



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**SEVENOAKS SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Sevenoaks School

Full Name of School	<b>Sevenoaks School</b>
DfE Number	<b>886/6014</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1101358</b>
Address	<b>Sevenoaks School High Street Sevenoaks Kent TN13 1HU England</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01732 455133</b>
Fax Number	<b>01732 456143</b>
Email Address	<b>admin@sevenoaksschool.org</b>
Head	<b>Dr Katy Ricks</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Nicholas Gould</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>1054</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (503 boys; 551 girls)</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>702</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>352</b> Full: <b>352</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 a governors' representative, 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**

Ms Juliet Jaggs

Mrs Lynn Doughton

Mr Andrew Lee

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding  
(Head of department, GSA school)

Team Inspector for Boarding  
(Former senior master, HMC school)

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

- 1.1 Sevenoaks School is a co-educational day and boarding school at the top of the High Street of Sevenoaks. Founded in 1432 when a bequest from William Sevenoke was used to establish a free grammar school for the poor of the town, it is one of the oldest lay foundations in England. Originally established to educate boys, girls were admitted to the school in 1976. The 100 acre campus runs along the High Street, and includes historic buildings from the early eighteenth century as well as more recent developments. The school is a charity and a company limited by guarantee. Members of the governing body are trustees of the charity and the directors of the company.
- 1.2 The school aims to discover and exploit the full potential of each pupil, to prepare them for adulthood and to guide them in achieving a balance between individual and community responsibility. At the time of the inspection, 1054 pupils attended the school. These pupils come from across the world with typically 40 different nationalities represented at any one time. A large majority of these pupils speak several different languages including English, with a very few receiving additional support for English as an additional language (EAL). The school has identified 80 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), two-thirds of whom receive additional learning support. None of these pupils has an Education Health Care plan.
- 1.3 Boarders live in one of the seven houses located within the school grounds. In all, 169 boys board at the school and 183 girls. Most international boarders new to the sixth form live in two of the houses, one for boys and the other for girls. Boys and girls aged 13 to 18 live separately from one another in four further houses. New sixth-form boarders also join these houses and there is a junior boarding house for pupils aged 11 to 13.
- 1.4 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) Recommendation for further improvement**

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement:

1. Extend the level of monitoring and evaluation amongst middle leadership to more accurately identify areas for development.

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

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI in February 2013. At that time there were no recommendations for further improvement in boarding.

### **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 receive appropriate guidance from their peers before they arrive at the school and as they settle in, such as the 'Big Sister' scheme in some girls' houses. Suitable written information is provided in the house booklets and during various residential induction events. Boarders have a choice of staff to whom they can turn for personal support, including an independent listener. Boarders are provided with the details necessary to contact various helplines. The vast majority of boarders who responded to the pupil questionnaire said that they enjoyed boarding. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Medical policies are implemented effectively. Sufficient staff are qualified in first aid and boarding house staff have been trained to promote boarders' mental health and emotional wellbeing. Boarders who are unwell are accommodated and cared for appropriately both in their houses and in specialist facilities run by qualified nurses. Appropriate procedures are in place for dealing with medical emergencies and boarders have access to local services as necessary. Medication is securely stored and proper records are kept of its administration. Staff who care for boarders implement suitable systems to ensure that prescribed medication is given only to the boarder to whom it has been prescribed and that household remedies are administered appropriately. Boarders are allowed to self-medicate after appropriate consideration by the medical staff. Boarders' rights as patients are respected; all staff are informed of the care requirements for boarders with particular conditions. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders use various electronic communications to contact their parents, many of whom live abroad and in different time zones. Proportionate systems are in place to monitor and control boarders' access to the internet and to prevent unsafe practice by boarders. Parents are made aware of the school's expectations regarding boarders' safe use of information and communication technology. Suitable arrangements ensure overseas boarders meet with their parents if they visit. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Suitable accommodation is provided in separate houses for boys and girls, and delineated in the mixed junior boarding house. Risk assessments are appropriately undertaken and findings acted upon. Boarders' sleeping areas are well organised to provide adequate storage, some of which is lockable, as well as space for individual private study. Boarders personalise these areas with photographs and personal items. Accommodation is sufficient for the number of boarders, with younger boarders sharing in larger groups than senior boarders and those in the sixth form. Communal areas in each of the houses provide additional space for study and recreation. Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided close to the sleeping accommodation and offer appropriate privacy. Bathroom areas for boys and girls are separate in the mixed boarding house. Boarding accommodation is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated. Appropriate cleaning and maintenance routines ensure the accommodation remains in good order and bedding is suitably clean and warm. Boarding houses are set apart from other school buildings and access is restricted to those designated to use them. Appropriate arrangements are in place to safeguard boarders should members of the public use any of the school's facilities. Surveillance equipment does not intrude on boarders' privacy. The vast



majority of boarders responding to the pupil questionnaire said that they felt safe in their boarding house. [NMS 5]

