



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST RICHARD'S SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Richard's School

Full Name of School	St Richard's School
DfE Number	884/6003
Registered Charity Number	1113203
Address	St Richard's School Bredenbury Court Bromyard Herefordshire HR7 4TD
Telephone Number	01885 482491
Fax Number	01885 488982
Email Address	schooloffice@st-richards.org.uk
Headmaster	Mr Fred de Falbe
Chair of Governors	Mr Jonathan Jackson
Age Range	3 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	112
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (44 boys; 68 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 0 5-11: 53 3-5 (EYFS): 35 11-13: 24
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 75
Number of Boarders	Total: 37 Full: 3 Weekly: 18 Flexi: 16
Inspection dates	20 to 22 May 2014

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 September 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 the chair of governors, 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 Bridget Windley

Reporting Inspector

Mr Anthony Hobson

Team Inspector for Boarding (Housemaster, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Richard's is a Roman Catholic co-educational day and boarding school for boys and girls aged from three to thirteen. In 1921 it was founded in Malvern, and in 1968 it moved to its present site of over 35 acres near the small town of Bromyard in north Herefordshire. The school was privately owned until 2005 when it became a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. The school occupies a Victorian house with modern additions providing specialist facilities, which include a riding school, a swimming pool and science and design and technology workshops. The boarding house is located within the main school building as is the accommodation for residential boarding staff. Since the previous inspection, a new headmaster, bursar and chair of governors have been appointed.
- 1.2 The total number of pupils is 112, of whom 44 are boys and 68 are girls. Opportunities for children to board commence at Year 3 with full time, weekly and flexi boarding offered. At the time of the inspection, there were 3 full boarders (1 boy and 2 girls), 18 weekly boarders (7 boys and 11 girls), and 16 flexi-boarders of whom 7 were boys and 9 girls. The school has identified four pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and two pupils speak English as an additional language. No pupil has a statement of educational needs. Boarders are drawn mostly from business and professional backgrounds in the local neighbourhood, with a small number in the armed services. Almost all pupils are of white British origin, and a few European boarders visit for one or two terms, a few for a year.
- 1.3 The school aims to offer a stimulating yet caring environment in which pupils can develop their self-confidence, respect for others and a love of life, as well as fulfil their academic potential. This ethos is in the context of Catholic traditions and values, and focuses on pupils having the freedom to enjoy their childhood in an atmosphere akin to a family, without too many of the pressures of some aspects of modern life.
- 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 school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Pre-preparatory Department

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Reception	Reception
Pre-prep 1	Year 1
Pre-prep 2	Year 2

Preparatory School

School	NC name
Form 1	Year 3
Form 2	Year 4
Form 3	Year 5
Form 4	Year 6
Form 5	Year 7
Form 6	Year 8

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.1 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013, and therefore it must:

- ensure all recruitment checks on staff are completed as required 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, under Child protection].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.2 In addition to the above regulatory action point, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that the school and the governing body fully implement systems to monitor boarding.
2. Ensure that boarders have more opportunities to put forward their opinions.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in September 2010. Recommendations were given with regard to risk assessments, support for overseas boarders, continuous refurbishment in the boarding areas and governors' systems for the monitoring and development of boarding. All have been met apart from the requirement for governors to monitor boarding systems which remains a recommendation for the future.

