



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BETHANY SCHOOL

BOARDING WELFARE

INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Bethany School

Full Name of School	Bethany School
DfE Number	886/6036
Registered Charity Number	307937
Address	Bethany School Goudhurst Cranbrook Kent TN17 1LB
Telephone Number	01580 211273
Fax Number	01580 211151
Email Address	hmsec@bethanyschool.org.uk
Headmaster	Mr Francie Healy
Chair of Governors	Mr Andrew Pengelly
Age Range	11 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	369
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (255 boys; 114 girls)
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 250
Number of Boarders	Total: 119 Full: 79 Weekly: 40
Inspection dates	8 Oct 2013 to 10 Oct 2013

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 February 2010 and can be found at 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 both the chair of governors and the governor designated to have a particular interest in 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 Rodney Fox

Miss Margaret Pepper

Mr Karl Wilding

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding
(Former Head, ISA school)

Team Inspector for Boarding
(Deputy Head, HMC school)

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 SUMMARY	2
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	2
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	2
(iii) Progress since the previous inspection	2
3 COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS	3
(a) Boarding provision and care	3
(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding	4
(c) Leadership and management of the boarding provision	5

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Bethany School states its mission as giving young people an education which will equip them for life in a changing world, set within the firm foundations of a Christian faith. The school aims to provide for its pupils an individually tailored education, based on an understanding of each pupil's particular abilities and needs, which will enable them to fulfil their academic potential and to develop their self-confidence and independence, their knowledge and understanding of spirituality, and their awareness of the modern world and their responsibility within it. The school is an educational charity, governed by its trustees.
- 1.2 Founded in 1866 as a boarding school for boys from the east end of London, Bethany is now a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19, situated on a 60-acre site close to the historic small town of Goudhurst, in Kent. Boarders belong to one of five houses, each of which accommodates about twenty-five boarders in addition to day pupils. One is a purpose-built sixth-form house for both boys and girls.
- 1.3 The present headmaster has been in post since September 2010, having previously been the academic deputy. Since the previous boarding inspection in 2010, an additional accommodation block for sixth-form boarders has been built, two other houses have been extensively refurbished, and a programme for the formal review of boarding houses by senior staff has been instituted.
- 1.4 Of the 369 pupils in the school at the time of the inspection, 87 boys and 32 girls boarded. Five pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified a further 204 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, of whom 139 receive specialist learning support. Of the 52 pupils who speak English as an additional language, 42 receive support for their English. Boarders come from a wide range of different countries, the largest overseas representation being from Hong Kong.
- 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 meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that minutes of governors' meetings fully reflect the thoroughness with which the governors exercise their responsibilities for overseeing the safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of all the pupils, including boarders.
2. As soon as practicable, make provision within the medical centre to separately accommodate boys and girls.
3. Identify and rectify remaining boarders' concerns about food, and provide more varied fare for making evening snacks and drinks in the boarding houses.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in February 2010. Four recommendations were made, concerning recruitment procedures for staff, the recording of medication administered, instructing catering staff about the school's child protection procedures and ensuring that pupils can store personal possessions and valuables securely. The school has addressed all four recommendations and made progress in each of the areas identified.

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 An effective induction process helps new boarders to settle quickly. A familiarisation weekend is provided before the start of term; informative booklets outline school routines and established boarders act as guides. Boarders report that members of staff are readily available to deal with concerns. Contact details for helplines and the Children's Rights Director are well publicised. Boarders have access to a counsellor and to independent listeners. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Appropriate arrangements exist to care for sick or injured boarders. A fully equipped medical centre, staffed by qualified nurses, provides 24-hour support. As currently configured, the centre only permits two patients of one gender to be accommodated, any others being accommodated in the houses. Liaison between medical and house staff is close. The administration of medicines and homely remedies is appropriately controlled and recorded. The suitability of boarders to self-medicate is assessed by a doctor. Boarders' rights to medical confidentiality are appropriately respected. The doctor holds weekly surgeries at school. Access to local specialist services is available. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can easily contact family and friends in private, including through the internet. The school's arrangements to ensure safe internet use are measured and appropriate. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Recent refurbishment has ensured that all boarding accommodation is of a comfortable standard. House furnishings are treated carefully, and houses are well heated, ventilated and cleaned. Washing and toilet facilities are sufficient in number and provide suitable privacy. Boarders in the sixth-form house enjoy en-suite single rooms. Boarders may personalise their living spaces, although pin boards and shelving are not always provided. Houses have suitable social areas for relaxation. Boarders feel safe and well cared for in their houses. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Meals are nutritious and offer variety and choice. Boarders, both in responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and during interviews, raised concerns over the quality and quantity of food, whilst acknowledging recent improvements. Inspectors agreed that quantities are too highly controlled and that the food is not always attractive to the diverse national tastes of boarders; although the school does provide appropriately for those with particular medical or religious dietary needs. Facilities for food preparation are hygienic. House amenities for making snacks and drinks are ample; however, the provisions supplied in the evening lack variety and quantity, and fruit is not routinely available. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Laundry arrangements are efficient; boarders have ready access to clean clothing and bedding. Older boarders do their own washing in suitably equipped laundry areas. Personal possessions or valuables can be locked away in rooms or stored securely with house staff. Each house has a small tuck shop selling personal items and snacks. Weekly shopping trips enable additional items to be purchased. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 An appropriate choice of activities is available for boarders outside teaching time. Televisions in common rooms provide access to news. At weekends, house activities and outings are organised, in addition to free time. Suitable indoor and

