



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**THE ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL, BATH GDST**

**BOARDING WELFARE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## The Royal High School, Bath GDST

Full Name of School	<b>The Royal High School, Bath GDST</b>		
DfE Number	<b>800/6002</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>306983</b>		
Address	<b>The Royal High School, Bath GDST Lansdown Road Bath Somerset BA1 5SZ</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01225 313877</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01225 465446</b>		
Email Address	<b>royalhigh@rhsb.gdst.net</b>		
Head	<b>Mrs Rebecca Dougall</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs Carol Lear</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>664</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Girls</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>25</b>	5-11: <b>98</b>
	11-18:	<b>541</b>	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>552</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>112</b>	
	Full:	<b>106</b>	Weekly: <b>6</b>
Inspection dates	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> December 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 June 2009 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 a representative of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), with the chair of the local school board of governors and another member of the local school board, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended registration sessions and assemblies. 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 Jean Marsland

Reporting Inspector

Mrs Emma Picken

Team Inspector for Boarding, Head of Boarding, GSA school

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Royal High School, Bath is an independent, non-denominational school for girls aged three to eighteen, with boarding available from the age of nine, governed by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST). The school was founded in 1998 following the merger of Bath High School GDST and the Royal School and is unique in being the only GDST school to offer boarding. The school is located on the northern slopes of Bath, in an area of historic interest. The senior school and college (sixth form) are set within a 12-acre site. During the inspection, the junior school began the move to its new, purpose-built accommodation, located a mile away within an 11-acre site. Since the previous inspection, the school has ceased to admit boys to its sixth form. In addition to the governance provided by the GDST, the school has a local board of governors who support it in achieving its aim "to encourage each girl to persevere and grow in self-confidence in order to discover and fulfil her potential, being ambitious for herself, whilst being a good citizen in an international and ever-changing dynamic world".
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection, there were 664 pupils on roll. Of those, 123 were in the junior school for pupils aged 3 to 11, including 25 in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); 541 were in senior school, including 174 in the sixth form. Of the pupils aged 9 and over, 112 were boarders. Pupils come predominantly from business and professional backgrounds. Day pupils come from a wide geographical area, up to a distance of around 40 miles. The majority of day pupils come from white British backgrounds; the remainder are from a mix of ethnic backgrounds. Around two-thirds of boarders come from overseas, with almost every continent represented. The school has identified 87 pupils as having a special educational need and/or disability (SEND), of whom 13 receive specialist learning support. For 63 of the boarders, English is an additional language (EAL); of those, 21 receive support for their English. One pupil has a statement of special educational need.
- 1.3 Boarders aged 9 to 16 are accommodated in School House, within the main building of senior school. Sixth-form boarders are accommodated in the purpose-built Gloucester House, close to the main senior school buildings, and in the recently-developed Level 6, a separate area within School House. The senior house mistress is resident in School House and the house mistress in Gloucester House. They are assisted in caring for the boarders by teams of staff with specific boarding roles.
- 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 2013.

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

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that the programme for refurbishing the showers is completed without delay.
2. Ensure that the range of choices of food available to boarders at breakfast, supper and at weekends is improved.

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

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in June 2009. The school has responded fully to all but one of the recommendations of the previous boarding welfare inspection. Welfare plans are now in place for any boarder who has special welfare needs, a record is kept of valuables held on behalf of boarders, a risk assessment has been carried out for the stairs in School House, dated fire records are kept, local and overseas boarders are well integrated and a written record is kept to show that staff references have been followed up. Some progress has been made in refurbishing the showers; however, this work has not yet been completed.

### **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 Before arriving at school, new boarders are sent welcome booklets and letters of welcome. Older, established boarders act as “buddies” to help new boarders settle in. Boarders are told of a range of people within school whom they can turn to for guidance or help with personal problems. Details of these people and how to contact them are given to boarders in the “Worries and Concerns” leaflets, displayed on notice boards and included in boarders’ handbooks. In addition, the school ensures that boarders have contact details for several appropriate helplines, an independent listener and the Children’s Rights Director. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Suitable arrangements provide for the care of boarders, including those with chronic conditions and disabilities. Suitable and appropriately-staffed accommodation is provided to cater for the needs of boarders who are unwell or injured, supplemented by further, separated, accommodation within each boarding house where house staff can care for boarders who are unwell overnight; nursing staff are on call if needed in an emergency. Detailed policies make clear the arrangements for the administration of medicines and household remedies. Prescription medication is given only to the boarder for whom it is prescribed. Careful records are kept of all medicines given. Boarders have access to local specialist health services such as a dentist and optician as necessary. The medical confidentiality of boarders is appropriately respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders are able to contact parents and carers in private through the internet and with their own mobile telephone. In addition they have access to a private house telephone. [MNS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders, providing adequate storage and a work area for each boarder. Boarders in Year 13 have single rooms; other boarders share with one other or a small group. Both houses have large common rooms with televisions and games and at least one other room for social purposes. School House has a supervised room for boarders to do their homework. Toilet and washing facilities are accessible from sleeping accommodation and provide privacy. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of parents said the boarding accommodation was not comfortable. In response to recommendations from the previous inspection, a programme of refurbishment has begun to improve shower facilities but is not yet complete; boarders spoken with expressed their dissatisfaction with this. Boarding areas are well-maintained and appropriately lit, heated, ventilated and cleaned. Reasonable adjustments are made, where possible, to meet the needs of boarders with restricted mobility. Bedding is clean, suitable and sufficiently warm. Boarders can personalise their rooms and are encouraged to do so. Boarding accommodation is protected from access by unauthorised persons. Boarders’ privacy is not intruded on by the use of CCTV cameras. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Provision is made for boarders who have special medical, religious and dietary needs and food is prepared and served hygienically. The majority of boarders responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and many of the boarders spoken with, said that the food is not good. At lunch, boarders are provided with a wide range of choices of hot and cold nutritious food. Breakfast, supper and weekend

