



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST HUGH'S SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Hugh's School

Full Name of School	St Hugh's School
DfE Number	925/6022
Registered Charity Number	527611
Address	St Hugh's School Cromwell Avenue Woodhall Spa Lincolnshire LN10 6TQ
Telephone Number	01526 352169
Fax Number	01526 351520
Email Address	dos@st-hughs.lincs.sch.uk
Head	Mr Chris Ward
Chair of Governors	Mr Mark Harrison
Age Range	2 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	180
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (96 boys; 84 girls)
Numbers by Age	2-5 (EYFS): 55 5-11: 86 11-13: 39
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 133
Number of Boarders	Total: 47 Full: 7 Weekly: 40
Inspection Dates	22 to 24 September 2015

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 chair of governors and a governing board member, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended registration sessions. Inspectors visited the boarding house 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 Sue Bennett

Reporting Inspector

Mr Rupert Blencowe

Team Inspector for Boarding
(Head of Boarding, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Hugh's School is a day and boarding preparatory school for boys and girls from the ages of two to thirteen years. It is located in Woodhall Spa, a small village in Lincolnshire. Established in 1925 for boys only, the school began to admit girls in 1981 and pre-prep pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), in 1993. The school is on a self-contained campus, comprising a main Edwardian building, along with a number of more recently built educational facilities. There is one boarding house which accommodates boys and girls between the ages of eight and thirteen. The school has a charitable status and is overseen by a board of governors.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a caring, family atmosphere and to allow all pupils to develop their independence and individuality. It seeks to achieve this by providing a happy, stimulating and inclusive environment, based around Christian values, enabling pupils to feel safe, valued and cared for. Furthermore, the school aims to equip pupils with the traditional values of courtesy, honesty and hard work, together with a sense of responsibility and consideration for others. The boarding principles are intended to build on these aims by seeking to provide a community experience that enables boarders to develop their unique gifts and to prepare them for their future lives.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has made significant improvements to the boarding facilities. The accommodation for both boys and girls has been refurbished and now includes communal relaxation areas with a range of leisure resources. The boarding management has been restructured, and improvements made to channels of communication between parents and house staff, including those which enable boarders to contact their families.
- 1.4 The school has 180 pupils on roll, 96 boys and 84 girls, with 55 in the EYFS. Currently, 47 pupils board, either on a full, weekly or flexible basis. Of the 30 pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities across the school, all receive extra support for their learning. One pupil has an Education, Health and Care plan. There are no pupils attending the school who have English as an additional language. Pupils' families predominantly come from business or farming backgrounds. Most are of white British ethnicity, with a small minority from a broad mix of other nationalities and cultures.
- 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 does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, and therefore it must take the following action.
- Ensure that all the necessary recruitment checks are carried out on all staff before they are appointed, including a prohibition check for all staff employed in a teaching position [National Minimum Standard 14.1, under Staff recruitment and checks on other adults, and for the same reason, National Minimum Standard 11, under Child Protection].

(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. Improve the depth of recorded information in governance meeting minutes following the annual review of safeguarding.
 2. Strengthen development planning to present a sharper focus for future boarding improvement.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

- 2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI as part of an integrated inspection in October 2012. The school has made suitable progress in addressing most elements of a recommendation made at that time, to introduce a systematic process for overseeing and reviewing the regulatory requirements.

