



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**HEADINGTON SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Headington School

Full Name of School	<b>Headington School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>931/6064</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>309678</b>		
Address	<b>Headington School Headington Road Oxford Oxfordshire OX3 7TD</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01865 759100</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01865 760268</b>		
Email Address	<b>ea2head@headington.org</b>		
Headmistress	<b>Mrs Caroline Jordan</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs Helen Batchelor</b>		
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>802</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Girls</b>		
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>589</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>213</b>	
	Full:	<b>178</b>	Weekly: <b>35</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>3 Dec 2013 to 5 Dec 2013</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, as amended. 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 October 2010 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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, 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 Maureen Bradley

Mrs Jean Gray

Mr Harvey Trump

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding  
(Former Senior Teacher, HMC school)

Team Inspector for Boarding  
(Head Teacher, GSA school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Headington School is an independent day and boarding school for girls aged 11 to 18. Founded in 1915, the school moved to its present site in Oxford in 1929. The school is a Church of England foundation but welcomes girls of all faiths. It is administered by a governing body that is also responsible for Headington Preparatory School. The school aims to provide a stimulating, enriching and forward-thinking environment for girls where achievement, enterprise, creativity and leadership are nurtured. It seeks, through building self-confidence, independence and responsibility, for girls to be ready to play an active role in an ever-changing world.
- 1.2 There are 802 girls in the school, of whom 213 are boarders. There are 178 full boarders and 35 who board weekly. A further 14 pupils board on a flexible basis. Day pupils come to Headington from Oxford and the surrounding area, and boarders are from a range of countries across the world, with over 30 nationalities represented. Pupils come from families with a range of professional backgrounds. Of the 123 pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, 51 receive specialist learning support from the school. There are 120 pupils with English as an additional language, of whom 49 receive support for their English.
- 1.3 Since the previous Ofsted boarding inspection in October 2010, the school has appointed a new headmistress and a new head of boarding. The structure of governance and of leadership has been enhanced, with the creation of an inner executive and a senior management group. A new humanities and information and communication technology classroom block has been opened, and a sixth-form centre has been extended to provide additional workrooms, together with common room facilities and a café. The school has a rolling programme of refurbishment for its four boarding houses.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its NC equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Upper Third	Year 7
Lower Fourth	Year 8
Upper Fourth	Year 9
Lower Fifth	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

## **2. SUMMARY**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.1 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

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

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure that a set of guiding principles for boarding is agreed to more truly reflect the aims for the boarding community.

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

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in October 2010 and the two required actions identified, to improve the implementation of sanctions and the information available for parents, have been implemented.

### **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 A suitable induction programme and guidance exist for new boarders. A parent handbook and individual house handbooks provide guidance for boarders and their parents before boarders arrive. Boarders are encouraged to spend the first weekend in school to make new friends and to enjoy team-building activities. They have a choice of staff in school whom they can approach if they have any personal concerns, and most boarders say they know what to do in this event. An external independent listener is available, and contact details are displayed for those who can offer advice outside school, and for helplines, including the Children's Rights Director. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 A few boarders reported that they did not feel well looked after when they had been ill. Inspectors found that the school has suitable arrangements for all aspects of health care. Boarders who are ill are cared for in the well-equipped school medical centre available during the school day, and in the boarding houses in 'health havens', which provide suitable sick bay facilities, used mainly in the evenings and overnight. The matrons in each house are fully qualified nurses and share responsibility for the health care with staff in the school medical centre. A doctor visits the school at least once a week, and pupils have suitable access to local medical specialist services such as dentists and opticians, as well as to a school counsellor. Effective policies for the care of sick boarders are in place, as are care plans for those with specific medical conditions. Records for all medical care and the dispensing of medicines are maintained appropriately, and all medicines are securely stored. Prescribed medicines are given only to those for whom they have been prescribed, and older boarders are allowed to self-medicate only after they have been assessed as responsible to do so by the nurse. Pupil information is held in confidence and their rights as patients are fully respected. All boarding staff are qualified in first aid. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 The boarders contact their families by personal mobile telephones and through the internet. House telephones in a private setting are available if required. A suitable policy is implemented to ensure that boarders have safe use of the internet. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 The boarding accommodation is in four well-maintained, clean, warm and comfortable houses with appropriate furnishings. Some sixth-form boarders have access to single rooms, some with en-suite facilities, and all other boarders share rooms of an appropriate size. Washroom facilities are clean and offer suitable privacy. Common areas are comfortable and well equipped for relaxation. The boarders can personalise their rooms and common rooms to give them a homely atmosphere. Supervised study facilities are provided for younger boarders, and older boarders have the choice of working in their rooms or in the communal work areas. The boarding house sleeping accommodation is for the sole use of the boarders during term time although day pupils can use the common areas in the sixth-form house. The houses are secure from unauthorised access, and CCTV and other security arrangements do not intrude unreasonably on the boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 In pre-inspection questionnaires, a majority of boarders reported that they do not always find the food to be to their liking, and a small minority indicated they do not have sufficient snacks and drinks. The inspection found that boarders are provided