meals offer them a much more limited choice. Also in their questionnaire, a small minority of boarders said that are not happy with the availability of snacks and drinking water. Inspectors judge that these are readily available in both houses; boarders spoken with say they are happy with the provision. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 The school makes appropriate arrangements for laundering boarders' clothing and bedding; in addition, boarders are able to wash their own clothes. Boarders can obtain personal items from the school shop or on their, at least, weekly trips to town. Boarders are provided with a lockable cupboard or drawer to store personal possessions. Valuables looked after by staff are documented, signed for and held in a locked cupboard or safe in the house offices. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarders have access to a range and choice of activities at lunchtimes and after school. At weekends, boarders in Years 5 to 10 are provided with a compulsory range of sporting and craft activities and outings. Older boarders are able to join those activities and trips if they chose. Boarders have access to safe areas both indoors and outdoors and to safe areas where they can be alone if they wish. Boarders have access to information about events in the world outside school through television, internet, newspapers and school assemblies. [NMS 10]

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

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 Careful arrangements are made to promote the safety of boarders. Risk assessments for activities both on and off site are thorough. Staff receive regular training in health and safety matters. The health and safety committee oversees arrangements. Any deficiencies are remedied so that the school premises are suitably maintained to ensure the health, safety and welfare of boarders, as far as is reasonably practical. Of those parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority said that the school keeps their child safe. In responding to their questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of boarders said that they feel safe in their boarding house. This was confirmed by boarders spoken with. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Appropriate measures protect boarders from the risk of fire. The recommendations of a recent external check of potential fire risks have been responded to speedily. Staff receive fire training at regular intervals. Fire-fighting equipment and alarms are checked regularly and those checks carefully recorded. Fire drills are held termly both during the school day and in boarding time. Reports of these are logged and any points arising attended to. Close attention is paid to ensuring boarders know how to respond in the event of a fire, including, to remind them, a walk-through of escape routes on the first evening of every term. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Clear arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders are followed carefully. Staff receive training at the level appropriate to their roles at the specified intervals. The required annual audit of the school's child protection policy and procedures is carried out by the GDST Council, the proprietors, and any necessary amendments made. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school's behaviour policy is clear; boarders understand and respect the need for rules. A suitable anti-bullying policy supports the school's stance that bullying of any kind is unacceptable. Records show that bullying incidents are rare. Boarders spoken with say they are confident that, should any bullying occur, the school takes it seriously and responds effectively. Guidance is given to staff should the need

arise to restrain a boarder or to search a boarder or a boarder's possessions. [NMS 12]

- 3.14 The school operates safe recruitment procedures for the appointment of staff. All the required pre-appointment checks on staff are carried out and carefully recorded. Those adults over the age of sixteen who live on site are subject to the appropriate checks and arrangements in order to ensure the boarders' welfare is safeguarded. Any visitors to the boarding houses are carefully monitored to prevent their having unsupervised access to boarding accommodation. The school does not appoint guardians for boarders. [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 An appropriate statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available to staff and parents on the school website and to boarders in the boarding houses, and is seen to work in practice. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that the experience of boarding helps their child's progress and development. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 There is clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding. Regular reviews of the boarding provision ensure that areas for further development are identified. Boarding staff have appropriate levels of training and experience for their roles. Frequent and detailed communication between boarding staff, and with teaching staff, ensures that the boarders' all round well-being is carefully considered and any concerns picked up and attended to. All the required records are maintained by the school; these are monitored regularly and any necessary action taken. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Boarding staff have job descriptions that reflect their duties accurately. Newly-appointed staff receive suitable induction training which includes boarding matters, safeguarding and health and safety arrangements. The appraisal system provides boarding staff with regular opportunities to review their work and identify any areas for further development and training, which staff readily undertake. The roles of spouses, partners or adult members of staff households are made clear. At all times, including overnight, the staff supervising boarders are sufficient in numbers, training and experience. Boarders are told which staff are on duty in the evenings and overnight; they say they are confident in knowing how to contact staff during the night should they need to do so. Staff know the whereabouts of boarders at all times. The need for boarders to sign in and out of the houses is strictly enforced; any delay in their return to the houses is quickly followed up. Should the occasion arise, guidance is given to staff as to the steps to take to locate a missing boarder. Boarding staff are provided with suitable accommodation, appropriately separate from the boarders, to which boarders are not allowed access. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 The school has a suitable policy to promote equal opportunities. Boarders' individual needs are carefully considered and boarders say they feel well supported. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 House meetings and questionnaires are among the channels provided for boarders to contribute their views on the arrangements for boarding, or to raise a concern or make a complaint. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of boarders said that the school does not ask for or respond to their views. Boarders spoken with were confident that the school does take notice of their views

and declared that they are happy to speak directly with staff to express their views. [NMS 17]

- 3.21 The school has a suitable complaints procedure; any complaints are handled in line with the procedure. Almost all parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that they receive timely responses to their questions. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Within boarding, a number of older pupils take on roles of responsibility, such as Head of House or Overseas Representative, for which they have clear job descriptions setting out the scope of their roles. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20 does not apply]