



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

WESTONBIRT SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Westonbirt School

Full Name of School	Westonbirt School		
DfE Number	916/6019		
Registered Charity Number	311715		
Address	Westonbirt School Westonbirt Tetbury Gloucestershire GL8 8QG		
Telephone Number	01666 880333		
Fax Number	01666 880364		
Email Address	office@westonbirt.gloucs.sch.uk		
Headmistress	Mrs Mary Henderson		
Chair of Governors	Mr Dermot McMeekin		
Age Range	4 to 19		
Total Number of Pupils	334		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (46 boys; 288 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 87
	3-5 (EYFS):	41	11-18: 206
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	199	
Number of Boarders	Total:	135	
	Full:	116	Weekly: 19
Inspection dates	16th to 18th Oct 2012		

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. 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.

Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of ISI on the Ofsted website.

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

Mr Peter Jones	Reporting Inspector
Ms Anne Cox	Team Inspector for Boarding (Housemistress, GSA school)
Mr Simon Leyshon	Team Inspector for Boarding (Chaplain, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Westonbirt School is a boarding and day school which educates girls from the ages of eleven to nineteen. It was founded in 1928 by the Martyrs Memorial Trust as a boarding school for girls, and is still owned by the Trust. The school is now part of the Allied Schools Group and has its own governing body, the chairman of which is a member of the Allied Schools Council. The school occupies a nineteenth-century mansion and extensive gardens and grounds near Tetbury in Gloucestershire. The school shares its facilities with a co-educational day school for pupils aged three to eleven which is in the grounds of Westonbirt. At the time of the inspection, the total number of pupils in both schools was 334, 46 boys and 288 girls; Westonbirt School had 71 day pupils and 135 boarders with 19 of these boarding weekly. Most pupils are from families with professional backgrounds and some come from a range of ethnic groups, with about a quarter of the pupils from overseas. Day pupils are able to board on occasional nights at the school by prior arrangement. The school has 72 pupils for whom English is an additional language and 70 of these receive support for their English. Forty-seven pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities and 38 of these receive specialist learning support from the school.
- 1.2 Four of the boarding houses are located within the main building with the sixth-form house located close by on the main school site. The school's ethos is based on strong relationships and an encouragement for the pupils to work and play hard. The school aims to promote high academic standards and to develop each pupil's self-reliance, self-respect and strong moral values based on Christian principles.
- 1.3 Since the last inspection in 2011, a new management structure has been put in place, a new head of boarding appointed, a new school day and after-school activities programme introduced, and a new music technology centre has been opened.
- 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 does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011, and therefore it must:

- ensure that boarding and other accommodation provided is appropriately heated, maintained and gives suitable privacy for boarders for toilet and washing facilities (National Minimum Standard 5.1, under Boarding Accommodation);
- ensure that accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders accommodated (National Minimum Standard 5.2, under Boarding and Accommodation).

(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. Develop further the quality and consistency of the practice and management of boarding.
2. Give greater weight to the importance of good quality décor and furnishings in keeping with the homely ethos of the boarding houses.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in November 2009. The inspection recommended changes to the arrangements for medical consents, registration information about parental responsibility and written records of medication. Further recommendations were made about the inclusion of the school's child protection policy in the boarding handbook, the recording of sanctions, the gathering of information about staff and the school's procedures in relation to Criminal Records Bureau checks. The inspection also recommended that staff receive training in health and safety, that boarders should be given sufficient opportunities to contribute to the operation of boarding and that they should have lockable storage provision in their dormitories. The school has met these recommendations.

2.4 The inspection also recommended that the programme for redecoration and refurbishment of bathrooms and boarding houses should be accelerated as a matter of urgency. The school has not met this recommendation in full.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

3.(a) Boarding provision and care

- 3.1 The school does not meet one of the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 There is an appropriate process of induction for new boarders. Pupils say they can talk to a wide range of staff if they need help or guidance with a personal problem, and know how to contact an independent listener and national helpline numbers, including the Children's Rights Director. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school has policies for the care of boarders who are unwell and implements these successfully. Appropriate policies and procedures exist for first aid and dealing with medical emergencies, and for the care of any boarder pupils with a chronic condition or disability. Suitable arrangements are made for the use of household remedies. Nursing staff provide care during the day and night for five days of the week, with boarders who are ill overnight accommodated in the sanatorium. Additional medical, dental and other health care is accessible outside school through local services. Procedures for handling and recording medicines are thorough and medicines are only given to the boarder to whom they are prescribed. Parents give permission for their children to receive treatment and this information is stored and shared appropriately. The confidentiality and rights of boarders as patients are respected, including the right of older boarders deemed to be competent to give or withhold their consent for treatment. The school has met the recommendations from the previous boarding inspection by implementing changes to the arrangements for medical consents, registration information about parental responsibility and written records of medication. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders are able to contact their parents, carers and families in private by landline telephone, mobile telephone, email and surface mail. Some girls commented in their questionnaire responses that they found it difficult to contact their parents. This reflects the uneven mobile phone signal available in the school's rural location as well as the slow internet broadband speed which currently prevents the use of internet video telephone. The school recommends a specific mobile phone network whose signal is stronger than others, and is in the process of installing an upgraded internet connection which will allow internet video telephone calls. The school has suitable systems to ensure the safe use by boarders of electronic communications. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation is suitably lit and ventilated. Girls report that heating in some dormitories is not always adequate and inspectors agree with this view. In addition there is not always enough heating in the sanatorium. The standard of cleaning is adequate. Girls report that some of the bathrooms are in poor decorative order and inspectors agree that the boarding accommodation is not appropriately maintained. The school provides for reasonable adjustments to be made for any boarders with restricted mobility. Some of the shower facilities fail to provide sufficient privacy for the boarders. Although all boarding accommodation is adequately furnished, the standard of furnishings is not consistent across all boarding houses. Some bedrooms are too crowded, use is made of bunk beds which are not suitable for the age and size of the occupants and there is not always enough space between the beds. A significant minority of parents said in their questionnaire responses that they did not feel all the boarding accommodation was comfortable, and inspection evidence supports this view. The girls bring their own duvets, other soft furnishings and decorate their personal space. Boarding

