



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**WEST BUCKLAND SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## West Buckland School

Full Name of School	<b>West Buckland School</b>
DfE Number	<b>878/6032</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>306710</b>
Address	<b>West Buckland School West Buckland Barnstaple Devon EX32 0SX</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01598 760281</b>
Fax Number	<b>01598 760546</b>
Email Address	<b>enquiries@westbuckland.com</b>
Head	<b>Mr John Vick</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr John Light</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 19</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>574</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Boys and Girls</b>
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): <b>28</b> 5-11: <b>107</b> 11-19: <b>439</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>478</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>96</b> Full: <b>96</b> Weekly: <b>0</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>26 Jan 2016 to 28 Jan 2016</b>

## 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 the governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended registration sessions. 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 John Dunston      Reporting Inspector

Mrs Nathalie Hart      Team Inspector for Boarding (Housemistress, GSA school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 West Buckland School aims to enable all pupils to develop the personal qualities, abilities and values that will enable them to make the most of their own lives and to contribute to society. It seeks to base its moral and spiritual values on its Christian foundation and to instil generosity and kindness of spirit, a commitment to virtue, and the tolerance and enjoyment of diversity and individuality. The school sets out to encourage pupils to consider themselves contributors to the communities and environment in which they live and wherever they may live in the future. Its pastoral support aims to enable all pupils to enjoy their childhood, strive to reach their potential, and live their lives safely and confidently in school and beyond. The school is a charitable trust whose trustees act as governors, meeting four times a year. At least two of the governors must be parents of current pupils at the time of their appointment and two must be former pupils. The work of the governing body is supported by several committees.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1858 as a boys' boarding school on the present 100-acre site on the edge of Exmoor. It is now a co-educational school for 574 day and boarding pupils aged from 3 to 19, including approximately equal numbers of boys and girls. There are 28 pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and 136 in the sixth form. In total, 96 pupils are full boarders, 63 of whom are from overseas, mainly from Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Germany, France, Spain and Russia. In addition, around 70 pupils board on a part-time or occasional basis. There are 58 pupils who have English as an additional language, all of whom receive specialist support for their English. The school has identified 111 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 38 receive additional specialist support.
- 1.3 Boarders are accommodated in three separate houses. Boyer has boys aged 10 to 16 and Bamfylde has girls aged 11 to 16. Sixth-form boarders aged 17 to 19 live in Parker's in separate wings for boys and girls. Since the previous boarding welfare inspection in 2009, the school has opened the 150 Building, housing facilities for art and design, and a theatre. Since the previous integrated inspection in 2013, the Michael Morpurgo library and Parker's have been opened. This new boarding house replaced two smaller houses. Internet access has been extended to all the teaching and learning buildings and to the boarding accommodation. The post of chaplain has been replaced by a chaplaincy team of four staff members. The leadership of the sixth form has been restructured to include a new post of deputy head of the sixth form, including responsibility for higher education and careers guidance.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used for the senior school and throughout this report to refer to year groups. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the preparatory school and its NC equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Prep 1	Year 1
Prep 2	Year 2
Prep 3	Year 3
Prep 4	Year 4
Prep 5	Year 5
Prep 6	Year 6

## **2. SUMMARY**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.1 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that plans are implemented to improve the quality of food in order to ensure consistency at all mealtimes.
2. Ensure that senior staff give feedback to pupils about the concerns that they raise.
3. Develop further training opportunities for boarding staff.

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

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in December 2009. The report recommended that all prefects should be clear about the need to protect pupils' privacy, that recruitment checks on prospective staff should cover all the matters listed in NMS 38 (in place at that time) and that the school should continue to improve boarding accommodation for male sixth-form pupils. All recommendations have been implemented. The previous integrated inspection, incorporating boarding, was undertaken by ISI in January 2013. It was recommended that the school should further develop systems for fully integrating international boarders and taking account of their views, and improve development planning to ensure that all aspects of the school's provision are incorporated into a unified plan rooted in widespread consultation with published targets and review dates. Since that time, the school has introduced new procedures and routines to support the integration of international boarders and to take account of their views. It has established systems for consultation to support a coherent development plan.

### **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 Appropriate guidance and support are provided for new boarders, including an induction programme and a 'buddy' system. Boarders have a wide range of staff to whom they can turn if they have any difficulties. Contact details for a range of external sources of confidential help and advice are displayed in the boarding houses, including the independent listener and the Children's Commissioner. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school implements appropriate healthcare policies for boarders who are unwell or injured. Trained and experienced staff in the conveniently located medical centre follow clear procedures for the dispensing of medication. Detailed records are kept of household remedies issued either in the medical centre or in the houses, with due regard for boarders' confidentiality. Boarders have easy access to local medical services. The competence of boarders to self-medicate is carefully assessed and monitored. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can contact family and friends through a variety of means. Many have the use of a mobile telephone, tablet device or computer, and desktop computers are available in the house for on-screen communication. Internet access is available in all the houses. Suitable monitoring safeguards are in place as well as cut-off times for each year group. For some overseas pupils, the cut-off times limit opportunities to maintain contact with their families, given time differences. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation is comfortable, clean and welcoming. The houses have suitable lighting, ventilation and heating. Pupils' bedrooms and social areas of the houses are well decorated and maintained. All washrooms and toilet facilities offer adequate privacy. Parker's has appropriately separated accommodation for boys and girls. Boarders are encouraged to personalise their own space with posters and photographs, and notice boards are provided. Homework is done either in the boarding house or in the school prep room under the supervision of a member of staff. Appropriate security measures are in place to ensure that access to boarding accommodation is only available to those entitled to use it, but do not invade boarders' privacy. Each boarding house has an annual and comprehensive risk assessment. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 A varied range of food is served at mealtimes, with provision for pupils with particular dietary needs. The choice of main courses is limited in the evenings. A minority of boarders who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and a minority of boarders in discussions, expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the food, although this was found to be adequate during the inspection. Food is prepared and served in hygienic conditions. Boarders contribute to a food committee that meets regularly. A minority of boarders commented unfavourably in response to the questionnaire on the availability of snacks. Inspectors found that provision in the tuck shop and in the houses does not reflect this. Drinking water is widely available throughout the day. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 The laundry services are efficient. Pupils are able to secure valuable items in the boarding house. Pupils feel safe at the school and are confident that their belongings are also safe. Boarders are able to purchase appropriate items at the school shops and to travel to Barnstaple on a weekly basis for other shopping. [NMS 9]