- 3.6 Meals provide an adequate choice for all boarders including those with special, dietary, medical and religious needs. A small minority of the pupils responding to the questionnaire did not agree that the food is good. Almost all boarders who spoke to the inspectors said that they enjoyed the food at the school. Inspection evidence supports this view; menus are varied and nutritious. A few boarders responding to the pupil questionnaire were unhappy with the availability of snacks and drinking water outside meal times. Boarders in interview however were positive about snacks and drinks in the boarding house and inspection evidence indicates that boarders have appropriate access to drinking water and snacks at reasonable times. Arrangements are made for older boarders to budget and purchase fresh produce on behalf of other members of the house. Food is prepared and served hygienically in the main school and the dining room is clean. Standards of hygiene are sufficient in the house kitchen areas with cleaning and storage policies being implemented consistently. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Laundry provision is managed efficiently for those boarders taking advantage of the service in the boarding house. Clothing is stored appropriately and returned to the right boarder. Arrangements are adjusted to suit older boarders choosing to do their own laundry. Boarders may obtain stationery and sundry items from the school shop. Boarding staff implement appropriate procedures to protect boarders' valuables. Appropriate arrangements are in place to search boarders' personal property should this be necessary. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarders have access to a range of evening and weekend activities that provides for their interests and recreation. A small minority of junior pupils who responded to the questionnaire were unhappy with the compulsory activities organised at the weekends. Inspection evidence shows that there is an appropriate balance between activities and free time. The boarders who spoke to the inspectors felt that they were fortunate to have a breadth of opportunity. Senior boarders have appropriate access to the town and all boarders have access to a variety of media providing information about the world outside the school. Activities are managed safely with appropriate risk assessments in place. School facilities accessible to boarders are maintained safely and there are safe areas within the boarding houses, where boarders can be alone if they wish. [NMS 10]

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

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The health and safety policy is implemented consistently. Following an external audit, the school has taken appropriate steps to reduce risks identified. A cycle of refurbishment contributes to the safe maintenance of the premises. An effective risk assessment policy is implemented for a consistent approach to risk management throughout the school. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Fire detection and fighting equipment is suitably maintained. Evacuation drills are carried out frequently each term, including the early morning and evening. The evaluation of these events has resulted in appropriate improvements and training for boarders. [NMS 7]

- 3.12 The safeguarding policy has regard to official guidance issued by the secretary of state. Leadership with responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils takes appropriate action to ensure all staff are adequately trained. Parents are provided with suitable details about how to support their children's welfare. Safeguarding procedures are implemented in accordance with local authority expectations. School systems ensure that information is available for analysis to identify and support pupils in need. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The implementation of the behaviour policy promotes good relationships and behaviour amongst boarders. Suitable rules are in place with relevant sanctions, and infringements are recorded appropriately. The restraint policy has regard to guidance but it has not been necessary to implement it. Adequate arrangements are implemented to combat bullying and staff have been trained to recognise signs of potential bullying. Boarders are confident that the rare allegations of bullying are managed effectively. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school operates safe recruitment practices. All required checks are carried out in a timely manner and recorded in the single central register of appointments in accordance with relevant official guidance. Appropriate checks have been completed for all people over the age of 16 living in boarding accommodation but whom the school does not employ. These people have provided the documentation required concerning the terms of their accommodation. Persons visiting the boarding accommodation are kept under sufficient supervision. Suitable arrangements have been made to ensure that boarding staff engage only vetted personnel for frequent services such as taxis. [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 A suitable statement of boarding principles is available and informs practice in each of the boarding houses. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Leadership and management with responsibility for boarding have adequate experience. They demonstrate skills and knowledge appropriate to their roles and responsibilities in boarding. Review procedures have recently been introduced to evaluate the provision in each of the boarding houses. The governing body monitors boarding provision through various committees and draws on the information from analysis conducted by senior leadership to identify developments in boarding, which include improvements to boarding accommodation. Analysis conducted by middle leadership is not as well developed. Academic leadership collaborates with boarding and pastoral tutors to promote boarders' wellbeing, including those with SEND. The school maintains and monitors the necessary policies and records, taking appropriate action where this is necessary. The vast majority of parents responding to the questionnaire felt that their children were safe, that they could communicate with boarding staff and that management of boarding was effectively organised. Regulatory compliance is routinely monitored with appropriate systems to ensure that boarding practice meets the standards. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Each member of the boarding staff has a job description appropriate to their role, including spouses who contribute to boarding provision. Sufficient staff supervise each boarding house during the day and overnight; these members of staff are suitably experienced and specialist medical support is available in an emergency. Boarders know how to contact staff and appropriate systems are in place to ensure

that boarding staff know the whereabouts of boarders, particularly during co-curricular time when a variety of options are available. Boarding staff know the school's policy in relation to boarders going missing. Induction training and on-going appraisal procedures are used to identify and respond to the training needs of boarding staff and adequate professional development opportunities are provided. Boarders' access to communal areas in staff accommodation is properly supervised. [NMS 15]

- 3.19 Pupils of different nationalities integrate well and appreciate one another's cultural heritage. Boarding staff pay due regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010; they are sensitive to boarders' needs. Appropriate adjustments are made for pupils with SEND. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 A small minority of boarders who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they did not agree that the school asked for and responded to their opinions. Inspection evidence does not support this. Boarders share their views through various formal means such as the boarders' council, the food committee and the sixth-form steering group. The boarders who met the inspectors felt that their contributions in these discussions and during informal house meetings prompted developments in provision. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school has an appropriate policy on responding to complaints. Leadership records and responds to all informal concerns about boarding raised by parents and pupils. There have been no formal complaints since the previous boarding welfare inspection. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Various positions of leadership and responsibility are awarded to boarders of all ages. They are provided with adequate guidance how to fulfil their roles without abusing the position. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not provide lodgings. [NMS 20]