



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**PRIOR PARK PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE**

**INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Prior Park Preparatory School

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	<b>Prior Park Preparatory School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>865/6028</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>281242</b>		
Address	<b>Prior Park Preparatory School Manor House Calcutt Street Cricklade Swindon Wiltshire SN6 6BB</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01793 750275</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01793 750910</b>		
Email Address	<b>prepoffice@priorpark.co.uk</b>		
Headmaster	<b>Mr Mark Pearce</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Commodore Christopher York</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 13</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>216</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (145 boys; 71 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>29</b>	5-11: <b>123</b>
	11-13:	<b>64</b>	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>174</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>42</b>	
	Full:	<b>38</b>	Weekly: <b>4</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>26 Nov 2013 to 28 Nov 2013</b>		

## 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 2010, as amended. From September 2011 the inspection of boarding welfare forms part of the inspection process. 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. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in November 2009 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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 a governor, 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 Jan Preece

Mr Alistair Telfer

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding  
(Head of Department, ISA school)

## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 SUMMARY</b>	<b>2</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	2
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	2
(iii) Progress since the previous inspection	2
<b>3 COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS</b>	<b>3</b>
(a) Boarding provision and care	3
(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding	4
(c) Leadership and management of the boarding provision	5

## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Prior Park Preparatory School is a day and boarding school for boys and girls aged from three to thirteen years, situated in the small town of Cricklade, Wiltshire. It was established in 1946. The school is one of three schools owned and run by The Prior Foundation, the other two being Prior Park College and The Paragon Junior School, both of which are in Bath. The foundation is a Roman Catholic educational charity and the schools are governed by its trustees. Each school also has its own governing advisory board. A new headmaster took up post in January 2011 and a new head of boarding took over in January 2013, joining a restructured senior leadership team.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide pupils with a Catholic Christian education of the highest quality, whilst welcoming those of other faiths, enabling them to move on to their senior schools confident, compassionate and independent. It seeks to develop pupils' academic and other talents and to provide pastoral care of an encouraging, supportive and disciplined nature. It sets out to create an outward-looking ethos that builds links with parents and the local community whilst celebrating the richness of cultures from around the world.
- 1.3 The school buildings are arranged around a Grade II listed manor that also houses the boarders. Most pupils live within a 15-mile radius of Swindon, though over half the boarders come from overseas, some of whom have parents in the armed forces. At the time of the inspection there were 216 pupils on roll, of whom 42 were boarders, 31 boys and 11 girls. While the school offers weekly and flexible boarding, the majority board full-time. Boarding is overseen by a head of boarding who is supported by a team of resident staff.
- 1.4 All of the 31 pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive additional support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Of the 38 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), 26 receive help with their language skills.
- 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 2011.

### **(ii) Recommendation for further improvement**

- 2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Evaluate all procedures and provision to ensure that boarders of all ages perceive their experience within the boarding community to be equitable.

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

- 2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in November 2009. It made six recommendations that related to staff training in safeguarding and fire protection, the storage of medicines, recruitment procedures and risk assessment. These have all been addressed.

### **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 receive a helpful information booklet prior to their arrival. They meet their allocated 'buddy' at a welcome barbecue where they are introduced to boarding staff. Boarders have a choice of resident staff to approach should they require help. They are aware of the independent listener and prominent notices display the contact numbers for external helplines. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 A qualified school nurse who lives on site provides medical assistance and oversees thorough arrangements to promote boarders' health. Medicines are securely stored, and comprehensive, computerised records ensure that medication is safely administered, that all first-aid treatment is logged and that confidentiality is maintained. Treatment for chronic conditions is appropriately managed and access to ancillary medical services arranged. Boarding staff have received first-aid training and designated staff may administer medicines at night. Boarders who are ill during the day are cared for in the health centre and usually return to the boarding house overnight, where there are facilities to provide separate accommodation. With the exception of asthma inhalers, boarders do not self-medicate. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders say that they may easily contact their families during the evening, by using the house telephone or their own mobile telephones, which are securely stored by house staff. They are also able to use video messaging and email. The school offers additional contact times to accommodate boarders from different time zones. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation is comfortably furnished and appropriately separated to house boys and girls, and different age groups. It is warm, clean and well maintained, and each boarder has ample storage space. Boarders personalise their bed area with photographs, posters and toys, and many provide their own duvet covers. Toilet and washing facilities afford appropriate privacy. Boarders may use the library to study and recreational areas are located close to boarding areas. Boarding accommodation is protected from unauthorised access and boarders' privacy is not compromised by security measures. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Arrangements for the preparation and serving of food are suitable. Boarders' meals include provision for particular dietary needs. They are nutritious, varied and sufficient in quality and quantity. Menus are regularly evaluated and adapted to reflect feedback from the food committee. However, just under half of the boarders who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with the food and boarders voiced mixed opinions in interviews. Inspection evidence does not support the pupils' negative view. The meals sampled by inspectors were appetising and provided choice, and additional items such as bread, spreads and fresh fruit are provided. Boarders are provided with a suitable range of snacks and drinks. Younger boarders would like more choice for their evening snack because older boarders have additional options, though inspectors noted that boarders were consulted before the current arrangements were introduced. Tuck is available on a Wednesday evening and at weekends, and boarders enjoy regular themed food nights. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Appropriate arrangements ensure the efficient handling of boarders' laundry. They may obtain personal and stationery items at school. Boarders are happy with storage arrangements for their possessions and house parents look after any valuable items and money. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarding staff are developing a wider range of activities and recreational areas to suit various age groups. In addition to active areas such as the sports hall, boarders may use various quieter areas in the house, such as a relaxation room. Some recreational spaces have been equipped according to boarders' suggestions. A new area for the youngest boarders is in the course of development. At the weekend boarders have a varied activities programme and they enjoy trips out on Sundays. Boarders learn about the outside world through television news, newspapers, a weekly assembly about world events and a news quiz. [NMS 10]