- 3.8 A wide range of activities is available in boarders' free time, including indoor and outdoor sporting and recreational opportunities, as well as, for example, music, art and debating. Pupils enjoy a range of local visits at weekends as well as spending time on the extensive school site. Boarders have easy access to information about the world outside through electronic and printed media. [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 makes appropriate arrangements for health and safety. Policies are reviewed regularly. Risk assessments for boarding houses, and for on-site and off-site activities, are carried out and suitably monitored, in accordance with the school's risk assessment policy. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaires, both parents and boarders themselves reported that the school keeps boarders safe. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 All required measures are in place to ensure that the school complies with current fire legislation and to minimise the risk of fire. Routine fire practices take place regularly at different times, including when boarders might be asleep. Fire equipment is maintained and tested at regular intervals. Staff training in fire prevention and procedures takes place regularly and is recorded. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Suitable and effective safeguarding procedures are in operation, and appropriate arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders. All staff are trained in safeguarding and child protection matters. The designated safeguarding leads receive further training at the appropriate level. Detailed records are kept of any concerns. Governors carry out an annual review of safeguarding policies and their implementation. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school promotes positive behaviour and implements clear and detailed policies. Boarders frequently commented on the good atmosphere in the houses and in the wider school community. Effective measures are in place to combat bullying and boarders confirm that there is virtually none, although a small minority indicated in the questionnaire that if it ever arises it is well handled. Boarders are aware of the discipline and sanctions procedures and feel that staff issue sanctions fairly. The school has policies in place to cover physical restraint and searches of pupils and their property. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school has implemented safer recruitment procedures, including the carrying out and recording of all required checks on staff. The single central register of appointments is meticulously maintained. The school has systems in place to ensure that all those over the age of sixteen who live on the same premises as boarders but are not employed by the school have appropriate checks and receive guidance on contact with boarders and their responsibilities as residents. Visitors to houses are appropriately supervised and do not have access to boarders' accommodation. The school does not make arrangements for 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 has a wide-ranging statement of boarding aims and values which reflects the nature of the boarding experience for pupils of all ages. It is made known to boarders, parents and staff. Parents expressed in questionnaire responses overwhelming support for the quality of boarding life offered to their children. The aims of boarding at the school are consistently reflected in the enthusiasm shown by boarders for their boarding experience and in their relationships with each other and with staff. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Governors monitor the leadership and management of boarding to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities and that all standards are met. Effective links exist between the academic and boarding aspects of the school. Boarding staff receive training and support. Boarding welfare records are detailed. Boarders are always aware of who is on duty and how to contact them. Staff know and understand what to do if any boarder is missing. Boarders do not visit private staff accommodation. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All staff employed by the school and working with boarders have job descriptions. They receive induction and occasional training, and their performance is reviewed. The role of other residents is also clearly defined in the boarding handbook. Boarding houses are sufficiently staffed during boarding hours. Boarders of all ages are well supervised and staff know their whereabouts at all times. Boarders always know which members of staff are responsible for them. Policies and procedures are in place in case of any missing pupils. Staff on overnight duty are easily accessible to all boarders. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 A policy on equal opportunities is implemented to ensure that boarders of all backgrounds and nationalities, and those with SEND, are well cared for and that there is no discrimination. Boarders feel that everyone is respected by both pupils and staff. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders have a variety of opportunities to bring their views to the attention of staff. Boarders' committees have been created in the houses and within school at which they are able to raise concerns. A small minority of boarders commented in response to the questionnaire that their views are not fully taken into account. Inspection evidence, including discussions with boarders and minutes of meetings, showed that issues raised by the committees are considered by senior staff, and that appropriate changes are implemented. However, pupils are not always made aware of the outcome of the review of their concerns. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 An appropriate policy on recording and responding to complaints is in place which meets regulatory standards. It is published on the school website. Complaints arise only rarely and are handled sensitively and in accordance with the policy. Appropriate records are kept. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Pupils acting as heads and deputy heads of house have job descriptions and receive appropriate training to fulfil their roles. Their work is monitored by senior boarding staff. A very small minority of boarders felt that they did not have sufficient opportunity to take on positions of responsibility. During the inspection it was clear that many such opportunities exist. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings to accommodate pupils. [NMS 20]