



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

GREAT WALSTEAD SCHOOL

BOARDING WELFARE

INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	Great Walstead School
DfE Number	938/6203
Registered Charity Number	307002
Address	Great Walstead School East Mascalls Lane Lindfield Haywards Heath West Sussex RH16 2QL
Telephone Number	01444 483528
Fax Number	01444 482122
Email Address	admin@greatwalstead.co.uk
Head	Mr Colin Baty
Chair of Governors	Mr Matthew Searle
Age Range	2½ to 13
Total Number of Pupils	457
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (270 boys; 187 girls)
Numbers by Age	2-5 (EYFS): 84 5-11: 283 11-13: 90
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 390
Number of Boarders	Total: 67 Full: 0 Flexi: 67
Inspection Dates	18 Jan 2016 to 20 Jan 2016

PREFACE

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) Regulations 2014, as amended. 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.

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 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 governors' representative, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended registration sessions. Inspectors visited the boarding house 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 Sara Wiggins

Reporting Inspector

Mr Robin Harskin

Team Inspector for Boarding
(Head of Department, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Great Walstead School is a co-educational preparatory boarding and day school for pupils aged two and a half to thirteen. It is set in approximately 300 acres of woods and parkland on the outskirts of Haywards Heath in Sussex. The school was established as a boys' preparatory school, mainly boarding, in 1925 in East Croydon and moved to Walstead in 1927. Pre-Prep and Nursery and 'the Keep', providing after-school care, were added in the 1990s. Full boarding ceased 15 years ago and boarding now continues on a flexible basis, with different pupils boarding each night. The boarding house is located at the top of the main school building. The school is a charitable company, directed by its governors.
- 1.2 The foundation of the school has a strong Christian element, embodied in its mission statement. Amongst the school's aims are the promotion of hard work and high achievement in a happy, well-resourced atmosphere, where moral and spiritual values are a foundation for life, and where each pupil is valued as a very special individual. The school's vision is to inspire all pupils to achieve their potential in all areas, through the support and dedication of staff, in a caring Christian environment.
- 1.3 The school has on roll 457 pupils, comprising 270 boys and 187 girls, and up to 67 pupils are occasional boarders. Out of 84 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, consisting of the Nursery and Reception, 54 are part-time. In Years 1 to 4 there are 173 pupils and in Years 5 to 8 there are 200 pupils. Sixty-one pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Six pupils have English as an additional language.
- 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 2015, and therefore it must take the following action.
- Ensure that all recruitment checks for after-school activity staff and the very occasional contractor are implemented prior to appointment, in particular, medical checks, employment history and references, and that overseas Gap-Year assistant staff are checked against the barred list prior to appointment [National Minimum Standard 14.1, under Staff recruitment and checks on other adults, and for the same reason National Minimum Standard 11.1, under Child protection, and National Minimum Standards 13.3 and 13.8, under Management and development of boarding].

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.2 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. Ensure that the intended refurbishment detailed in development planning is expedited.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

- 2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI in October 2012. The recommendation to monitor rigorously all existing boarding systems and processes, and to ensure that information is communicated clearly between school administrative records and boarding practice regarding fire information, has been appropriately 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 Induction of new boarders is undertaken appropriately by boarding house parents. A boarding handbook which details rules and procedures is given to new boarders. More experienced boarders help to guide pupils who are new to boarding. Boarders are aware of the choice of adults to whom they can turn for help and guidance with difficulties, including boarding and other school staff, the school's independent listener and the Children's Commissioner. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Appropriate policies are implemented for boarders who are physically unwell. These ensure that the physical and mental health and emotional well-being of boarders are actively promoted. Medical staff are experienced and well qualified, and boarders have easy access to external emergency medical, optometric and dental services. Ill or injured boarders are accommodated appropriately, separately from other boarders where necessary, including by gender. All medication is securely stored, and appropriate records are kept of its administration, including household remedies. Staff ensure that medication is given only to those boarders for whom it is prescribed. Boarders self-medicate where appropriate. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders have easy access to a school telephone and computer to contact their parents and families privately. School systems to monitor and control boarders' use of electronic communication are proportionate. Mobile telephones are not allowed in the boarding house. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Suitable sleeping accommodation is provided for boarders, with appropriate risk assessments undertaken. Boarding accommodation is suitably managed and organised appropriately according to age and gender. Dormitories for boys and girls are on separate floors in the boarding house, with toilets, showers and washing facilities easily accessible. These provide suitable privacy although arrangements in the girls' boarding house have been appropriately identified in development planning for further refurbishment. There is suitable space for private study and a common room for social purposes. Boarders who wish to spend time alone can do so. Lighting, heating, and ventilation in boarders' sleeping accommodation are appropriate. The accommodation is clean and spacious, and it is suitably furnished, and bedding is clean and warm. Many boarders personalise the dormitories by bringing duvets from home and putting photographs and posters on the walls. The boarding house is accessible to boarders and boarding staff only, and is exclusively for their use. Visitors do not have unsupervised access. Any use of surveillance equipment does not intrude on boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Boarders said that they like the food provided, which is varied, nutritious, plentiful and of high quality. Food is prepared and served under conditions of strict hygiene. Kitchen staff are fully aware of individual boarders' dietary and medical requirements. Boarders' suggestions for meals are welcomed and often put into effect. Drinking water is freely available close to the boarding house, and boarders are able to have snacks of biscuits and fresh fruit at reasonable times between their main meals. No boarders have disabilities which would necessitate help when eating. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Boarders' clothing and bedding are laundered and stored as appropriate. Boarders are able to obtain personal items while accommodated at school. Boarders show respect for each other's personal possessions, for which there is adequate storage

space in their dormitories. Any valuables which boarders bring into the boarding house are locked away by the boarding staff for safekeeping. The school has an appropriate policy for the searching of boarders' personal belongings. [NMS 9]

