



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

CULFORD SCHOOL

BOARDING WELFARE

INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	Culford School
DfE Number	935/6053
Registered Charity Number	310486
Address	Culford School Culford Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP28 6TX
Telephone Number	01284 728615
Fax Number	01284 728631
Email Address	hmpa@culford.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr Julian Johnson-Munday
Chairman of Governors	Professor Roy Swanston
Age Range	3 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	704
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (379 boys; 325 girls)
Numbers by Age	5-11: 181
	3-5 (EYFS): 48 11-18: 475
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 456
Number of Boarders	Total: 248
	Full: 248 Weekly: 0
Inspection dates	28 Feb 2012 to 01 Mar 2012

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing primarily on compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. 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 November 2008 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding School.

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.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors conducted formal interviews with boarders held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and collective worship. 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 Adrian Underwood

Mr Peter Last

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding (Housemaster, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Culford School was founded in Bury St Edmunds in 1881 and moved to its present site in 1935. It is one of nine Methodist schools directly owned by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust. The school has its own governing body including a representative from the Methodist Board of Management. It welcomes pupils of all faiths and denominations, or none. The school aims to provide an academic education, within a strong boarding environment, which is challenging, enriching and fun for every pupil. It also aims to develop high academic performance, according to each pupil's identified ability, an active and supportive social life within a caring Christian family community, and engagement in a wide programme of sports and activities.
- 1.2 The school educates pupils aged from three to eighteen with boarding an option from age seven. The total school roll is 704 (379 boys and 325 girls) of whom 145 are in the sixth form. There are 248 boarders, with a slightly higher proportion of boys than girls. Boarders come from families with professional or business backgrounds, most living in different parts of the United Kingdom. In addition, the school has an international dimension with 74 boarders from overseas, 44 of whom are supported in the development of their English. Of those who board, 33 have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and 28 receive specialist learning support. No boarder has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.3 Boarding accommodation is organised into four houses, all of which are centrally located on the campus. Cadogan House accommodates boys and girls in Years 3 to 8. Cornwallis House and Edwards House accommodate boys, and Jocelyn House, girls, in Years 9 to 13. The school offers a full boarding programme, although some boarders can go home after Saturday morning school and any Saturday sporting or other commitments. Each house has a housemaster or housemistress in charge, supported by an assistant and a team of tutors and matrons. The senior housemaster in charge of boarding is a member of the senior management team. Since the previous inspection, Edwards House has undergone refurbishment. A new girls' boarding house, Fitzgerald, is planned to open in September 2012.
- 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 2011.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Include in the training of matrons opportunities to attend external accredited boarding courses.

(iii) Progress since the last inspection

2.3 The Ofsted report of the inspection in November 2008 rated the boarding provision as outstanding with no recommendations. Since then the school has maintained its high quality of boarding provision.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

3.(a) Boarding provision and care

- 3.1 The school meets all the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 In addition to tutors who support and monitor boarders, the house boarding teams give guidance and help. Boarders report that the induction process helps them settle into the life of the house with the support of buddies and mentors. In addition to the school's independent listener, boarders have access in confidence to peer counsellors and can use an anonymous e-mail helpline. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Boarders lead healthy lifestyles, with a range of sports facilities and activities provided. Boarders who are unwell are supported by the medical centre, whose facilities are appropriate for first aid treatment, illness and longer-term conditions. Accommodation for those who are ill is separated from other boarders and has separate provision for boys and girls. Matrons work closely with the medical centre. Medication is managed by the medical centre and boarders deemed competent to do so administer their own medicines. Medical records are kept confidentially by the medical centre. Boarders taking medicine and the storage of medicines are correctly documented and all medical practices are regularly monitored. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can contact family and friends using telephones and internet access. Where boarders experience poor mobile phone signal reception, they are able to use house phones or the landline phones of boarding staff. Monitoring of electronic communications to safeguard boarders is proportionate. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation is appropriate for the ages and gender of boarders and is regularly upgraded. The school has recognised the need for a second girls' house to accommodate the increasing demand for boarding places and a new boarding house for girls is nearly complete. Boarders personalize their areas with the suitability of material monitored by housemasters and the housemistress. Study facilities are appropriate and Years 9 and 10 boarders value the cabinets which recharge and update their laptops overnight. Toilet and washing facilities are appropriate and offer the suitable privacy. Access to the houses is strictly controlled by an electronic system so that only boarding pupils have access and the regulations for the use of sports facilities by the public ensure there is no unsupervised access to children. The CCTV system to protect boarders does not intrude on their privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Catering facilities are hygienic and clean. The school has recognised the need for the upgrading of these facilities, which is provided for in immediate development plans. Menus are carefully planned, including provision for special diets. A proactive food council influences catering standards. Boarders enjoy a choice of meals of a suitable quality including a daily salad bar. Boarders can make snacks and drinks in their houses at appropriate times. Fresh fruit is available daily. [NMS8]
- 3.7 Boarders' clothing and bedding is suitably laundered. Boarders can buy essential personal and stationery items from the school shop. They have lockable spaces with the possessions and pocket money of the boarders in Cadogan House kept safe by the boarding staff. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarders confirm that they enjoy an appropriate range of activities and their programme is suitably monitored by tutors. House activities in the evenings and at