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

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 Careful arrangements for health and safety ensure that boarders are protected from harm. Risk assessments are rigorous and include all areas used by boarders, as well as weekend trips. Equipment is inspected for safety regularly and suitable records kept. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Appropriate fire precautions and staff training ensure that the school complies with all requirements for fire safety. Fire drills, including some when boarders are asleep, are carried out regularly and staff ensure that occasional boarders know the procedures. Suitable records are kept of maintenance checks and fire drills. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Child protection procedures are appropriate and well implemented. All staff receive the appropriate training for their level of responsibilities. New staff undertake thorough safeguarding training during induction and all staff receive additional annual updates. Governors fulfil their statutory duty to review the school's arrangements through termly reports from the leadership, support and monitoring from a designated governor, and an annual review by the full governing body. [NMS11]
- 3.13 The school has a suitable policy to promote positive values and good behaviour. Boarders say that rewards, such as for the tidiest dormitories, and sanctions, such as an early night or withdrawal of tuck, are generally administered fairly. However, a number report that occasionally a group receives a sanction for an individual's misdemeanour which they feel is unfair. Inspectors concur with this view. Boarders say that bullying is extremely rare and all agree that it is firmly and promptly dealt with by staff. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school employs suitable safe recruitment procedures. The few adults who are resident but not employed by the school are appropriately checked and all residents sign a written agreement stating their responsibilities. A clear policy ensures that visitors and contractors do not have unsupervised access to boarders. The school does not appoint guardians for boarders from overseas though it monitors guardianship arrangements to ensure that they are working well. [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 spiritual life of the school underpins its aims for boarding, which are published on the school website and in handbooks. Boarding practice reflects these values and results in a strong feeling of community. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The head of boarding has appropriate experience and through membership of the senior leadership team contributes to the integration of boarding within the school. Boarders' academic progress and pastoral needs are monitored and the requisite boarding records are maintained. Information about individual boarders' needs and well-being is communicated efficiently through morning briefings, email and informal exchanges. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Boarding staff have an appropriate job description and undergo thorough induction. A new appraisal system ensures that boarding and pastoral responsibilities are evaluated and training needs are identified. Those new to boarding duties have not yet undertaken specific training. Staff provide effective supervision and through regular roll calls ensure that they know boarders' whereabouts. Boarders know who is responsible for them and may contact staff at night easily. Any access to staff accommodation is appropriately supervised. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders state that they are well cared for and treated as individuals. Those with SEND are given additional support such as with prep and study skills, and the head of EAL attends boarding staff meetings to ensure that the needs of boarders from overseas are met. Most boarders are extremely happy with their experience of boarding. However, younger boarders said that older boarders monopolise some recreational areas and would like allocated times when they are given priority. Inspectors found that the lack of rotas for popular areas reduces equal access. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, all boarders indicated that they are able to offer their suggestions, such as through the boarders' council and food committee, and that the school responds to their views. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 A suitable complaints procedure for all schools in the foundation is readily available. Records show that concerns are addressed carefully and most are resolved informally. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Prefects support staff in the smooth running of the boarding house. They are expected to show kindness to the younger boarders and to be good role models. Younger boarders report that they generally exercise their role responsibly. Prefects are appropriately supervised and supported through training and weekly meetings with the leadership. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for pupils. [NMS 20]