



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**DORSET HOUSE SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Dorset House School

Full Name of School	<b>Dorset House School</b>
DfE Number	<b>938/6015</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>307035</b>
Address	<b>Dorset House School The Manor Church Lane Bury Pulborough West Sussex RH20 1PB England</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01798 831456</b>
Fax Number	<b>01798 831141</b>
Email Address	<b>info@dorsethouseschool.com</b>
Head	<b>Mr Richard Brown</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Captain Willy Hockin</b>
Age Range	<b>4 to 13</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>128</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (72 boys; 56 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	4-5 (EYFS): <b>9</b> 5-11: <b>86</b> 11-13: <b>33</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>81</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>47</b> Flexi: <b>47</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>10 November 2015 to 12 November 2015</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 governors, 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

Dr Robin Harskin

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

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

- 1.1 Dorset House School is an independent day and boarding preparatory school for boys and girls from the age of four to thirteen years. It is located in the small village of Bury, near Arundel in Sussex. Originating in 1784, the school moved to Bury Manor in 1964 and became a charitable trust under the direction of a governing body. The school is on a self-contained campus, comprising a medieval Great Barn, a 12th century village church and a number of more recent educational facilities. There is one boarding house, which accommodates boys and girls between the ages of nine and thirteen years.
- 1.2 The school aims to create a boarding community which engenders a 'home away from home' feeling, based on the belief that emotional and social well-being and growth, self-esteem and confidence are of prime importance. It seeks to foster a culture of mutual respect, tolerance and trust, with supportive guidance from staff in times of difficulty. Furthermore, the school aims to meet boarders' individual needs and nurture their aptitudes by providing of a range of activities and opportunities which enable them to discover their 'best self'.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the school has undertaken significant redevelopment of the boarding facilities. The accommodation for both boys and girls has been refurbished and a new boarding management structure has been put in place.
- 1.4 The school has 128 pupils on roll; 72 boys and 56 girls, with 9 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Currently, 47 pupils board on a flexible basis. There are 32 pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) across the school and 29 receive extra support for their learning. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are no pupils attending the school who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Pupils' predominantly come from business and professional family backgrounds. Most are of white British ethnicity, with a very 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:

- implement all recruitment checks on staff before they begin work, namely: prohibition order checks for peripatetic staff working in a teaching capacity. [National Minimum Standard 11 under Child protection and for the same reason, National Minimum Standard 14.1, under Staff recruitment and checks on other adults];
- ensure that the records specified in Appendix 2, notably recruitment records, are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate [National Minimum Standard 13.4 and 13.8 under Management and development of boarding].

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

2.2 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Improve opportunities for younger boarders to undertake roles of responsibility to support their personal development.

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

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI as part of an integrated inspection in November 2012. No specific boarding recommendations were raised at the inspection.

