



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ROYAL MASONIC SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Royal Masonic School for Girls

Full Name of School	Royal Masonic School for Girls		
DfE Number	919/6165		
Registered Charity Number	276784		
Address	Royal Masonic School for Girls Rickmansworth Park Chorleywood Road Rickmansworth Hertfordshire WD3 4HF		
Telephone Number	01923 773168		
Fax Number	01923 896729		
Email Address	enquiries@royalmasonic.herts.sch.uk		
Head	Mrs Diana Rose		
Chair of Governors	Mr John Gould		
Age Range	2 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	931		
Gender of Pupils	Girls 2 to 18; Boys 2 to 4		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 23	5-11: 194	
	3-5 (EYFS): 73	11-18: 641	
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 815		
Number of Boarders	Total: 116		
	Full: 82	Weekly: 34	
Inspection Dates	21 Jan 2014 to 23 Jan 2014		

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 June 2011 and can be found at 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, with the chair of governors and the governor with responsibility for safeguarding, 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 Gwen Caddock	Reporting Inspector
Mr Michael Brewer	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of Boarding, HMC school)
Mrs Nichola Haworth	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of Boarding, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Royal Masonic School for Girls is a day and boarding school for girls aged two to eighteen and for boys aged two to four. The school was founded in south London in 1788 by Chevalier Ruspini to educate daughters of freemasons who were unable to support their families. The school moved to Rickmansworth Park in 1934, when all pupils were full boarders, described as Beneficiaries of the Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys. In 1978, it became an independent fee-paying school, open to girls of all backgrounds and faiths, continuing to accept beneficiaries of the trust and working with national charities and local authorities to place children in need of boarding education.
- 1.2 The school is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The governing board has fifteen members, four of whom are also trustees of the charity. The work of the governing body is supported by five committees with specialist areas of expertise and by a number of individual governors who take on specific areas of interest, including safeguarding and early years.
- 1.3 The school aims to offer a nurturing, inclusive and supportive environment, encouraging pupils to be compassionate and tolerant, to do their personal best, and to grow in integrity, responsibility and spiritual awareness so that they approach adulthood with interpersonal skills that reflect both empathy and self-confidence.
- 1.4 The school is situated in 150 acres of parkland, with purpose-built facilities that include a new Nursery and a sixth-form centre. Recent refurbishments include Cadogan House for the Pre-Prep and Prep Department, together with a senior boarding house. A total of 5 boarding houses currently provide accommodation for 121 boarders. One house provides for the youngest group, aged seven to twelve, two houses accommodate senior girls and two are designated sixth-form houses. The provision includes flexible, weekly and full boarding. The school has 931 pupils on roll, with 96 in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including 20 boys aged from 2 to 4, 194 girls between the ages of 5 to 11 in Cadogan House and 641 in the senior school. Currently, 252 pupils from across the school have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and 148 of these receive specialist support. Of the 77 pupils who speak English as an additional language, 40 have support for their English. Pupils come from a very wide range of backgrounds, and many cultures and faiths are represented. Many pupils live locally or travel from within a wide catchment area, extending from north west London to rural Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, while a number of boarders come from various other countries.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) 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 2013.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure that boarders receive responses to both formal and informal suggestions and proposals.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in June 2011. No recommendations were made.

