



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BROCKHURST AND MARLSTON HOUSE SCHOOLS

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools

Full Name of School	Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools
DfE Number	869/6003
Address	Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools Marlston House Hermitage Thatcham Berkshire RG18 9UL
Telephone Number	01635 200293
Fax Number	01635 200190
Email Address	r.harper@brockmarl.org
Heads	Mr David Fleming and Mrs Caroline Riley
Proprietor	Mr David Fleming
Age Range	3 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	331
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (Boys 162; Girls 169)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 38 5-13: 293
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 248
Number of Boarders	Total: 83 Full: 9 Flexi: 74
Inspection Dates	1 to 3 December 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) 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, the proprietor and representatives from the advisory panel to the governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended a registration session. Inspectors visited the boarding accommodation 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

Ms Juliet Jaggs

Reporting Inspector

Mr Richard Whymark

Team Inspector for Boarding (Head, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools are proprietorial, co-educational and single-sex boarding and day preparatory schools located on the outskirts of Hermitage, Berkshire. Both schools share the same estate; boys are educated at Brockhurst and girls at Marlston House. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and pupils in Years 1 and 2 and Years 7 and 8 learn in co-educational classes. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are taught in single-sex classes. Brockhurst School was originally founded in 1884 as a boys' boarding school in Shropshire. In 1945 the school moved to its current location and the girls' school, Marlston House, was established in the same building in 1995. The schools are run by a limited company, of which the headmaster is the chief executive officer and one of the two directors, both of whom act as governors. The school aims to provide an excellent, all-round education, combining the best features of single-sex and co-educational school systems.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection, 331 pupils were on roll, of whom 169 were girls and 162 were boys. Of the 38 children in the EYFS, 7 attended on a part-time basis. Boarding provision for the 83 boarders is in the main school, with girls on one corridor and boys on the floor below. Pupils board from the age of 8. The few boarders from overseas come from Turkmenistan and Spain. A total of 14 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and 9 of them receive support for their English. The school has identified 61 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and 33 of these receive specialist learning support. None of these pupils has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team has been expanded to include the designated safeguarding lead, and a new oversight advisory panel has been established to support governance.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used by the school for the EYFS and throughout this report to refer to year groups. The year group nomenclature used by the school from Year 1 and its NC equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Form 8	Year 1
Form 7	Year 2
Form 6	Year 3
Form 5	Year 4
Form 4	Year 5
Form 3	Year 6
Form 2	Year 7
Form 1	Year 8

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.1 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, and therefore it must:
- ensure that all action taken in response to welfare concerns is recorded and filed centrally and confidentially [National Minimum Standard 11, under Child protection, and ISSR para. 8(a)];
 - ensure that the proprietor monitors the delivery of welfare provision and takes swift action where necessary [National Minimum Standard 13.1, under Management and development of boarding, and ISSR para. 8(b)];
 - ensure that those responsible for governance, leadership and management develop the knowledge and skills necessary to fulfil the standards that promote the well-being of the pupils [National Minimum Standards 13.3 and 13.4, under Management and development of boarding, and ISSR para. 8(b)].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.2 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Centralise the information gathered for each boarder so that his or her particular needs can be more easily identified and addressed.
 2. Analyse the information gathered during routine monitoring of boarding provision to ensure that relevant development priorities can be identified accurately.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