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 suitable induction on arrival. Child-friendly handbooks, staff support and the 'buddy' system help to settle boarders into house routines. Boarders know that there are a range of people in school to whom they can turn for advice, and contact details for outside agencies are prominently displayed. Boarders understand the role of the independent listener. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell are in place and implemented effectively, promoting their physical, mental and emotional well-being. There are clear arrangements for providing first aid and dealing with medical emergencies at all times of the day and night, and staff are appropriately qualified. Medical care records, including for the dispensing of medicines and home remedies, are carefully kept. Medicines are stored securely and their administration follows clear procedures. Prescribed medication is only given to boarders for whom it is prescribed. Appropriately separated accommodation, including washing and toilet facilities, is available for boys and girls who are ill. Boarders have access to specialist services when needed. Currently, no boarders self-medicate. Staff are aware of the need to respect the request of a boarder to give or withhold consent for his or her own treatment. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders report that they find it easy to contact home and in private when they wish. Personal mobile telephones are available for use each evening and the house is equipped with plentiful landline telephones. Computers are available for email access and some boarders have their own tablet computers for this purpose. Appropriate systems monitor the safe use of electronic communications and boarders sign an acceptable use policy. [NMS4]
- 3.5 Suitable accommodation is provided for boarders. The separated boys' and girls' wings within the boarding house are well organised. Regular risk assessments are undertaken to reduce risk for all boarders. There has recently been extensive refurbishment to all boarding areas and boarders were involved in contributing their ideas to these changes. Dormitories are suitably furnished, sufficient in size, well heated, lit, ventilated, clean and secure from other pupils in the school. Rooms have ample space for personal belongings and bedding is clean. Boarders are able to personalise areas and are encouraged to do so. There are shared communal areas for boarders to relax and socialise, and they can complete academic work in a separate workroom within the house. Washrooms on each wing have suitable numbers of personal facilities, providing appropriate privacy and within easy reach of the dormitories. Visitors are not allowed unsupervised access and CCTV use does not intrude on boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Boarders speak warmly of the quality, quantity and variety of the food provided. Meals are well balanced, nutritious and prepared in a well-equipped and hygienic kitchen. Individual diets are catered for appropriately. The dining room is easily accessible and family style meals are encouraged. Boarders have supervised access to the house kitchen in the evenings for snacks and drinks. Drinking water is readily available. No boarders have disabilities that require support with eating. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Laundry arrangements are appropriate and boarders report a quick return of their clothes and bedding. Staff readily purchase any additional personal items or

stationery that boarders may require. Older boarders are able to walk to local shops once a week. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a few boarders were concerned about the safety of their belongings. Inspection evidence does not support this view. Boarders are able to bring in a lockable container for their valuables if they wish. Additionally, they can hand items to house staff for safe keeping. Official guidance is observed in the event of staff needing to search boarders' belongings. [NMS 9]

- 3.8 In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses a very small minority of boarders expressed dissatisfaction with the balance of activities and free time. Inspection evidence showed that the balance is appropriate. The activities programme during the day, in the evening and at weekends is varied and plentiful, including options on site as well as further afield. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken for activities such as horse riding. Boarders have suitable access to recreational areas, both indoors and outside, for rest and relaxation. Boarders watch an appropriate news channel each morning and have access to newspapers in the library. No onerous demands are made on boarders. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school does not meet two of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school implements its written health and safety procedures effectively. Risk assessments are comprehensive and cover all areas of the school premises, accommodation and facilities. Documents are regularly reviewed by senior leaders and managers; appropriate action is taken to rectify any identified issues. Detailed risk assessments are completed for any off-site and residential trips. These measures protect, as far as reasonably possible, boarders' welfare, health and safety. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Stringent measures to reduce the risk from fire are in place, including regular audits and testing of equipment by external specialists. Regular fire drills are undertaken, including during boarding time, and emergency procedures are clearly understood by the boarders. Records are carefully maintained and monitored. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Safeguarding arrangements are appropriately implemented in practice and, in most respects, effectively promote boarders' welfare. However, in the past there have been recruitment check discrepancies for new staff. Amendments to written policies to reflect current guidance were promptly made by the close of the inspection. All staff, including designated safeguarding personnel, have appropriate levels of training and receive regular updates to reflect changes in practice, such as 'Prevent' awareness, in relation to the Government strategy for countering extremism. Governors monitor these arrangements and undertake the annual review of safeguarding with due diligence. However, written records lack sufficient breadth to reflect the depth of discussions. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Written policies to promote good behaviour amongst boarders are in place and consistently implemented in practice. The procedures include measures to guard against bullying, including cyber-bullying, complying with relevant legislation and guidance, and are well understood by both staff and boarders. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a few boarders and parents commented negatively on the school's handling of bullying and standards of behaviour. Inspection evidence does not support these views. During inspection discussions, boarders commented that incidents of bullying are extremely rare and that they feel confident that staff address any occurrences promptly. They report that staff are very fair in administering both sanctions and rewards. Boarders have recently

contributed towards devising the 'Pupil Promise', which they say provides clear guidance on behavioural expectations. Detailed records are carefully maintained and managed. Suitable arrangements are in place for searching boarders and their possessions and for the use of physical restraint should the need arise. [NMS 12]

