



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

GOSFIELD SCHOOL

BOARDING WELFARE INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	Gosfield School
DfE Number	881/6010
Registered Charity Number	310871
Address	Halstead Road Gosfield Halstead Essex CO9 1PF
Telephone Number	01787 474040
Fax Number	01787 478228
Email Address	enquiries@gosfieldschool.org.uk
Principal	Dr Sarah Welch
Chair of Governors	Mr Peter Sakal
Age Range	4 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	180
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (110 boys; 70 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 7 5-11: 50 11-18: 123
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 169
Number of Boarders	Total: 11 Full: 0 Weekly 11
Inspection dates	27 Mar 2012 to 29 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 (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. 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 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 a governors' representative, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration settings. 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 James Bowden

Dr Nicholas England

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding
(Headmaster, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Gosfield School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils from the ages of 4 to 18 years. The school aims to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and are able to achieve personal excellence in all aspects of school life. In addition, it seeks the involvement of staff, pupils and parents in a positive and effective partnership. Founded in 1929, the school occupies a Victorian house in a parkland setting of over 100 acres in the Essex countryside. The school is a charitable trust administered by a governing body. The principal, who has overall responsibility for boarding, took up post in September 2010.
- 1.2 There are 180 pupils on roll: 110 boys and 70 girls. Of these, 7 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage, 50 are in Years 1 to 6, 114 are in Years 7 to 11 and 9 are in the sixth form. Currently, there are nine boys who board weekly and two girls who are flexi-boarders; none of these have been identified as having English as an additional language, or special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most pupils come from families with a business, professional or farming background and live within a 30-mile radius of the school. Almost all pupils are from white British backgrounds. Since September 2011, boarding has been reinstated for girls, previously providing for up to 28 boys. The boarders are cared for in two separate houses at each end of the main building, one for boys and one for girls, by a housemaster, a housemistress and a Gap Year student who also supports the teaching staff during the day.
- 1.3 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. Extend further the variety of activities for boarders during the evenings.
2. Add to the variety of main courses for the boarders' evening meal.

(iii) Progress since the last inspection

2.3 The ten recommendations made at the time of the last Ofsted boarding inspection in June 2008 have been fully addressed. These included boarders' access to people outside the school to discuss personal concerns at school, medical matters, ease of confidential contact with parents or carers, provision of meals, the quality of cutlery and staff recruitment procedures.

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 Pupils choosing to opt for boarding are provided with information beforehand and given the opportunity to have a 'trial' stay overnight. Boarding staff and other boarders provide appropriate support for the induction of new pupils. Each boarder is confident about choosing a member of staff to whom he or she can turn for guidance or help with a personal concern. Pupils are now made aware of at least one person outside the boarding or teaching staff whom they may contact directly should the need arise. In addition, a list of specialist and national organisations and their telephone numbers are provided. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Provision for boarders' health and well-being has improved since the previous inspection. The school now has suitable medical policies that are understood and fully implemented. Written permission from parents and carers for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescribed medication is now obtained in advance. The school also ensures that prescribed medication is only administered to the appropriate boarder. Medicines are securely stored. Pupils assessed as sufficiently responsible to do so are allowed to self-medicate. Boarders who are unwell are appropriately cared for either in the medical room or the sick bays in the boarding houses. Boarders have access to the school doctor and other services if necessary. Medical records are securely stored, ensuring confidentiality. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Since the previous inspection, pupils' ease of contacting parents or carers in private without having to inform or seek permission from boarding staff has improved. Boarders have access to a private pay telephone throughout the day. In addition, they are allowed to use their own mobile telephones until 9 pm, when they are collected in. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Both boarding areas are clean, sufficient in size, suitably furnished and well maintained. Bedding is clean, warm and suitable. Pupils are able to personalise their space. All pupils are afforded appropriate privacy and there are facilities for both organised and private study. Bathrooms and toilet facilities are clean and in good working order. During the activities programme, specialist accommodation used is reserved for boarders. There is no unsupervised access to boarders, or to boarding accommodation whilst occupied by pupils. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Progress since the previous inspection has ensured greater standard, quantity and choice of food, which is prepared hygienically. The quality of the cutlery is now of a higher standard. Any special dietary needs are met. However, in responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and discussions, boarders suggested they do not have sufficient variety of choice, including a cold main dish option, for some of their evening meals, and inspectors agree with this view. Throughout the day, boarders have access to drinking water and can use the vending machines or prepare snacks in their own cafeteria during the evening. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Laundry arrangements are appropriate, and individual items are returned each morning at breakfast. Personal and stationery items can be obtained when needed, including on the weekly 'supermarket run'. Secure provision is made for any small or large personal belongings or valuables brought in by pupils. [NMS 9]

