



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**THE PARK SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## The Park School

Full Name of School	<b>The Park School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>933/6035</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>310214</b>		
Address	<b>The Park School</b> <b>The Park</b> <b>Yeovil</b> <b>Somerset</b> <b>BA20 1DH</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01935 423514</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01935 411257</b>		
Email Address	<b>thehead@parkschool.com</b>		
Head	<b>Mrs Jane Huntington</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Steve Hart</b>		
Age Range	<b>2 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>188</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (96 boys; 92 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>46</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>9</b>	11-18: <b>133</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>164</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>24</b>	
	Full:	<b>24</b>	Weekly: <b>0</b>
Inspection dates	<b>20 Nov 2012 to 22 Nov 2012</b>		

## 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 December 2009 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 the chair of governors and the governor with responsibility for boarding, 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 Stuart Thackrah

Mrs Jan Scarrow

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Head, GSA School)

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

- 1.1 The Park School is an independent day and boarding co-educational school for pupils aged between three and eighteen years. It occupies two sites a short walking distance apart near the centre of Yeovil. The school was founded in 1851 and became a company limited by guarantee in 1957, with a board of governors who are trustees of the charity. It admitted boys to the senior department in 1993 and a sixth form was officially opened in 2000. The school maintains the strong Evangelical Christian tradition that characterised its foundation but it welcomes pupils of all denominations and faiths. Through its Christian ethos the school aims ‘to provide a solid foundation for life by providing a safe and happy environment in which pupils can develop academically, physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually to their highest potential, so that they can mature into well rounded adults in today’s world’.
- 1.2 The boarding houses aim to provide ‘a secure family environment where our young people can live healthy, safe and fulfilled lives’. There are two houses situated within the school grounds; one for boys only and the second for boys and girls. At present there are 24 full boarders, 15 boys and 9 girls, and there are also 3 home-stay pupils. There is provision for weekly or flexi-boarders when required. The boarders come from both Britain and overseas with the majority coming from Hong Kong. Those for whom English is an additional language (EAL) are supported by the school’s EAL department. The school prepares most of its pupils for university entrance and those from overseas may complete the international English language test for this purpose. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered by the school including the participation in many local and national competitions.
- 1.3 Since the last inspection a second boarding house has been opened between the existing boarding and the head’s house and a new head of boarding has been appointed from September 2012. The head exercises overall responsibility over the school’s three departments, junior, senior and sixth form, including the running of the boarding houses. The current head was appointed in January 2011.
- 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 accommodation for sick boarders is adequately separated from other boarders, provides separate accommodation for male and female boarders and is close enough for staff to monitor the sick person at all times [National Minimum Standard 3.2, under Boarders' health and well-being];
- operate safe recruitment procedures and vet staff in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance issued by the Secretary of State [National Minimum Standards 14.1, under Staff Recruitment and Checks on Other Adults].

### **(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. Provide documentation for boarders in their mother tongue to help boarders and their parents to understand the requirements of the school.
2. Improve the boarding areas, including the facilities for showering.

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

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in December 2009. Nine recommendations were made, all of which have been acted upon. The school now records complaints received comprehensively and its complaints policy includes the address for Ofsted. A person has been appointed with overall responsibility for the medical care of boarders but with specialist help accessible close by, the school has decided that a first aider rather than a qualified nurse is appropriate. All staff who administer medicine have been suitably trained. There is now a robust system for ensuring that money kept for boarders is adequately logged and boarders' opinions on what food is offered at mealtimes are now taken into consideration.