- 3.14 The school now operates appropriate safe recruitment procedures for the appointment of all staff, volunteers and governors, having made improvements to the process and completed checks not made previously. During the inspection, prohibition checks were obtained for a small number of peripatetic staff. All necessary appointment checks are now completed in a timely manner and recorded appropriately within the single central register. There are currently no residents on the school premises over the age of 16 who are not employed by the school. The protocol for visitors to the school is stringently implemented, ensuring that there is no unsupervised access to boarders or their accommodation. The school does not appoint guardians to care 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 A suitable statement of boarding principles is made available to parents, staff and boarders in boarding handbooks and related policies. These values are clearly reflected in practice. Boarders commented that they feel well cared for and safe, and that boarding is like being part of a big family. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The school's governance appropriately monitors the quality of boarding provision and supports boarders' well-being and welfare through regular visits to the school, meeting with staff, boarders, senior leaders and managers. A clear boarding leadership and management structure is in place. Links between academic and residential staff are effective. Academic staff undertake boarding duties, and boarders' pastoral and educational needs are regularly discussed in whole-staff meetings. Self-evaluation systems clearly demonstrate a vision for boarding, and senior leaders and managers have good levels of skills and knowledge in boarding provision. However, development planning documentation does not clearly identify specific timescales or targets for future boarding improvement. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a few parents expressed concerns about leadership and management organisation and communication channels. These views were not supported by inspection evidence. Parents have many opportunities to communicate with staff, as evidenced in communication records. Recent leadership and management restructuring has had a positive impact on boarding provision, such as the many improvements to boarding facilities and accommodation, which boarders describe as 'amazing'. Leaders and managers appropriately maintain and monitor the required records. Senior boarding staff have suitable levels of experience and boarding training. Some minor policy amendments were required prior to the inspection to fully reflect recent regulatory updates. All boarding documents are now followed and maintained as required by the regulations. Prompt action is taken to improve outcomes for boarders when required. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Boarding staff, who are all employed by the school, have detailed job descriptions that accurately reflect their roles and responsibilities. Suitable induction procedures for new boarding staff clearly support their understanding of the school's expectations. A professional review programme and training provide appropriate support for professional development. Sufficient numbers of staff, with appropriate qualifications and experience, supervise boarders at all times. During the night boarders can easily contact staff should the need arise. Registration systems

ensure that staff always know boarders' whereabouts. A detailed policy is in place for staff to follow in the event that a boarder should go missing and staff have a clear understanding of the procedures. Suitable accommodation is provided for staff, appropriately separated from boarders. Boarders do not have access to staff accommodation. [NMS 15]

- 3.19 In pre-inspection questionnaire responses a very small minority of boarders felt that staff do not always support their individual needs. Additionally, a few parents expressed concern over their children's individual support. However, during discussions, boarders commented that staff do understand and support them, describing them as very approachable and helpful, including providing help with homework when needed. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders are actively encouraged to contribute their views on boarding provision through the boarding committee or the suggestion box on the house landing. Recent changes as a result of their suggestions include more varied resources in communal areas. During discussions, boarders said that they are able to raise concerns and make complaints, and that staff readily listen to them and appropriately address any issues. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school has an appropriate policy on responding to complaints, which is in line with regulatory requirements. Procedures are carefully followed and efficiently recorded, including any action taken by the school. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 The boarding house does not operate a prefect system. However, boarders do undertake roles of responsibility, such as a rota for tidying communal areas and washing up after snacks. They comment that these duties help to prepare them for future life. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings. [NMS 20]