- 3.8 Boarders enjoy a wide variety of free-time activities and there are safe areas at school where boarders can be alone if they wish. As well as those activities provided by the school as a whole, including many sports, the house parents organise many pursuits exclusively for boarders, including go-karting, smoothie making, and arts and crafts. Boarders' input is sought in deciding which activities to arrange. Boarders are able to use a range of indoor and outdoor facilities, including off site. They also have access to newspapers and magazines appropriate to their age which inform them about events in the outside world. There are no boarders who have unusual or especially onerous demands placed upon them. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school does not meet two of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school has an efficient system for ensuring the health and safety of boarders in the house and around the school site. It is underpinned by suitably detailed policies and protocols and by efficient record keeping. Appropriate risk assessments are in place for all relevant areas and for the safety and suitability of activities, both on and off site. These have identified relevant areas for action which have been implemented. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Fire risk assessments exist for all areas, including the boarding house, and implementation is reviewed regularly. Equipment is tested and maintained on a regular basis. Fire drills both in and out of regular school hours are recorded appropriately. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Safeguarding is effective. Staff have a clear appreciation of the importance of safeguarding the boarders' welfare and of reporting concerns. Staff training is regularly carried out and includes mental health issues. Child protection procedures are set out in the school's safeguarding policy, which has due regard to official guidance. These are implemented appropriately in almost all areas, but there have been occasional lapses in the rigour with which staff recruitment checks are carried out. Communication with the local safeguarding board is constructive and the school makes ready contact without investigation if any disclosure is made. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Boarders understand and follow the school motto: 'Kindness is the Walstead way'. Behaviour is appropriately managed. Boarders have a clear understanding of which elements constitute bullying and cyber-bullying, and confirm that any bullying is dealt with promptly when it occurs. This was supported by inspection evidence. Suitable logs are maintained and trends identified. Serious sanctions are suitably recorded and lesser ones are implemented fairly. Arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions and for applying physical restraint are appropriate. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school efficiently maintains an accurate register of recruitment checks. Checks of medical fitness, employment history, and references for after-school activity staff and the very occasional contractor, had not always been obtained prior to appointment before the inspection was announced. Appropriate checks are now implemented for all staff. The barred list check for overseas Gap-Year assistants had not been taken up prior to appointment, although overseas police checks were undertaken and suitable safeguards arranged, and references had been taken up.

Visitors to boarding areas are carefully supervised. The school does not appoint guardians for boarders. [NMS 14]

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

- 3.15 The school does not meet one of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The school's statement of boarding principles and practice is reflected clearly in the philosophy, ethos and practice of the school and its community. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Boarding within the school is suitably managed by house parents and other staff, who have good skills and knowledge and are appropriately trained and experienced. The school's leadership and management, and its governance, actively promote the well-being of boarders in almost all respects, although the monitoring of staff recruitment checks lacks sufficient rigour. Whole-school development planning includes a focus on the needs and future improvement of boarding. Monitoring of the implementation of the boarding and welfare provision, including management audits, is undertaken appropriately. A wide range of welfare and pastoral policies is underpinned by thorough record keeping, with action being taken as appropriate in response to review of records. Recently, this has included the effective revision of a number of policies, including those for behaviour and the prevention of bullying. Regular meetings ensure efficient and thorough communication between academic, pastoral and administrative staff, enabling the school to meet the recommendation of the previous inspection. Through the pre-inspection questionnaire and during discussions, parents and boarders indicated their view that boarders are well looked after and are safe. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All boarding staff have job descriptions reflecting their roles and responsibilities. Thorough induction procedures are followed on appointment, and professional development is undertaken regularly by boarding staff and Gap-Year assistants. Appraisal systems are suitable and enable staff to reflect on their roles and practice. Deployment of suitably experienced staff is sufficient to ensure the pastoral care and supervision of the boarders during the day and overnight. Staff know the whereabouts of boarders at all times, and boarders know who is responsible for them and can contact an appropriate person at night. Suitable accommodation is provided for staff, separate from that for boarders but within easy reach. Any access by boarders to staff accommodation is appropriate. There is a clear policy for missing pupils, which is known and understood. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 An equal opportunities statement sets out principles applying to both staff and pupils. The school promotes tolerance for others, showing sensitivity to the needs of the individual. All boarders responding to the questionnaire said that they enjoy being at the school and being a boarder, and that they get on well together, and this was confirmed in discussions. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders are actively encouraged to contribute their views to the operation of the boarding provision. These have recently been additionally obtained through a boarding survey issued by the school. Boarders feel confident that their views are listened to and are taken seriously. Activities have been arranged and menus changed in response to boarders' needs and desires. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school has a suitable complaints policy for parents. Complaints received are carefully considered, and correspondence outlining the concerns raised and their resolution is efficiently kept. Logs of complaints are detailed. Written records clearly identify those relating to the boarding provision and action taken by the school as a result of matters raised. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast

majority of parents indicated complete satisfaction with boarding arrangements. [NMS 18]

- 3.22 In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a very small number of boarders said that they do not have the opportunity to take on responsibility. Inspectors found that although the boarding house does not have a system of prefects, senior pupils have opportunities to fulfil well-defined roles in the wider school community, such as school prefect and peer mentor, which enable them to support others in the flexi-boarding environment. In discussions, boarders were clear that such opportunities are available. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20]