- 2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI in May 2012 when the school met the National Minimum Standards. No recommendations were made that were specific to boarding 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 New boarders are assigned another pupil 'guide' to explain the boarding routines to them and to help them settle in. Existing boarders offer support, and arrangements to demonstrate fire drills help those new to the house to familiarise themselves with safety procedures. Specific guidance from members of academic staff assists pupils with EAL when they first arrive and some documents are translated. Boarders are confident that they can turn to staff and to senior boarders for guidance with personal difficulties. The contact details of the independent listener and various helplines, including the Children's Commissioner and ChildLine, are posted on several notice boards. [NMS 2 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.3 Qualified staff treat boarders who are unwell or injured in the surgery. Some resident members of staff also have first-aid qualifications and those who do not are appropriately trained to administer household remedies. Duty staff implement the procedures for administering medication and recording treatment in accordance with the school policy. Prescribed medication is only issued to the appropriate boarder, and no boarders self-medicate. Boarders who are not well enough to attend school usually return home or to their dormitories where the matron visits them at regular intervals. A telephone on each landing provides an additional link to the surgery. Occasionally, boarders prefer to stay in the surgery, which is less private. The school doctor visits on a weekly basis and appointments with other specialist services are made when required. Boarders' rights as patients are respected. No boarders are currently deemed to be at level of competence for giving or withholding their consent for medical treatment. [NMS 3 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.4 Boarders have access to several telephones for contacting their families and friends. Arrangements can be made for these conversations to be in private if requested. Full boarders have access to their own mobile telephones at the weekend, as well as personal computers for video calls. Staff supervision to prevent unsafe use of electronic equipment is adequate. [NMS 4 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.5 Separate comfortable, well-lit and heated accommodation is available for boys and girls. Only the boarders designated to use the separate corridors have access to them during the day, and doors to each landing are secured overnight. The large proportion of flexi-boarders means that the number of boarders in the house varies considerably from one night to the next. The school policy stipulates that boarders should not sleep on their own in a dormitory, and so a few boarders move dormitory during the course of the week. All boarders are familiar with the routines for changing their bedding each time they move. Rooms are suitably furnished and boarders can personalise their areas. Sufficient toilet and washing facilities are provided on both the boys' and girls' landings, with suitable privacy. Communal rooms provide comfortable social areas and boarders have sufficient support when doing their prep. Suitable policies are implemented to ensure that external groups do not compromise the boarders' use of the facilities. Surveillance cameras do not intrude on boarders' privacy. [NMS 5 and ISSR para.30]

- 3.6 Meals throughout the day cater for all dietary needs. A few boarders disagreed that they are happy about the availability of snacks and drinks in their questionnaire responses. Inspectors joined boarders for some of their meals and discussed this matter with them. Inspection evidence did not support the views expressed in the questionnaire; the quantity and variety of food were judged to be sufficient. Most of the boarders commended the range of snacks available to them throughout the day. Drinking water, milk and fruit are freely available and the evening hot chocolate is a favourite. The accommodation for preparing, serving and consuming food is clean; recommendations to monitor refrigeration temperatures more closely have been implemented in full. [NMS 8 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.7 Laundry facilities are efficient for those boarders choosing to use them; most flexi-boarders take their laundry home. Boarders may provide their own lockable tuck box for valuables. Staff look after boarders' pocket money, but few pupils bring money to school. The tuck shop operates on a weekly credit basis that limits pupils' spending. Care is taken to provide a selection of personal and stationery items for purchase at the school. Any search of boarders' possessions is carried out in accordance with guidance issued by the Secretary of State. [NMS 9 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.8 The activity and trips programme provides boarders with sufficient choice as well as free time. Suitable risk assessments are in place for several higher risk activities such as shooting and riding. Swimming is supervised by a qualified lifesaver, in accordance with the school's policy. The grounds and premises include recreational areas with space for boarders to play both inside and out. Boarders and staff consistently implement the safe protocol for crossing the public road to the school playing fields. Boarders have access to the television in the boarding house, and the general studies programme further provides boarders with information about events in the world outside school. [NMS 10 and ISSR para.8(b)]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school does not meet all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school complies with health and safety regulatory requirements. Regular monitoring is used to ensure that the premises, accommodation and facilities are adequately maintained and on a day-to-day basis pupils are safely supervised. Documentation varies across different departments within the school and does not always follow the templates provided. [NMS 6 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.11 Fire appliances and alarms are checked regularly and the school meets the recommendations in the visiting fire officer's report. Fire-evacuation drills are conducted at various times of the day as well as during boarding time. [NMS 7 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.12 The board of directors reviews the safeguarding policy annually, but a lack of rigour in this process means that any shortcomings are not identified. Changes to the document during the course of the inspection have ensured that it reflects the current statutory guidance. Staff are provided with an aide memoire for safeguarding. Suitable blocks and filters are in place for boarders' internet access, but the use of digital cameras is inconsistently monitored. Record keeping is inconsistent throughout the school, and particularly amongst those with responsibility for safeguarding pupils' welfare. Adults work independently of one another, and so the school does not hold comprehensive information about how to care for pupils with

additional needs. Monitoring procedures have not ensured that vulnerable pupils receive sustained specialist support. [NMS 11 and ISSR para.8(a)]