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 The school has a suitable induction process for new boarders, which includes an allocated guide to help them settle into boarding and a comprehensive handbook. Boarders have a choice of adults to whom they can turn with a concern and all report that they are well looked after. Boarders are aware that they may contact the local doctor or the school chaplain, who visits at least once a week, in the case of any problems or distress. Their names and contact details, along with the appropriate helplines, are prominently displayed on notice boards and include the Children's Rights Director. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Suitable policies and arrangements are established for the care of boarders who are unwell or injured. There is provision for first aid, medical emergencies and chronic medical conditions. A suitably equipped medical room, with toilet and washing facilities, is located within the boarding house, with separate sick bays for boys and girls and separate from other boarders. Household remedies and prescribed medicines are stored securely and administered by qualified boarding personnel, who are careful to give the prescribed medicine only to those for whom they are prescribed. Any self-medication is handled in a sensitive and sensible manner. There is access to local medical, dental and other specialised medical services, and confidentiality, including 'Gillick competence', is appropriately respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders are able to contact parents and family using the school landline telephones and via email. At interview, a small minority of senior boys mentioned that there were occasions when they might have to wait for use of the phone. The overseas boarders are allowed mobile devices and they are able to contact their families by video messaging. In order to prevent unsafe practice, the school has appropriate systems to monitor and control the use of electronic communications. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Upgrading in the layout and fabric of the house has taken place since the last boarding inspection and appropriate further development is planned. Adult accommodation is separate and the boarding areas for boys and girls are also separate. The accommodation is suitable in size and furnishings for all ages and needs. Dormitories are well ventilated, lit and heated, and clean bedding provides appropriate comfort and warmth. Areas within dormitories are personalised with duvet covers and posters, and the overseas boarders brighten their space with flags and maps. Suitable toilet and shower facilities which offer appropriate privacy are situated close to the dormitories. Boarders' common rooms provide opportunities for private study and social recreation, as does the dedicated room for the Year 8 boarders. Table football, television, music, books and board games can all be enjoyed by boarders in their free time. Access to boarding accommodation is strictly controlled and all boarders stated in the pre-inspection questionnaire and in interview that the school keeps them safe from unauthorised intrusion. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 All dietary requirements are catered for and boarders have nutritious and healthy meals which are plentiful and varied. Suitable facilities are provided for the hygienic preparation and consumption of the boarders' main meals. Boarders have all their meals served in the school's dining hall. There is access to drinking water, with fruit and snacks available at the appropriate times of the day. In the questionnaire, some older boarders indicated that they were not happy with the food and the provision of snacks. In discussions it was established that this is because occasionally choice is limited. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 The boarding staff arrange for the laundering of the boarders' clothing and bedding, which is suitably stored and returned to the correct boarder. Boarders are able to obtain necessary personal items and stationery from the boarding staff. Lockable cupboards are available in most of the dormitories and valuable items are given to the matrons for safe keeping. The inspection team found this was appropriate and disagreed with the very few boarders who reported in the questionnaire that their belongings were not safe. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Outside teaching time, an appropriate balance is maintained between free time and organised activities. Each evening and throughout weekends full use is made of the school grounds and facilities, and onsite clubs range from horse riding to canoeing. Shopping and theatre trips to Bromyard form a regular part of the boarders' weekend programme. There are many safe places where boarders may be alone should they so desire. The provision of newspapers and the watching of news programmes on television allow boarders the opportunity to gain information about events in the outside world. [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 A thorough health and safety policy is implemented effectively, and the premises and facilities are maintained to ensure a safe working environment for the boarders. The procedures for promoting safety when on and off the premises cover all reasonable risks. All boarders are escorted to facilities, such as the lake, swimming pool and the sports fields. Suitable audits and maintenance tests are undertaken regularly. In the questionnaire a very large majority of parents reported that the boarding environment keeps their children safe. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school's fire safety policy and practices are suitable according to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Regular fire drills, both by day and during boarding time, ensure that boarders are aware of procedures in a variety of situations. Records are kept of fire drills and maintenance of equipment, and appropriate action is taken to remedy any problems. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Arrangements for safeguarding boarders are implemented correctly; all staff are trained appropriately and the designated officers undertake a higher level of training. Good links have been established with the local safeguarding board and communication is open and helpful. The school is aware of new developments in safeguarding and has already put measures in place to implement the government guidance issued in the 2014 *Keeping Children Safe in Education* publication. Governors are committed to the annual review of safeguarding procedures, but their oversight of recruitment checks on staff has on one occasion not always ensured these are completed fully before appointment. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school promotes positive behaviour, and rewards and sanctions are given in accordance with the school's policies and DfE guidance. Boarders spoke highly of the friendly environment of the boarding house and the mutual respect they have for each other. A few boarders indicated in the questionnaire that the system of rewards and sanctions is unfair, but in interviews boarders expressed a clear understanding of the school's procedures. Appropriate records of misdemeanours are kept by the school which are monitored closely. In discussions boarders reported that there is no bullying in the house and they are confident that if it did occur it would be addressed swiftly and efficiently. The school has detailed records and procedures in place to deal with any such behaviour. Documentation specifies

the circumstances when restraint is to be used, and arrangements are established for searching pupils or their possessions, but have yet to be implemented. [NMS 12]

