



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**BRUERN ABBEY SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Bruern Abbey School

Full Name of School	<b>Bruern Abbey School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>931/6106</b>		
Address	<b>Bruern Abbey School Chesterton Manor Chesterton Bicester Oxfordshire OX26 1UY</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01869 242448</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01869 243949</b>		
Email Address	<b>secretary@bruernabbey.org</b>		
Head	<b>Mr John Floyd</b>		
Proprietor	<b>Mr Sterling Stover</b>		
Age Range	<b>8 to 13</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>102</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Boys</b>		
Numbers by Age	8-11 :	<b>45</b>	11-13: <b>57</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>11</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>91</b>	
	Weekly:	<b>74</b>	Flexi: <b>17</b>
Inspection dates	<b>03 December 2013 to 05 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 October 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 the proprietor, 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**

Mr Rod Sharman

Mr Robert Humphreys

Reporting Inspector

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

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Bruern Abbey School was founded in 1989 as a boarding preparatory school for boys from the ages of eight to thirteen by the proprietor, who is also known as the principal. The school moved to its current location in a village near Bicester in 1999. Since 1996 it has specialised in the education of boys with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. The school is housed in a late nineteenth-century manor house, and is set in parkland with space for games and country sports. Boarding accommodation is in the manor house. There is no formal board of governors, although the principal formally involves individuals from within and outside the school community in major decisions. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage, with very few from minority ethnic groups. Most pupils come from professional families and many live in or near London. Since the previous inspection, a design and technology centre has been built and a new head has been appointed.
- 1.2 All pupils have special educational needs and/or difficulties/disabilities. The central aim of the school is to prepare them for the Common Entrance examination and enable them to continue their education successfully in mainstream senior independent schools. The school seeks to restore self-belief within pupils who may have lost confidence in themselves, and also to enable them to enjoy a fully-rounded education and appreciate the cultural aspects of life. Emphasis is placed on the importance of living as a community.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the school had a total of 102 pupils on roll, 45 in the junior school for pupils up to the age of 11, and 57 in the senior school. Seventy-four pupils are weekly boarders, and 17 board on a flexi-basis. The junior school comprises five mixed-age classes, each spanning Years 4 to 6. Two pupils have statements of special educational needs. None have English as an additional language. Specialist learning support is provided by the school for pupils with the most severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the senior school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

### Senior school

School	NC name
Lower Sixth	Year 7
Upper Sixth	Year 8

## **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 minutes of the meetings between the principal and head clearly indicate the outcomes of the principal's annual review of child protection.
2. Ensure that health and safety reports and records are monitored consistently.

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

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in October 2009. Good progress has been made in fulfilling the recommendations made at that time. The handling of medication is in line with national advice. Kitchen staff have received further food hygiene training. National guidance in safer recruitment has been adopted. Maintenance of the accommodation has improved.

### **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 Boarders are introduced to boarding through a supportive process that takes account of any special educational needs and/or disabilities they may have. Boarders commented that they found the taster day process helpful and welcoming. All boarders have a choice of staff they can turn to. They are provided with contact details of an independent listener. Contact details for a number of national and local help lines are displayed in a format that boarders find helpful. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Boarders' health and well-being are a priority for the school. Boarders who are ill or injured are supported by the medical staff. The medical centre works closely with the school's local medical practice, and has appropriate accommodation for boys who are ill. The comprehensive medical records are kept securely, together with controlled medicines. Parental permission for administration of medicines is sought. Boarding staff work closely with the matrons who are also part of the wider boarding team to ensure appropriate care policies are implemented. The administration and storage of medicines in the medical centre is appropriately documented, an improvement since the previous inspection. Other specialist services are accessed if necessary. The confidentiality and rights of boarders are respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders contact their families with ease and privacy. Boarders are allowed to use non-internet-enabled mobile phones at specified times as well as landlines. Each boarder has a laptop that can be used to email. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation is clean, comfortable and well maintained, an improvement since the previous inspection. Bedrooms vary in size from those that accommodate five to larger ones. All have easy access to suitable washrooms and toilets that respect boarders' privacy. Boarders personalise their rooms with photographs and posters. Appropriate spaces are provided for them to complete their prep and undertake private study. Boarding accommodation is protected from unauthorised access and security arrangements do not intrude on boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Meals are seen as a priority for the school in fulfilling a key aim to emphasise living as a community. Parents are regularly invited to join their children at formal dinners, and on special occasions. Boarders are provided with a number of different weekly dinner options, including theme nights and the popular oyster club, where pupils have a fish and sea food lunch, run by the principal. Meals are nutritious and prepared in hygienic conditions; staff have received further hygiene training since the previous inspection. Many boarders commented to inspectors that they like the food and have a range of different options, including provision for special diets. Drinking water and snacks are available at various times throughout the day. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Appropriate laundry provision is made for clothing and bedding. The arrangements ensure that boarders receive their own laundry. Boarders' washing is completed on a daily basis. Boarders have access to their computers and non-internet-enabled mobile phones at specified times. These are collected in by the boarding staff and stored securely. Boarders have lockable storage. A minority of boarders who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed concern about the safety of

their possessions. Inspectors' conversations with boarders showed that this view was more about a concern that their shoes were being moved without their knowledge. Suitable arrangements are made for boarders to purchase personal toiletries or stationery. [NMS 9]