- 3.13 The strong sense of community within the boarding house contributes much to boarders' conduct. Rules are simple. Boarders know that they are expected to behave sensibly and to support one another. Boarding staff reinforce this approach by implementing suitable policies. More serious incidents are documented in full and monitored. Arrangements for searching boarders and their possessions are appropriate. [NMS 12 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.14 Recruitment checks are conducted appropriately and information confirming applicants' suitability is collected systematically. The required checks and documents, including the written agreement about arrangements for occupancy, are carried out for all adults over the age of 16 living in the boarding house and not in the employment of the school. Visitors to the boarding house are supervised appropriately. The school does not appoint guardians for boarders living overseas. [NMS 14 and ISSR para.8(b) and 18(2)(f)]

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

- 3.15 The school does not meet all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The statement of the school's boarding principles and practice emphasises the boarding house as an extension of family life. Resident staff successfully collaborate to create this environment in practice. [NMS 1 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.17 The proprietor does not monitor the effectiveness of leadership and management of boarding with sufficient rigour. Procedures are too informal and do not provide the level of accountability necessary to ensure effective practice. Appropriate action has not been taken sufficiently swiftly when staff have been unable to fulfil their roles effectively. The school maintains the documents required for the leadership and management of boarding. Leaders and managers are not sufficiently effective in their oversight. They assume that staff will voluntarily keep them well informed, rather than positively holding individuals to account. Knowledge of regulatory requirements is limited, and leadership is not able to fulfil its responsibilities consistently. Some of the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools are not met, and governance, leadership and management are failing to promote boarders' well-being. Senior boarding staff have received adequate training in boarding practice, some of which is shared with other resident staff. This includes guidance about administering medicine by those without first-aid training and general advice about using reasonable force when necessary. [NMS 13 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.18 Appropriate job descriptions provided for resident staff and the role of the spouses of resident staff are understood. Staff are deployed in various areas of the boarding house to ensure appropriate levels of supervision. A Gap-Year student manual is used to ensure that these staff receive induction training for their role. They work in proximity to another colleague, so that boarders are always under the responsibility of suitably qualified staff, including overnight. The internal telephones on the landings provide a satisfactory means for the boarders to contact staff during the night. Suitable training is available for staff, but the application of new knowledge and skills is not monitored consistently to ensure that its impact is fully effective. Appraisal systems provide staff the opportunity to talk about professional development, but these are managed inconsistently. Boarders sign in and out at various times throughout the day so that staff know their whereabouts. Boarders' access to the boarding leadership's accommodation is carefully managed. [NMS 15 and ISSR para.8(b)]

- 3.19 The boys' and girls' corridors operate differently, but their distinctive features do not undermine boarders' opportunities. Special arrangements are made to integrate small groups, such as those from overseas and flexi-boarders, and to treat them fairly. Staff take time to work together and meet the needs of boarders from overseas and with EAL. [NMS 16 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.20 The boarders have suitable opportunities to contribute, as representatives on the school council. Pupils have effective means to express their views about the running of the house, and menu choices in particular. Boarders contribute their views in other ways, including well-being questionnaires, which provide them with the opportunity to talk about their feelings. [NMS 17 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.21 Changes made to the complaints procedure during the course of the inspection mean that it meets requirements. No complaints have been made about boarding, and in questionnaire responses parents were positive about their children's experiences as boarders. [NMS 18 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.22 The pupil heads of boarding are selected to lead by example. They have no powers to sanction other boarders but they know to pass on any concerns to members of staff. [NMS 19 and ISSR para.8(b)]
- 3.23 The school does not provide long-term lodgings. [NMS 20 and ISSR para.8(b)]