- 3.14 Staff are checked during the recruitment process, but the school has not always been sufficiently rigorous in checking staff against the barred list before they begin work at the school. However, the appointment procedure is now being implemented correctly and all staff currently working in the school have had satisfactory criminal record checks. This includes all persons over the age of 16 who are not employed by the school but live on the premises, and they also have a written agreement stating the terms of their accommodation. Visitors to the boarding house during the day are appropriately supervised. Parents of boarders from overseas make their own arrangements for guardians in the UK, and the school selects and monitors carefully the adults who offer occasional weekend accommodation for these pupils. [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 statement of boarding principles and practice is provided on house notice boards for the boarders and to parents and staff in the boarding handbooks. Parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the organisation and management of boarding. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 New leadership of boarding has already introduced many initiatives which are strengthening the boarding experience for the pupils. The governors value boarding and the recent appointment of a dedicated governor has already had an impact in supporting the newly developed systems for monitoring the boarding provision. Monitoring was a recommendation from the previous inspection which remains in place. Senior boarding staff are suitably trained and experienced and there are appropriate measures for the induction of new members of the team. Gap year students play a significant role in the boarding house, for which they receive suitable training. Links between the pastoral and academic staff are effective, maintained formally through regular meetings and informally through daily communication. The required records specified in National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, Appendix 2 are suitably maintained and stored. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All staff working with boarders have job descriptions, induction training and some opportunities for professional development. All staff have regular reviews of their professional practice. The roles of spouses within the boarding house are made clear. Boarders know the suitably qualified and experienced member of staff who is responsible for them and staff know the whereabouts of boarders in their care. The ratio of staff to pupils ensures that boarders are supervised at all times. The school has a suitable policy for missing pupils, which has not needed to be implemented. At least six members of staff are resident in the house overnight and boarders know how to contact the member of staff on night duty. Suitable accommodation for living, eating and sleeping is provided for the residential boarding staff. It includes toilet and washing facilities and is separate from those of the boarders. Boarders only visit staff accommodation in groups for specific reasons and there is no favouritism or inappropriate contact. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Staff are clear about their responsibilities for ensuring that boarders have equal opportunities and due attention is given to any religious, cultural or dietary needs. Overseas boarders and those with individual needs are well cared for and fully integrated into the boarding community. In discussions, all boarders reported that staff treat them fairly and without discrimination. [NMS 16]

- 3.20 Boarders' views are gathered through periodic questionnaires and boarding meetings. A minority of boarders indicated, in interviews and in the questionnaire, that the school does not provide sufficient opportunities for them to put forward their opinions and the inspection findings confirmed this view. Boarders are not penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint in good faith. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school's policy for parental complaints is published on the school's website. Complaints are appropriately responded to and recorded. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Dormitory captains assist house staff in the smooth running of the house and they are given appropriate training and supervision. Their job description requires them to act as role models and provide support for their juniors. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 For occasional weekends, overseas boarders reside with an English family in accommodation which is of a comparable standard to that provided by the school. Parents are advised of this procedure and they understand that the school organises, supervises, checks and monitors such arrangements at least yearly. Records show that visits to the potential lodgings are made, and the responsible adult is interviewed. All members of the host family aged over 16 have been suitably checked, and the responsible adult has suitable references. Written agreements between the school and the host family are in place and the school provides satisfactory written guidance. A member of staff discusses his or her lodgings separately with each overseas boarder once a term, recording the agreed outcomes and taking action on any concerns or complaints. [NMS 20]