### **3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS**

#### **3.(a) Boarding provision and care**

- 3.1 The school meets all but one of the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 The induction process for new boarders helps them settle in, although the written literature is sparse. Boarders state that they understand the procedures through a mixture of help from staff and older pupils. Some boarders who could not read English prior to arrival suggested that a handbook written in their own language would be beneficial and both Russian and Cantonese versions are planned. Each boarder has many adults to turn to for guidance and in discussion they were clear that boarding staff were very supportive. There is an independent listener from without the school available and all appropriate helpline numbers are clearly displayed. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school has appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell. These include first aid, care of those with chronic conditions and disabilities, dealing with medical emergencies and the use of household remedies. Some overseas parents have not completed the medical form, making it difficult for staff to respond to any existing conditions. There is no separate accommodation for boarders who are unwell, consequently they retire to their rooms. They are monitored regularly by first aiders but they may not be within calling distance at all times. Boarders have access to local medical, dental, optometric and other specialist services or provision as necessary. Prescribed medicines are given only to the boarder to whom they are prescribed. The one boarder allowed to self-medicate has been assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so. The confidentiality and rights of boarders as patients are respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Electronic communication is accessible to all boarders and, particularly for those who live overseas, is used often. Appropriate systems monitor and control the use of electronic communications in order to detect abuse, bullying or unsafe practice by boarders. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 The boarding houses are well maintained, adequately furnished and accessible to all pupils. A refurbishment programme is planned to brighten and upgrade the provision. There is separation of genders and boys' and girls' toilet and washing facilities are adequate, but privacy is minimal in one shower room. New bedding is provided for each boarder and boarders can personalise their rooms using the pin boards provided. Younger pupils do prep in the dining room whilst the older boarders can work in their rooms. Internet access allows them to do private research using the school's network. Boarding accommodation is reserved for boarding pupils only and the security measures in place are not intrusive. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 The boarders enjoy meals which are nutritious, varied and substantial. Boarders' choices are accommodated by the catering staff as are any dietary, medical or religious needs. The dining room and kitchen are well maintained and boarders have access to snacks and drinking water in addition to the main meals. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Laundry and storage provision for boarders' bedding and clothing are adequate. Boarders are able to visit town at the weekend to purchase personal items and have secure lockers for their personal items. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 There is a range of activities throughout the day until 6.00pm and a programme of evening and weekend activities for the boarders. There are sitting rooms in each of the boarding houses and outside grass and all-weather facilities provide safe

recreational areas. Boarders may return to their rooms for quiet time if they so wish. Newspapers and magazines are available for boarders to access world events and they regularly use local facilities, such as the sports centre at the local college. [NMS 10]

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

- 3.9 The school meets all but one of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The health, safety and welfare of the occupants are reasonably assured in every part of the school's land and buildings with regard for all official guidance. There is a premises development plan which includes general maintenance overseen by the governing body. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school's fire safety policies are thorough, giving clear guidance to all staff in the event of a fire. Safety equipment is regularly checked and written records kept. There are termly fire drills during boarding time. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils are appropriate. The designated person is suitably qualified and all staff are trained as part of the induction process and regularly thereafter. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 There are suitable measures to combat bullying and promote good behaviour. The boarders say that there is no bullying and that sanctions for poor behaviour are fair and consistently applied. There is a clear policy for the restraint of pupils in certain circumstances with appropriate arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The policies for the recruitment and vetting of staff are comprehensive but in a number of cases had not been applied correctly. Some staff had only one reference, some references had not been correctly verified and interview notes were sparse. A number of people are involved in recording these details and a centralised system under a single person with clear oversight is lacking to ensure greater consistency. [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 boarding principles are stated on the school's website and in the boarding handbooks for pupils and staff. The strong family atmosphere clearly demonstrates that these principles are working in practice. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 There is clear management and leadership shown from the head and the governors and the opening of the new boarding house shows that the development of boarding is on-going. There is effective communication between house and academic staff and the head of boarding coordinates this dialogue. The boarding staff are adequately trained in first aid and child protection and the head of boarding undertakes further training with the Boarding School Association. All records are maintained and monitored. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All staff working with boarders have job descriptions, induction training prior to taking up the post and regular training and reviews thereafter. Supervision outside teaching time is always carried out by suitably qualified and experienced staff who know where the boarders are at all times but are aware of the procedures should a boarder go missing. There is always at least one member of staff sleeping in each

boarding house, and boarders are confident that they can contact someone if necessary. Access to staff accommodation is always suitably monitored. [NMS 15]

- 3.19 Boarders suffer no discrimination and great care is taken to integrate pupils from different cultures and religions. The EAL department is active in enabling those with limited English to access the curriculum and those with other special needs are equally supported. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 There are regular meetings, both formal and informal, where boarders are encouraged to raise concerns and influence decisions within the house. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 There is an appropriate policy for complaints, compliant with the relevant regulatory standards. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 All Year 12 pupils are prefects, and Year 13 pupils can apply to become senior prefects, one of which has responsibility for boarding. All are suitably monitored and given appropriate duties. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 An agency arranges all home-stay accommodation directly with parents and carries out all necessary checks and visits on their behalf. It monitors the arrangements, provides appropriate documentation and liaises regularly with the school to ensure that any concerns or complaints are resolved. [NMS 20]