with a variety of nutritious options at mealtimes in the main school dining area. Food is prepared and served in hygienic and well-equipped kitchens and serving areas. The catering department gives careful consideration to boarders' dietary requirements, including medical or religious needs, and where possible, tailors the provision to ensure sufficient nutrition, quantity, quality and choice of food. Menus frequently have an international flavour, to cater for the boarders from overseas. The catering department encourages boarders to contribute their ideas to the menus through a food committee, and each house can choose the daily menu at least once each term. All the houses have facilities and provisions to prepare their own snacks and drinks in the evening, and ingredients are available for older boarders to cook in their kitchens. Adequate, clearly labelled sources of drinking water are provided. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Facilities are available in the houses for boarders to do their own laundry and ironing. A laundry service is also available to boarders if required and is used for bedding and dry cleaning. An efficient system ensures that boarders' receive their own clean laundry. Possessions are kept safe in lockable furniture in bedrooms, and in a personal safe, suitable for small valuables and money. Other items, including pocket money, are kept secure by the house staff. Boarders have access to local shops at specified times, and necessities such as toiletries and stationery are provided in school. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 The school has extensive facilities on site for recreation and relaxation. A well-organised, full and varied programme of sporting, cultural, artistic and service-orientated activities is available to the boarders and these activities are carefully monitored by house staff. At weekends boarders can choose activities or join outings that include shopping trips. Boarders have access to news events in the world outside through assemblies and current affairs notice boards in each house, and through television, newspapers, magazines and the internet. [NMS 10]

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

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 Health and safety procedures are thorough and well documented. A written policy is effectively implemented and all records and procedures are scrutinised to establish any patterns of risk and to ensure that any deficiencies are remedied. Health and safety matters, including all risk assessments, are appropriately monitored. Premises, accommodation and facilities are well maintained and all matters regarding site management are efficient. Effective security systems ensure that the boarding accommodation is protected from access by unauthorised people. The boarders interviewed said that they feel safe in their boarding houses and around the school site. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school has appropriate arrangements for fire safety. Regular drills take place to ensure that boarders are aware of evacuation procedures during the day and at night times in their boarding houses. Fire safety policies and risk assessments are carefully monitored and equipment is tested regularly. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The school has thorough procedures in place for all aspects of child protection. The child protection policy is in line with that of the local safeguarding authority, with whom the school has a close working relationship. Training for all staff is thorough, and new staff receive training within their induction. A designated governor visits the school to monitor the efficiency of the procedures and the governing body regularly reviews the policy and its implementation. [NMS 11]

- 3.13 Staff and boarders understand and follow the school's policies for promoting positive behaviour and relationships. Staff are well trained in implementing the anti-bullying policy, including cyber bullying. Pupils are very supportive of each other. Incidents of bullying are rare, and records show that they are handled with care. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, boarders reported that sanctions and rewards are not always fair. The inspection found no evidence of staff unfairness in the boarding environment. A system is in place to ensure that any sanctions are recorded and applied fairly across all houses. Good behaviour is encouraged and rewarded. Staff are aware of the required policies for using restraint and searching pupils and their possessions. Relationships between boarders and staff are positive. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school operates safe and thorough recruitment procedures for the appointment of staff, governors and volunteers. The central register of appointments is maintained efficiently and all staff records include the required documentation. The school does not appoint guardians for the boarders, but it does monitor the suitability of guardians appointed by the boarders' parents. [NMS14]

### **3.(c) Leadership and management of the boarding provision**

- 3.15 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The principles for boarding are incorporated within the school aims and these aims are clearly displayed in the boarding houses and in boarding publications. The aims, however, do not fully reflect the ethos of boarding promoted by the boarding staff in their efforts to create a successful boarding experience for each boarder. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The staff in charge of boarding are experienced and suitably qualified for the management of the houses. A clear line management structure for boarding staff has been established and job descriptions define individual responsibilities. Frequent meetings are held between all involved in the care of boarders, and any issues regarding the boarders' welfare are discussed and clearly minuted. Methods of communication amongst staff regarding day-to-day events and any concerns within each house are efficient. The leadership of each house maintains the required records and documents, which are kept secure and maintained appropriately. Boarding staff who teach in the school help to ensure that communication between day and boarding provision is efficient. Boarding is central to school development, and plans for the future of boarding are well defined. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Supervision in the boarding houses is by suitably qualified and experienced staff. All staff have relevant job descriptions and new staff induction is thorough, and helpful, comprehensive handbooks are produced. An annual system of appraisal allows staff to reflect on their boarding practices and training needs are suitably identified. At least three members of staff are resident in each house, including a qualified nurse. Duty rotas are clearly displayed in houses, and boarders know how to contact staff at night when needed. Appropriate supervision is in place for weekend visits and trips. Boarders are registered several times during the day, and staff are aware of the procedure to follow if a boarder were to go missing. Staff have suitable self-contained accommodation that is rarely visited by boarders, and only for appropriately supervised social events. The roles of other adults resident in staff households are clear. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders from overseas are closely monitored and those who need further help with the development of their English have appropriate levels of encouragement and support. Boarders reported that they are all treated equally. [NMS 16]

- 3.20 A small minority of boarders reported in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire that the school does not seek their views or respond to them. Inspection found that many forums are available for boarders to express their views and concerns. The school encourages boarders to express their views, formally through the school council and through a boarding committee with representatives from each boarding house. In the houses a culture of openness encourages pupils to raise concerns or ideas at weekly house meetings, and suggestion boxes are well used. A dedicated email address is provided to the boarders for suggestions regarding activities, and a questionnaire has also been used to canvass their views. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 A clear complaints procedure is available for parents of all school pupils. Records show that formal complaints are rare and most concerns are handled quickly by senior leadership staff. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 A few prefect roles are in place within each house to provide support. Prefects are not authorised to give sanctions. They work to ensure better integration between the houses and contribute to the pastoral care of younger boarders. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20]