



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

OLD BUCKENHAM HALL SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Old Buckenham Hall School

Full Name of School	Old Buckenham Hall School
DfE Number	935/6019
Address	Old Buckenham Hall School Brettenham Park Ipswich Suffolk IP7 7PH
Telephone Number	01449 740252
Fax Number	01449 740955
Email Address	admissions@obh.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr Tom O'Sullivan
Chairman of Governors	Mr Nick Bullen
Age Range	3 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	200
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (130 boys; 70 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5(EYFS): 35 5-11: 113 11-13: 52
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 111
Number of Boarders	Total: 89 Full: 42 Weekly:16 Transitional 31
Inspection Dates	19 May 2015 to 21 May 2015

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) 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.

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 the safeguarding 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

Mrs Jan Preece

Mr Richard Balding

Reporting Inspector

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

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Old Buckenham Hall School is a preparatory day and boarding school for boys and girls aged from three to thirteen years. It is set in 80 acres of rural Suffolk countryside, just outside the village of Brettenham. The school was founded in 1862 as a boys' school in Lowestoft, and moved to its current site in 1956. It became a charitable trust administered by a governing body in 1968 and first admitted girls in 1998. Since the previous inspection, a new headmaster took up appointment in January 2015 and the governing body has seen significant changes to its membership, including the appointment of a new chairman. A new head of boarding has been appointed and the school has implemented changes to make the boarding model more flexible.
- 1.2 The school aims to offer all its pupils an excellent education, inspiring them to achieve their best within a rich, happy, safe and fulfilling school experience upon which to build future success. To achieve this the school seeks, with the help and support of parents, to promote high standards of academic achievements and to support all pupils through providing a breadth of educational opportunity, strengthened through the ethos of a boarding school. The school sets out to prepare pupils for the academic, social, creative and technological demands required for the future, alongside promoting Christian values of respect, tolerance and diversity, and fostering healthy physical and emotional well-being.
- 1.3 At the time of inspection there were 200 pupils on roll, 130 boys and 70 girls, of whom 62 boys and 27 girls in Years 3 to 8 were boarders, on a transitional, weekly or full basis. Boarders are accommodated in two boarding houses, one for boys on the upper floors of the main house and one, situated in the grounds, for girls. Pupils may start to board at the age of seven. Those in Year 8 choose either to be full boarders or day pupils. Full boarding is organised on an 11-day cycle, which means that pupils spend alternate weekends at home. Most pupils come from local families with farming and professional backgrounds, and very few come from a minority ethnic background. The school offers short courses to a small number of pupils from overseas as an immersion in the life and culture of a British boarding preparatory school. The school has identified 54 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 50 receive additional support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Five pupils receive support for learning English as an additional language (EAL).
- 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) Recommendations for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that governors' minutes record in detail the process by which they carry out their annual review of safeguarding.
2. Involve the whole boarding team in regular and systematic evaluation of boarding practice and the effectiveness of recent new initiatives.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI in May 2012. No recommendations to further improve boarding were made at that time.

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 are provided with a comprehensive boarding handbook and experience a trial night. A guide from amongst their peers helps them to settle in by providing advice and support in the first days. Boarders know whom to approach if they have a concern, and they say that they are well cared for. Boarders are aware of the availability of an independent listener. Details of where to obtain help and advice, including external helplines, are displayed in prominent positions in both boarding houses. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school implements appropriate policies and protocols for the care of boarders who are unwell, which are overseen by an experienced registered nurse. The impact of medical treatment on pastoral care is closely linked and formally monitored at boarding committee meetings. Suitable sick bays, close to washroom facilities, are located in both boarding houses. Boarders with ongoing medical conditions are provided with appropriate care plans. All medication is stored securely and only boarders with asthma who are deemed sufficiently mature self-medicate. Staff maintain detailed records of treatment and medication. Close links with local specialist medical services assist arrangements for ancillary medical treatment when required. Each individual medical record contains the required parental consent forms, and boarders' rights to confidentiality are respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders may contact their families by using the house telephones, which are located to ensure privacy, and by email. The school ensures that boarders from overseas are able to use video messaging at appropriate times. Boarders understand that their use of the internet is monitored to prevent cyber-bullying and ensure access to appropriate websites, and all those interviewed expressed satisfaction at the ease with which they may contact their parents. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 The dormitories in both houses are spacious, well lit, furnished comfortably and welcoming. The rolling refurbishment programme ensures that the houses are maintained to an appropriate standard. Dormitories are bright, with distinctive character, as a result of a recent competition that inspired boarders to decorate them, and they afford sufficient storage for boarders' belongings. The school makes individual provision for any boarder with temporary restricted mobility. The ample washing and toilet facilities are located conveniently in the houses and are suitably private. Day pupils use the boarders' showers after games and visit the surgery, but are supervised whilst on the boarding floor. The common rooms are equipped with games, comfortable furniture and televisions. The boarding areas are secured to prevent unauthorised access and boarders' privacy is not compromised by surveillance equipment. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Boarders are provided with nutritious home-cooked meals and all dietary requirements are catered for. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of boarders expressed some concerns about the food and availability of snacks and drinking water. These views were not supported by inspection evidence and boarders spoken to praised the food for its variety, quality and quantity. In the houses, taps are clearly labelled as providing drinking water and inspectors observed that boarders are provided with appropriate snacks before bedtimes. The kitchens and dining hall provide suitable accommodation for the hygienic preparation and serving of the boarders' food. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Laundry arrangements are handled promptly on site. The matrons keep a stock of essential toiletries, and stationery items may be purchased from the school shop. Boarders' possessions are stored safely in lockable boxes kept by their beds and any valuables are secured by staff. A small minority of boarders expressed in response to the questionnaire that their possessions are not always safe. Inspectors found that most are happy with the safety of their belongings in the dormitories but some are concerned about the changing rooms. The school was alerted to this concern in its own survey prior to the inspection and has arranged additional supervision in the changing rooms, as well as continuing to train boarders in the appropriate storage of their kit. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarders praise the many recreational activities, including art, computing and sports, both inside and outside, which are available to them after supper and at weekends. A small number of boarders expressed in response to the questionnaire dissatisfaction with the balance of free time and activities. Inspection evidence did not support this view. Inspectors found that there is an appropriate balance of free time and supervised activities, including Sunday trips. Boarders say that they may find many safe places, both in the grounds and boarding houses, should they wish to be alone. They learn about events in the world outside school in current affairs lessons and through news programmes on the internet, though do not have consistent access to 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's policies and procedures to promote the health and safety of boarders are comprehensive and well managed. The boarding accommodation and school facilities are suitably maintained by estates staff and, when appropriate, by specialist external contractors. Health and safety records are suitably maintained. An appropriate risk assessment policy underpins thorough risk assessments for boarders' visits as well as the premises and their activities on site. Staff are being trained and monitored to ensure that they develop sufficient awareness to undertake these. Consequently, boarders live and work in an environment where safety is promoted and in response to the questionnaire almost all agreed that they feel safe in the boarding house. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 All necessary measures, which are efficiently documented, are taken to reduce the risk from fire and promote fire safety. The staff receive regular fire awareness training and an appropriate number of resident staff have undertaken additional training as fire marshals. Fire equipment is serviced at the required intervals. Evacuation drills, which occasionally require use of secondary exits, take place regularly during boarding time, including when boarders are asleep, and are recorded accurately. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The school implements thorough child protection and safeguarding measures. The safeguarding policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance and staff receive regular training to ensure that they are fully conversant with procedures. Boarders' welfare and safeguarding needs are carefully monitored and appropriate support provided. The designated safeguarding governor monitors the school's procedures regularly and produces termly reports for the governing body. Governors undertake the required annual review of safeguarding but their recording of how this is carried out lacks detail. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school has a suitable policy to promote and reward good behaviour. In questionnaire responses a small minority of boarders expressed dissatisfaction with