### **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 Induction of new boarders is appropriately undertaken by the house parents. A comprehensive handbook and clear notices within the house explain boarding procedures. A 'buddy' system is in place to help new boarders understand boarding house life. All boarders are aware of which adults they can turn to for advice, including school staff, the independent listener, and national support lines. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Appropriate policies provide for the care of boarders who are unwell, and promote their physical and mental health and emotional well-being. Procedures are implemented effectively, including dealing with any medical emergencies. Boarders are cared for by appropriately qualified medical staff, who are on call 24 hours a day. The medical provision includes separate sleeping, toilet and washing facilities for boys and girls, suitably separated from other boarders, although most boarders who are unwell are cared for at home. Boarders have access to outside medical services if required. All medication is securely stored and accurate records are kept of its administration, including for household remedies. Careful measures ensure that medication is only given to boarders for whom it is prescribed. Boarders' rights of confidentiality and consent are fully understood by staff. No boarders self-medicate at the moment. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can easily contact their parents and families in private; this is usually through the use of a school mobile phone or access to email during the evening. Proportionate systems monitor and control boarders' use of electronic communication and to ensure that they are not susceptible to unsafe practice. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarders are provided with suitable sleeping accommodation. Sleeping arrangements for boys and girls are on separate floors within the boarding house. Toilet and washing facilities are easily accessible from dormitories and afford appropriate privacy. The accommodation is safe, well-organised, and clean; regular risk assessments help to reduce risk for all boarders. All areas are regularly re-decorated and have recently undergone extensive refurbishment. There is a central library and sitting room area where boarders can study quietly or socialise with their friends. A new snooker table has recently been installed, which boarders enjoy. Dormitories are appropriately lit, heated and ventilated; they are suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number and ages of boarders accommodated. Bedding is clean and warm. Boarders are given ample choice as to how to decorate and personalise their dormitories, including the hanging of posters. The boarding house is only accessible to boarders and appropriate staff. Visitors do not have any unsupervised access. Surveillance equipment in no way intrudes on boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Food is prepared, cooked, and served in hygienic conditions. Meals are varied, nutritious and of suitable quality. Boarders comment that they can have as much to eat as they like and that meals are 'tasty', especially breakfast. Specific dietary needs are appropriately provided for. Boarders' suggestions for meals are welcomed and often acted upon. 'World Food Wednesdays' enable boarders to experience an international diet. Drinking water is readily available and snacks are provided each evening. No boarders have disabilities that require support with eating. [NMS 8]



- 3.7 Clothes and bedding are washed on a daily basis and either stored appropriately or carefully returned to the correct boarder. Boarders show respect for each other's property and each has a personal area to store their possessions. Valuable items are collected by staff each evening for safe keeping. Staff understand the official guidance to follow in the event of needing to search boarders' belongings. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 In the questionnaires, a few boarders expressed concerns regarding the balance between activities and free time. During discussions, boarders commented that they enjoy a wide range of evening activities, including sports, drama, music, and the construction of large-scale model racing cars. Such activities are appropriately risk-assessed. Emphasis is placed firmly on enjoyment and communal activity, with safe recreational areas available for boarders' use, both indoors and outdoors. Boarders who wish to be alone may do so. Inspection evidence does not concur with this view and finds that the balance is appropriate. No onerous demands are put on boarders. Boarders are encouraged to learn about the outside world; they have ready access to newspapers and a large wall area in the school is used exclusively for up-to-date and age-appropriate newspaper articles. [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's written health and safety policy and procedures are effectively implemented in practice, ensuring compliance with relevant health and safety regulations. The premises, accommodation and facilities are appropriately maintained and risk assessments procedures, including for off-site visits, are carefully documented. Senior leaders take prompt action to reduce risks and address maintenance issues, ensuring, as far as practicable, the health, welfare and safety of boarders. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Measures to reduce the risk from fire are implemented effectively. Fire systems and equipment are regularly tested, including external audits. Regular fire drills take place, including during boarding time and records are carefully maintained and monitored. Boarders have a clear understanding of these emergency procedures. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Arrangements to safeguard boarders and ensure their welfare are, in most respects, appropriately implemented in practice. However, not all recruitment checks have been correctly undertaken on peripatetic staff. The school's written safeguarding policies meet current requirements. All staff, including the designated safeguarding leaders, have appropriate levels of training. Regular updates ensure that they are fully aware of recent changes in safeguarding, such as the danger of radicalisation. The school has established appropriate links with the local safeguarding board for additional support and advice. Staff have a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, including reporting of concerns. Governors monitor safeguarding procedures and fulfil their responsibilities for the annual review of safeguarding. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Comprehensive written policies to promote good behaviour amongst boarders are implemented consistently in practice. Appropriate measures guard against bullying, including cyberbullying. All procedures are clearly understood by both staff and boarder. In the questionnaires, a small few boarders commented negatively on the way that staff administer rewards and sanctions and the school's response to bullying. Inspection evidence does not support these views. Boarders, during discussions, feel that systems for sanctions and rewards are fairly administered.