weekends include using the school's sports' and leisure facilities and visits and outings to a range of venues. Boarders from Year 9 upwards can also visit Bury St Edmunds. Those boarders with significant training programmes for tennis and other sports are monitored by tutors and house staff and their programmes adjusted accordingly. Boarders can watch national news programmes and read national newspapers. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school ensures that boarders are protected from harm. The school undertakes appropriate risk assessments and safety records are regularly scrutinized by the health and safety committee and the designated health and safety governor. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Fire safety policies and practice are appropriate with regular drills held during boarding time, from which action plans are developed. All teaching staff have fire awareness training. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The safeguarding policy is in accordance with locally agreed inter-agency procedures and the school has suitable links with the Local Children Safeguarding Board. The designated person's child protection training is up to date. All staff are trained in child protection every three years. Staff understand and implement safeguarding protocols. Child protection issues are monitored by a designated governor and reviewed by the whole governing body. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school has a policy to promote good behaviour which is understood by staff and pupils. Pupils report that rewards are part of the school culture. Boarders say that sanctions are appropriate and they value the "second chance" approach to many disciplinary issues. In interviews and questionnaire responses boarders reported that bullying was rare but was dealt with quickly and effectively. Policies for searching the pupils' possessions and physical restraint are appropriate, although no incidents of the latter have been recorded as having occurred. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 Staff recruitment policies and checks meet requirements. Persons over sixteen living on site that are not members of staff have written agreements with the school, are suitably checked receive and appropriate induction training. All visitors are monitored and none has substantial unsupervised access to boarders. The school does not appoint guardians. [NMS 14]

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

- 3.15 The school meets all the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The school's boarding principles and practice are published on the website, in the parents' and boarders' handbooks and work in practice. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The senior housemaster monitors consistency of practice across the houses. The boarding development plan provides for improvement of boarding facilities and accommodation. Senior boarding staff are experienced in the culture of boarding and regularly monitor boarding policies and practice. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Boarding staff have job descriptions. Induction, appraisal and continued professional development are appropriate, although matrons do not currently benefit from external accredited boarding training. All houses are appropriately staffed at all times to provide suitable supervision of pupils and staff know the whereabouts of boarders and the action to take should a boarder go missing. Boarders know how to contact a member of staff at night and enjoy appropriate access to private staff accommodation for meetings and special events. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders reported that they are equally and fairly treated by caring staff who are sensitive to individual needs. The school's equal opportunities policy is effective in practice and appropriate arrangements are made for those with particular learning needs. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 The boarders' views are widely canvassed through consultative councils and boarders report that these views are acted upon as appropriate. Minutes of the house, food and school councils are published and receive responses from senior managers. The school promotes a culture, whereby boarders are encouraged to state their views and raise concerns. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The complaints' procedure is published on the website and conforms to regulations. Complaints are appropriately responded to and recorded. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Prefects display responsibility and commitment and contribute to the leadership of the school and to the standard of pupil behaviour. The appointment system is rigorous and includes selection by pupils. Prefect training encompasses child protection and issues of confidentiality. Clear guidelines are laid down for prefects' responsibilities and the execution of their roles is monitored at house and school level. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for pupils. [NMS 20]