accommodation is reserved for the use of those pupils designated to use it, and there are suitable facilities for both organised and private study within the boarding houses. Surveillance equipment is used discreetly on the ground floor of the school and does not intrude unreasonably on the boarders' privacy. The school has a rolling programme for redecoration and refurbishment of bathrooms and boarding houses. This has not been accelerated with sufficient urgency to meet the recommendation of the previous inspection. [NMS 5]

- 3.6 Meals are sufficient in quantity and quality and are varied and nutritious. Boarders are consulted about the planning of the menus and special dietary needs are met. Although a significant proportion of girls who responded to the pupil questionnaire were negative about the food, the majority of the pupils interviewed said the food was good, and inspectors supported this view. The school has hygienic facilities for preparing and serving school meals and suitable dining rooms are used. Boarders have access to drinking water and can prepare simple food in all houses at any time. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Suitable laundry provision is made for boarders' clothing and bedding, which are adequately stored and correctly issued. Personal and stationery items can be obtained. Boarders are offered secure provision for the placement of any valuables or personal possessions brought into school and this meets the recommendation of the previous inspection that boarders should have lockable storage provision in their dormitories. Some boarders expressed the view in the pupil questionnaire that their belongings were not safe, but this view appears to reflect a recent isolated incident which the school addressed correctly, and is not supported by the evidence of general practice in the boarding houses. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarders participate in an extensive range of activities, during the week and at the weekends. There are adequate facilities which allow access to a range and choice of safe recreational areas. Trips out of the school are organised regularly. Pupils access information about the wider world through the internet and newspapers. [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 suitable arrangements for assuring the welfare, health and safety of occupants in the school throughout the premises and school site. The school has a suitable health and safety policy which is reviewed annually. Boarders say they feel safe and secure in the school, and view their boarding houses as homely places. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Fire precautions minimise hazards and fire drills take place regularly in boarding time. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Appropriate arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders are made, with links to the local safeguarding children board as necessary. Staff are trained to appropriate levels and at the required intervals in child protection. The child protection policy is included in the boarding handbook, meeting the recommendation from the previous inspection. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school has a written policy which includes measures to promote good behaviour and combat bullying. Boarders say they do not experience bullying, and any unpleasant behaviour is dealt with effectively. School rules and disciplinary

sanctions are known to boarders. A separate record is kept of sanctions administered and the name of the person issuing the sanction, meeting the recommendation of the previous inspection. [NMS 12]

- 3.14 The school operates safe recruitment procedures and has an appropriate single central register of appointments. The recommendation from the previous inspection, about the gathering of full and satisfactory information on staff and undertaking correct procedures in relation to CRB checks, is met. Suitable checks are made and written agreements exist between the school and persons over sixteen living in the same premises as boarders, and there are appropriate arrangements for the supervision of visitors to boarding accommodation. [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 statement of the school's boarding principles and practice, available to parents and staff, is made known to boarders and implemented appropriately. [NMS1]
- 3.17 The school's management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding includes effective links between academic and residential staff. Senior boarding staff have adequate but varying levels of experience and training and the school is in the process of introducing a more structured approach to the co-ordination and management of boarding. Records relating to boarders are maintained, monitored and acted on appropriately. A small number of parents said in the parent questionnaires that they did not feel boarding was well organised and managed, but inspection evidence of the school's current boarding practice indicates that management and leadership are clear. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 The school ensures that staff employed in positions working with boarders have job descriptions reflecting their duties, receive suitable induction and subsequent training and regular reviews of their boarding practice. This meets the previous inspection recommendation that staff receive training in health and safety and are clear about delegated responsibilities. Supervision of boarders outside teaching time is sufficient to meet needs. Staff know the whereabouts of their boarders or know where to find them at all times, and understand the procedures to follow in the unlikely event that a boarder should go missing. At least one member of staff sleeps in each boarding house each night and boarders know how to contact them. Boarder access to staff accommodation is properly supervised. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders are treated equally and feel that the care they receive is sensitive to their differing needs. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders have opportunities to make known their views on boarding provision. Girls feel comfortable about raising complaints or concerns and say that the school takes their views into account and reports back to them. Although a number of girls who answered the pupil questionnaire felt that the school did not ask for their opinions or respond to them, during interviews girls said that they had good opportunities to give their opinions through a boarders' council, a food council and a newly-formed social committee with the outcomes of the work of these groups shared during assemblies. This meets the previous recommendation that the school should ensure sufficient regular opportunities for boarders to contribute to the operation of boarding with feedback given. [NMS 17]

- 3.21 Complaints from parents are responded to according to the school's policy. In their responses to the inspection questionnaire parents gave overwhelming support to most aspects of the school. [NMS18]
- 3.22 Year 13 and Year 11 prefects are allocated appropriate responsibilities which they carry out conscientiously. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 There are no boarders in lodgings away from the school. [NMS 20 not applicable]