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 A comprehensive induction programme helps new boarders to settle in. Boarders confirm that they know who to go to for help and advice and say how much they appreciate the support given by staff. The independent counsellor is also the independent listener, while Russian and Mandarin speaking listeners support boarders from overseas. Boarders are also provided with details of outside support, including the Children's Rights Director. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school has and implements a suitable range of medical policies. First aiders are appropriately trained. The medical centre is staffed by qualified nurses and has suitable accommodation for boarders, including overnight when needed, and houses weekly surgeries with a GP, optician and dentist. Other specialist medical services are available locally. Prescribed medicine is only given to the named boarder. When assessed as competent, boarders are able to self-medicate, and their rights as patients are respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders have sufficient facilities to contact their parents or carers and families in private, using house telephones, mobile telephones, and their own and school computers. Appropriate safeguards are in place to ensure e-safety. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation is suitably furnished, with dormitories, two-bedded and single rooms. Rooms have personal study areas, and older boarders work in the resource centre or the computer suite. Toilet and washing facilities provide appropriate levels of privacy. High standards of cleaning and maintenance were observed. Houses have spacious common rooms and boarders enjoy personalising their own areas. The boarding houses are for the use of the boarders only, with security measures to prevent unauthorised access by outside groups using school facilities. Security arrangements do not intrude on the boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 School menus offer healthy choices of fresh food, catering for specific dietary needs. In questionnaire responses a minority of boarders indicated dissatisfaction with school food. However, in interviews boarders expressed that they generally enjoy their meals, and inspectors found that meals are of a high standard. The kitchen provides hygienic food preparation areas. The atmosphere in the dining room encourages boarders to socialise at mealtimes. Drinking water, hot drinks and plentiful snack boxes are provided in houses. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Laundry arrangements are efficient; boarders are able to take responsibility for some of their own washing. Stationery is obtainable at the school tuck shop and personal items may be bought from local shops. Boarders say that their possessions are safe and secure storage is provided by staff. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 A diverse range of activities is available, with recreational areas including sporting and outdoor areas. Boarders speak highly of the weekend activities programme and appreciate time to relax. The chapel and the Sanctuary, with a multi-faith prayer room, offer quiet areas for reflection. There are no onerous demands on boarders. Boarders access many sources of news and world events and also join local clubs and use local facilities. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school has written policies to ensure compliance with health and safety requirements, which are meticulously implemented. Standards of maintenance at the school ensure, as far as practicable, the health, safety and welfare of the boarders. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Checks, maintenance and regular fire drills, including those carried out in boarding time, are fully recorded. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The comprehensive arrangements made by the school to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils have regard to official guidance. Staff have been trained at the appropriate levels and intervals, with full induction training for new staff and an introduction to safeguarding for senior boarders. Safeguarding procedures have regard to locally agreed procedures and are fully implemented. The governors support the leadership in her role as the designated person. The full governing body assesses the suitability of safeguarding arrangements on an annual basis. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Suitable policies on behaviour meet requirements. These encompass measures to combat bullying and to promote positive behaviour, the school rules, disciplinary sanctions, the use of restraint, and arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions. The culture of the school puts emphasis on the use of rewards and support to encourage good behaviour, and records show an appropriate use of sanctions. Pupils appreciate the confidence and trust of staff. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 Appropriate policies and procedures ensure safe recruitment and thorough vetting of staff. Checks are appropriately recorded in the single central register of appointments, including residents in boarding houses not employed by the school who are over the age of 16; written agreements are in place as required. Visitors do not have unsupervised access to boarders. The school does not arrange guardians for boarders. [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 statement of boarding principles and practices is published on the website, on notice boards and in staff and boarders' handbooks: boarders are happy and confident and become increasingly independent, reflecting this stated ethos. Responses to the parents' questionnaire indicated high levels of satisfaction with the school. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The management and leadership of boarding are fully supported by both senior leadership and the governing body. Strong links have been established between academic monitoring and pastoral care staff. Records show that these links are used to plan careful intervention to enable boarders to succeed and do their personal best, fulfilling one of the aims of the school. Senior boarding teams are well experienced and qualified. All the required records are maintained and monitored, with appropriate action taken as needed. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Boarding staff have clear job descriptions, receive induction training, are appraised and undertake a wide range of additional training. Boarding rotas ensure supervision by experienced and qualified staff. Staff know the whereabouts of

boarders and how to contact them if necessary, as well as the procedures to follow if a boarder is missing. Two members of staff sleep in each house, and boarders are confident that they can contact the duty member of staff if necessary. Staff accommodation is suitable and separate from the boarders' accommodation. Boarders have no inappropriate access to staff accommodation or unfair treatment. [NMS 15]

- 3.19 Boarders do not experience any discrimination and care is sensitive to their differing needs. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Many councils, committees and surveys offer boarders opportunities to express their views. In response to the pupil questionnaire, a minority of boarders said that they do not feel listened to and that they do not receive responses to their suggestions. Inspection evidence shows that boarders' views have been considered and have generated change, although actions have not always been communicated clearly. Boarders know that they will not be penalised for making a complaint in good faith. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 An appropriate policy on responding to complaints is published on the school website and records show that it has been followed in full. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Senior boarders with roles of responsibility have clear job descriptions and training. They are well supervised and very well respected by the boarders. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20]