- 3.8 Boarders report that they enjoy a wide range of activities. These include TV documentary nights, watching films, and the important evening dinners. A full programme is offered after lessons have finished with boarders having access to the spacious grounds where they are safe. Boarders comment that they enjoy taking part in clubs, such as modelling and art. They do not stay at the weekends. They have access to newspapers and current affairs through their internet-enabled laptops. [NMS10]

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

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school has effective procedures to ensure the safety of boarders. Detailed risk assessments are in place for all aspects of boarding life, including one concerning the stream that flows through the grounds. The necessary records are completed. Arrangements for monitoring the reports and records are not consistently applied. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school ensures the safety of boarders with regard to fire. Drills are carried out regularly, including in the hours of daylight and darkness. Care is taken to ensure that pupils who board on a 'flexi' basis are familiar with evacuation procedures. Staff have received appropriate fire awareness training. Risk assessments are carried out and changes made when necessary. [NMS7]
- 3.12 Due attention is paid to child protection. The headmaster, designated person and the deputy are appropriately trained. They ensure that all staff and the principal have the required training. Child protection is central to the induction of all staff. In addition, pupils in the senior school have training so that they are in a position to respond should younger pupils approach them with a concern. The principal undertakes an annual review of child protection arrangements. However, the notes kept do not provide sufficient detail of this review or of any subsequent actions. [NMS11]
- 3.13 Positive relationships are promoted by the role modelling of the dedicated boarding staff. Good behaviour is encouraged by effective policies and positive reinforcement. A suitable anti-bullying policy is understood by boarders and staff, and is fully implemented. Boarders report that they rarely encounter bullying and if it does occur it is dealt with quickly and thoroughly. This was confirmed through the scrutiny of records. An appropriate policy for the use of physical restraint is understood by the staff. Arrangements for searching boarders and their possessions are clearly defined. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school operates safe recruitment procedures, improved since the previous inspection, and the central register of staff appointments is maintained accurately. Due attention is paid to ensuring that unauthorised visitors do not have unsupervised contact with the boarders. [NMS14]

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

- 3.15 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 The website, together with the parental handbook for boarding, provides a clear statement of the principles, aims and ethos on which boarding is based. Inspection findings confirm that boarding practice is in line with these principles. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The boarding team is managed by suitably qualified and experienced staff, and overseen closely by the head. Future staff training has been identified as part of a plan for the development of boarding and the required records are monitored. The principal is well informed about the pastoral needs of the boarders as he regularly attends boarding and pastoral staff meetings. A number of academic staff regularly have boarding duties enabling effective links to be maintained. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Staff have detailed job descriptions and have a clear understanding of what is required of them. Boarding staff have appropriate experience. Induction, together with training and professional review of their work, enhances their professional development. Supervision is appropriate both day and night. Care is taken to ensure that boarders' whereabouts are known at all times. A policy for dealing with missing children is clearly understood by boarding staff in the unlikely event that it is needed. Boarders know who is on duty at night and how to contact them. Suitable accommodation is provided for residential staff. Boarders' access to staff accommodation is properly supervised. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders commented in their discussions with inspectors, and in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, that they are treated equally and no inappropriate discrimination takes place. Staff ensure that they take into account boarders' individual needs with sensitivity in their care of them. [NMS16]
- 3.20 Boarders use the recently established boarding council to express their views. The principal's and headmaster's regular croissant breakfast with prefects enables pupils to express their views. Boarders commented that they were confident they could approach the boarding staff with any issues that they may have. [NMS17]
- 3.21 A clear complaints procedure which conforms to regulations is available for all parents of pupils in the school. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were positive and very supportive of the school in most areas of the boarding provision. A very small minority indicated that their child does not enjoy boarding. However, in discussion with boarders and parents during the inspection, it was clear that they appreciate that it is necessary for their children to board in order access the specialist help they require. A significant number of boarders opt to board in their senior schools. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Prefects are provided with specific duties which are appropriate for them. Boarding staff have suitable oversight of their work to ensure that prefects do not abuse their position. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for any of its pupils. [NMS 20 not applicable]