scrutinised by the governors, enabling them to exercise effective oversight of safety issues. Forthcoming trips and expeditions are reported to the governors, giving them the opportunity to monitor the arrangements. Safety equipment is appropriately checked and maintained, usually by outside specialist contractors. A suitable risk assessment policy governs the way in which risk is to be assessed and managed in all aspects of the school's life. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school takes all necessary measures to comply with fire regulations. Fire evacuation practices are conducted regularly for the whole school, and additional termly practices are arranged for the boarders during evening and night-time hours. Regular contact is maintained with the local fire authority. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 A detailed safeguarding policy is known to all staff and other adults working on the school site. Staff are suitably trained in child protection procedures. An effective working relationship has been established with local referral agencies, which enables any concerns to be promptly referred for advice or support. The designated safeguarding lead has trained all staff in being aware of the risks of pupils being drawn into extremism and how to prevent this. The intention to follow this up by requiring staff to undertake further online training is still being implemented. All staff have read the guidance document *Keeping Children Safe in Education (July 2015)*. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Appropriate policies are implemented to combat bullying and cyber-bullying. In discussions, pupils confirmed that bullying incidents are infrequent and, when they do occur, are appropriately and sensitively managed by staff. Rules and sanctions

are well known to pupils, and recognised as necessary. The school has appropriate policies to govern the circumstances when restraint may be used, or for searching pupils' possessions, which conform to national guidance. [NMS 12]

- 3.14 The school has a suitable written policy for the safer selection and recruitment of staff, which is rigorously applied. Recruitment checks are accurately recorded on a central register. All individuals over the age of 16, who are not employees of the school or on the school roll, but are living on the same premises as boarders must undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service check and sign an agreement specifying the terms of their accommodation and the school's expectations of their, and any visitors', behaviour with respect to the safeguarding of pupils. Visitors to boarding houses are not able to gain access without ringing to be admitted, taken to see the member of staff on duty and being supervised during their visit. The school does not appoint guardians on behalf of the parents. [NMS 14]

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

- 3.15 The school meets all the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 An appropriate statement of boarding principles and practice is available to parents and made known to boarders on notice boards and in handbooks. Its impact is evident in the life of the boarding houses. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The leadership and management of boarding are closely monitored by the governors. A review and reporting process ensures that governors are appropriately informed about boarding, its practice and plans for development. Boarding staff meet regularly with senior staff to discuss pastoral and organisational issues. Senior managers visit boarding houses regularly. House staff are also teachers, facilitating effective links between academic and residential staff. The school's senior managers have extensive experience in boarding, enabling them to provide appropriate support and stimulus to house staff, and to fulfil their responsibilities effectively with respect to meeting standards and promoting the welfare of boarders. Boarding staff have appropriate experience and have undertaken suitable training to enhance their knowledge and skills. All the required policies and documents are in place and suitably implemented, including monitoring records and taking appropriate action to improve outcomes for boarders. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All boarding staff have a clear job description reflecting their duties. Appropriate induction, regular appraisal and career development opportunities are provided. The role of spouses or other adult members of staff households in the boarding houses is made clear in written guidance. Staff supervision of boarders outside teaching time is appropriate for the age, number and needs of the boarders and the activities involved. Boarders know at all times who is responsible for them and how to contact these staff. Boarders are required to sign in and out of the houses, stating their destination, enabling staff to know their whereabouts. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the case of a missing pupil. At least one member of staff sleeps in each house overnight. All boarders have an emergency button by their beds to call for assistance during the night. Residential staff have their own accommodation, including washing and toilet facilities, which is entirely separate from the boarders' accommodation and facilities. Any boarders' access to staff accommodation is appropriately conducted and supervised. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 The school has suitable policies on equality and improving accessibility to school facilities. Care is taken to ensure that boarders do not feel discriminated against because of cultural or other characteristics. They are encouraged to celebrate the multi-cultural community in which they live. [NMS 16]

- 3.20 A small minority of boarders responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire and in discussions did not consider that their views are listened to. Inspectors found a wide variety of ways in which boarders' views are sought, including surveys, suggestion boxes, house and school councils, and regular informal meetings with house staff over a takeaway meal. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school has a suitable policy for managing complaints from parents, which meets the required standards. Scrutiny of the school's records of complaints revealed that parents' concerns are carefully considered in accordance with the policy, and responded to promptly. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Pupils selected for school or house office as prefects (praepostors) or heads of house are suitably trained for their roles, which do not involve the use of sanctions. They work closely with staff, helping to set standards and to support younger pupils. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for pupils. [NMS 20]