the use of rewards and sanctions. In interviews, they stated that, while some teachers are inconsistent in implementing the policy in lessons, their concerns do not apply to the boarding house. During boarding time a more homely style of rewards and verbal reprimands is employed and boarders report that it is operated fairly by boarding staff. The required policies for the use of restraint and arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions conform to the latest guidance. Boarders stated that bullying is rare and not tolerated in the school, and in their questionnaire responses most were happy with the school's handling of this, should it occur. Their positive view was shared by every parent who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire and confirmed by inspectors' scrutiny of records. [NMS 12]

- 3.14 The school operates thorough safe recruitment procedures, and the required checks are correctly recorded in the central register of appointments. Adult family members of staff who reside in the boarding house are suitably vetted and sign an agreement that sets out acceptable conduct. The school has suitable arrangements for visitors so that they do not have unsupervised contact with boarders. It does not appoint guardians for the boarders from overseas. [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 school publishes its principles and aims for boarding in the handbook for boarders and their parents. Boarders confirm that their house communities are homely and supportive, in accordance with these aims. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The governing body has supported the leadership's provision of new initiatives in boarding and demonstrate a clear sense of direction for its development. Boarders' academic and welfare needs are central to the leadership of boarding, though the most recent initiatives have not yet had time to become fully established and their effectiveness evaluated. The leadership provides experienced and committed guidance to the boarding staff, and ensures close liaison between the pupils' academic and residential lives through daily staff briefings as well as informal contact. Close attention is paid to the well-being of every boarder. Records demonstrate that any concerns are discussed at weekly boarding meetings and with parents, so that effective support is put in place. Boarding staff attend appropriate training to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. Governors' minutes demonstrate that they monitor closely the boarding provision with the leadership so that the boarding standards are fully met. All the required boarding records are kept. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All boarding staff have appropriate job descriptions. They receive suitable induction training, which ensures that they fully understand their responsibilities and the correct procedures. Boarding staff receive regular reviews of their practice and the leadership has initiated a revised system for professional review which links more closely to training opportunities. Boarders are carefully supervised by sufficient duty staff who take roll calls at key times of the day. They confirm that they can always locate a member of staff in boarding time and easily contact an adult at night. As required, the school's missing pupil policy has been amended to indicate when police help would be sought. Accommodation for resident staff is separate but adjacent to boarding areas and boarders do not have inappropriate access to it. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 The school has clear policies to promote equality that are implemented appropriately. International boarders and any who experience difficulties with their

learning or welfare are provided with suitable individual support. The boarders confirm that they are treated equally. [NMS 16]

- 3.20 The new leadership has established a school council that meets twice each term. In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of boarders did not agree that the school asks for, and responds to, their opinions. Inspectors found no evidence to support this view. Those interviewed appreciated the council and gave several examples of improvements arising from its discussions, such as lowering the price of tuck and the provision of a junior common room. Boarding staff undertake regular surveys of the boarders' views, such as a recent one about catering. Boarders of all ages are confident that they may make suggestions informally to staff. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school's complaints procedure is suitable and available to parents on its website. Records indicate that most concerns are resolved informally and, in response to the questionnaire, the vast majority of parents were happy with the handling of any concerns. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 The role of prefect does not extend to the boarding house. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20]