outdoor recreational spaces are available, including places where boarders can choose to be alone. [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 has a clear written health and safety policy. All required checks are conducted regularly and correctly recorded. All parts of the school site are subject to risk assessment. A health and safety committee reviews practice termly, and a designated governor monitors effectiveness. Although governors' meetings include review of health and safety as a standing item, their minutes do not reflect the care with which they fulfil this responsibility. Maintenance of the school premises gives high priority to health and safety. Each house has a designated member of the maintenance team with responsibilities for rectifying minor faults and conducting frequent visual safety checks. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school complies fully with fire safety regulations and liaises regularly with the local fire authorities, who use the premises for training purposes. Fire safety equipment is suitably tested and systematically maintained, mainly by specialist contractors. Fire evacuation practices occur regularly, during both day and night time, and are appropriately recorded. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Measures to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils are thorough and conform to requirements. All governors, staff and other adults receive appropriate information and training in child protection procedures. The school refers any concerns to local agencies without delay. Records are appropriately and securely kept. A designated governor monitors the safeguarding policy and its effectiveness, and the governing board conducts an annual review although minutes of governors' meetings do not fully report the governors' thoroughness in this regard. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school has carefully constructed policies to promote good behaviour and to discourage bullying. A range of measures is taken to raise all pupils' awareness of the dangers of cyber-bullying. Boarders interviewed considered bullying to be rare but handled well if it occurs. School rules and guidance about the disciplinary sanctions employed are clearly published. Suitable guidance is provided for staff about the use of physical restraint and the procedure for searching boarders and their possessions when necessary. All these policies and guidance adhere closely to current requirements, and are well understood by staff and boarders. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school's staff recruitment procedures have been rigorously applied and meticulously recorded in a central register. Procedures have not historically included checking the academic qualifications of visiting music teachers. This deficiency has been rectified, and the qualifications of all these teachers have now been checked. Appropriate checks are conducted on all individuals over the age of 16 who are neither pupils nor employees of the school but live on the same premises as boarders. They enter into a written agreement which specifies the terms of their accommodation and sets out expectations about their conduct. Visitors to boarding accommodation cannot gain entry without being admitted and are suitably supervised during their time in the house. The school does not appoint guardians on behalf of parents. [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 A clear statement of boarding principles and practice, which is in line with the school's aims, is well publicised in houses and handbooks, and evidently works in practice. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Effective leadership and management of boarding are provided by senior managers and house staff. A high degree of openness between boarding and senior staff facilitates informal communication and information sharing. A biennial inspection programme provides rigorous review of the practices and facilities in each house. This honest and useful process, which includes surveying parents, boarders and staff, informs development. Tutors periodically work in other houses, sharing good practice and increasing consistency. Most teachers have a tutor role, promoting effective links between academic and residential staff. Senior managers and house staff have appropriate experience and expertise. The school maintains all the required records and monitors them appropriately. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Boarding staff have detailed job descriptions and, when newly appointed, are supported with an induction process. All house masters and house mistresses complete professional training in boarding provision. The roles of spouses and other members of staff households are made clear in writing. Houses are always staffed by a sufficient number of suitably experienced personnel, supported by the availability of a senior colleague who can be contacted if needed. Boarders know who is responsible for them at all times. The systems for signing in and out mean that boarding staff always know where those in their charge should be. A detailed and thorough procedure to follow in the event of a boarder going missing is known and understood. At least one adult member of staff sleeps in each boarding house and is easily contactable at night. Staff accommodation is appropriately separated from that of boarders. House offices allow boarders and staff to hold private conversations. Boarders are occasionally invited into private residences in groups, often for meals, to foster the homeliness of the boarding experience. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 The school ethos is of tolerance and acceptance. Pastoral care programmes are highly individualised to meet the specific needs of boarders, in line with the school's aims. The activities programme is varied, and care is taken to cater for diverse interests and abilities. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders may contribute ideas or raise concerns in a variety of ways. School council members are elected from each tutor group; the food committee and cyber council are sub-committees of the council. House councils, suggestions boxes and surveys also provide opportunities for boarders to voice opinions. Boarders confirmed that they are able to raise concerns without prejudice. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 An appropriate complaints policy is established which ensures that concerns are dealt with promptly and, if possible, resolved at an informal stage. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Written job descriptions for house monitors and school prefects ensure that these roles are clearly understood and appropriately monitored by staff. Prefects do not impose sanctions on other pupils. Regular meetings are held between staff and the prefect body. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20i]