- 3.8 In both houses, boarding staff organise a weekly programme of recreational activities during the evenings using safe areas indoors, outdoors and off site. In addition, there are sufficient opportunities for free time each day, including opportunities for boarders to be alone should they so wish. Boarders' responses to the questionnaire showed dissatisfaction with the provision of enrichment activities in the evenings. Inspection evidence shows that there are enough activities to enjoy but insufficient variety. [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's procedures and protocols for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of boarders have a high profile and are monitored regularly by the health and safety committee. This is demonstrated by the recent appointments of a health and safety officer and a compliance officer with an overview of all regulatory requirements, including risk assessments and equipment checks. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Pupils and staff are fully aware of procedures in relation to fire safety for both day and night. Detailed information is provided and regular evacuation drills are carried out throughout the year, including termly practices for boarders during the night. A fire risk assessment is undertaken and fire equipment is maintained in good order. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The child protection policy and procedures are robust, well understood by all and implemented fully. Those with designated responsibilities have ensured that all staff are up to date with training. The school has secure links with the local authority and its designated officer. Detailed documentation, which is reviewed annually by governors, ensures that staff are aware of issues and actions to be taken should the need arise. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Respectful behaviour amongst pupils and effective relationships with boarding staff, including teachers who lead enrichment activities in the evenings, are promoted by the ethos of the boarding provision. Any incidents of poor behaviour are recorded and monitored regularly and, if appropriate, sanctions are applied. These procedures and policies are known and understood by staff, parents and pupils. Boarders feel that school policies for promoting good behaviour are fair, and that they are in a safe environment where bullying is not tolerated and is not an issue. Pupils also appreciate the mixed-age nature of the boarding provision in supporting their personal development. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 Safe recruitment procedures and vetting of all boarding staff, including partners, have improved since the previous inspection. The single central register of appointments is up to date, checked regularly and maintained accurately. All visitors are supervised during their time on site so that they do not have unauthorised access to boarders or their accommodation. The school is not involved in the appointment of guardians. [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 The school's aims and details for boarding provision are available to all prospective pupils and their parents. They are reflected in the personal development of boarders, particularly in relation to appreciating the need for personal organisation, becoming self-motivated and valuing their time as boarders at the school. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 With overall responsibility for boarding, the principal meets regularly with the housemaster and housemistress, both of whom have a teaching commitment throughout the day, thus supporting the effective links between academic and residential staff. All staff are suitably experienced and appropriately trained, an improvement since the previous inspection. Development of the quality of boarding is integrated into the school's three-year strategic improvement plan, which is monitored by a governor with delegated responsibility for boarding. All relevant records and policies are maintained and monitored regularly. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Job descriptions detail the full roles and responsibilities of boarding staff, and partners have no role within the boarding provision. Induction programmes for new staff are implemented, as are regular appraisal and continuous professional development. Supervision of boarders is appropriate and staff know their whereabouts, as well as how to implement the school's policy in the event of any going missing. Boarders can contact a member of staff during the night within their house should they have a concern. Staff accommodation is appropriately situated to provide accessibility to boarders under supervision, while maintaining privacy. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders are all treated fairly, in line with the school's admission criteria and whole-school policies with regard to equal opportunities. Activities for boarders in each house are open to all. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders are encouraged to raise concerns, or to make suggestions for improvement, either informally or through regular boarding house meetings. The school gives due consideration to pupils' views and boarders themselves report that they feel they are listened to by the boarding staff. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 A detailed complaints procedure is available to all parents and carers. All complaints are dealt with in line with the school's published protocols and none of the few concerns raised have had to reach the final stage of the procedure. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Boarding prefects are chosen to carry out duties in the boys' house. Their induction and job descriptions ensure that they fulfil their duties appropriately. They do not impose sanctions and are never left in sole charge of boarders. [NMS19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20]