Written records corroborate the fairness and appropriateness of rewards and sanctions, in line with the schools' written procedures. Boarders also say that any rare incidents of bullying are promptly addressed by staff. Detailed records are carefully maintained and regularly monitored by senior staff. Boarders feel school rules are appropriate and support the school's community ethos. Suitable written procedures provide clear guidance for staff on searching boarders, their possessions and in the use of physical restraint, should the need arise. [NMS 12]

- 3.14 The school has not followed appropriate safe recruitment procedures for the appointment of all staff, volunteers and governors. All staff have the correct criminal record checks. However, the necessary prohibition from teaching checks have not been undertaken on some peripatetic staff. The school was prompt to rectify these discrepancies, and all checks are now correctly recorded on the single central register of appointments. The school is careful to ensure appropriate checks and written agreements are undertaken on residents on the premises over the age of 16, who are not employed by the school. A suitable protocol is in place for school visitors, to prevent 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 does not meet one of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The school has a suitable statement of boarding principles and practice, which is easily accessible for parents, staff and boarders within boarding handbooks and on the school's website. These values clearly work in practice, through the community feel within the house and the care and support that boarding staff provide. Boarders comment on the friendly culture of the boarding environment, within which they feel safe and well looked after. [NMS1]
- 3.17 Parents, in the pre-inspection questionnaire responses, were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of boarding. The school's governance has appropriate oversight of the boarding provision through its regular visits to meet with staff and boarders. Self-evaluation and development planning demonstrate a clear vision for boarding development. Boarding is a regular discussion point at governance meetings and suitable action is taken to remedy identified areas for improvement, such as the ongoing refurbishment of the accommodation. There is a clear structure of boarding leadership; staff are knowledgeable, and generally demonstrate the skills appropriate to their respective roles and have suitable levels of experience and training. Given the school's small community nature, links between academic and residential staff are close. Boarders' pastoral needs are regularly discussed during whole staff meetings and senior staff closely monitor boarders' well-being. Not all of the required records are appropriately monitored and maintained by leaders as the necessary staff recruitment checks were incomplete. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All staff who care for boarders are employed by the school. Detailed job descriptions accurately reflect their duties and provide a clear directive on their roles and responsibilities. Suitable induction procedures are provided for new boarding staff. Regular appraisals and external training opportunities provide appropriate support for professional development. Boarders are supervised by sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced staff at all times. House registration systems ensure that staff always know boarders' whereabouts. Staff have a clear understanding of the policy and procedures to follow in the event that a boarder goes missing. Staff are always in the boarding house at night; boarders can easily

- contact them should the need arise. Staff accommodation is appropriately separated from boarders and boarders do not have unsupervised access. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Appropriate regard is given to ensuring that boarders are equally treated. In their questionnaire responses, a few boarders commented negatively on the effectiveness of homework in supporting their learning needs and the fairness of their treatment by staff. Inspection evidence does not support this. During discussions boarders felt that homework is appropriate, staff are supportive and they are all treated with equal fairness. Records and inspection discussions demonstrate that staff have a clear understanding of boarders' individual needs, including those with SEND, which they carefully and sensitively take into account during their care for boarders. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarding house meetings and school council representation actively encourage boarders to contribute their views on the boarding provision. For example, dimmer switches have been installed following boarders' suggestions for dormitory improvements. During discussions boarders comment that staff are receptive to any concerns or complaints that they may raise. Boarders do not feel penalised for raising concerns and say that any issues are suitable addressed. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school operates an appropriate policy on responding to complaints, which is compliant with regulatory standards. Written records demonstrate the efficiency with which the school responds to and monitors concerns or complaints, including for any action taken subsequently. [NMS18]
- 3.22 A prefect system does not operate within the boarding house. A few boarders, in their questionnaire responses, felt that roles for responsibility are limited. Inspection evidence concludes that most roles are undertaken by older boarders, such as head boarder and leading supper, and that opportunities for younger boarders to further their personal development are less evident. Suitable procedures, such as staff supervision, training and a written role description provide clear guidance on the head boarders' duties and responsibilities. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings. [NMS 20]