



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**OSWESTRY SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	<b>Oswestry School</b>
DfE Number	<b>893/6011</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1079822</b>
Address	<b>Oswestry School Upper Brook Street Oswestry Shropshire SY11 2TL</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01691 655711</b>
Fax Number	<b>01691 662726</b>
Email Address	<b>enquiries@oswestryschool.org.uk</b>
Head	<b>Mr Douglas Robb</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Peter Wilcox-Jones</b>
Age Range	<b>4 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>403</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (239 boys; 164 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): <b>0</b> 5-11: <b>51</b> 3-5 (EYFS): <b>43</b> 11-18: <b>309</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>Total: 287</b>
Number of Boarders	<b>Total: 116</b> <b>Full: 110      Weekly: 6</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>7 Feb 2012 to 9 Feb 2012</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing primarily on compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. 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 December 2008 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 the chair of 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**

Mrs Patricia Cullen

Mr Robert Gower

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding  
(Senior Tutor, HMC school)

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 The school's founder, David Holbache, provided grounds on the edge of the North Shropshire Plain for the establishment of a school with a vision of love of learning. Since its foundation as a school for boys in 1407, Oswestry has evolved into a non-denominational, co-educational boarding and day school for pupils aged from 4 to 18 years. Purpose-built accommodation has extended the range of resources and opportunities for educating pupils in line with the school's aim to develop the whole person with a desire for truth and respect for others. The school is administered by a board of governors. The current head has been in post since September 2010.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, an extensive building and refurbishment programme has increased the capacity for boarding. Restructured senior management includes a deputy head with responsibility for boarding, and new house staff, medical staff, a chaplain and a school counsellor have been appointed. All house staff have been retrained.
- 1.3 Of the 116 boarders on roll, 110 board full-time and 6 are weekly boarders, and there is a slightly higher number of boys than girls. Pupils are able to board from the age of 11 years. A number come from overseas and of the 70 boarders with English as an additional language, 63 attend English for Speakers of Other Languages lessons. Additional support is provided to the 18 boarders identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. The majority of boarders complete their education at the end of Year 13 and go on to higher and further education.
- 1.4 Three boarding houses are separated into accommodation for boys and girls. Guinevere House is a modern building where girls aged 9 to 18 years share rooms. School House accommodates boys up to Year 11 in the original school building, which has undergone some refurbishment. Sixth-form boarders are accommodated in separate buildings where they experience independent living in preparation for undergraduate life.
- 1.5 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. Reinstatement of the boarding council to enable boarders to debate issues raised in the school council. [NMS 17]
2. Review the timing of lunch for the youngest boarders. [NMS8]

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

2.3 The school has resolved the two recommendations made at the time of the previous Ofsted boarding inspection in December 2008. These related to boarding staff induction and training, and to the regular appraisal of their performance.

### **3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS**

#### **3.(a) Boarding provision and care**

- 3.1 The school meets all of the National Minimum Standards under this section.
- 3.2 New boarders follow an induction programme and receive guidance from house staff. A parents' handbook includes a guide to first-time boarding. Boarders are free to choose staff and an independent listener in whom to confide and have contact details for the school counsellor. Contact numbers for helplines are displayed in all houses. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 House staff are familiar with policies for first aid and dealing with chronic conditions. They receive training in the management of medication. Unwell boarders are cared for by well-trained staff in the medical centre, which is separated from the dormitories. Local dental and specialist medical services are readily available. Boarders may self-medicate with written permission from their parents. Medical information is securely stored and the confidentiality of boarders is respected at all times. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can contact family and friends with ease. House telephones are provided in private areas. Parents report that communication with the school is frequent and efficient. Appropriate methods for controlling the use of electronic communication are used to prevent cyber bullying and unsafe practices. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Accommodation is comfortable and suitable for the ages and gender of boarders. Toilet and washing facilities are clean and in good order. Boarders can personalise their rooms and are happy with their surroundings, which they say have a homely feel. They all have access to study areas. Boarding accommodation is reserved for the sole use of boarders and protected from access by unauthorised people. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Wholesome meals, prepared in hygienic surroundings, offer variety and choice to meet special dietary requirements. Meetings are held to address healthy eating issues and comments from all pupils. Lunch for junior boarders is provided after 1.30 pm. Each house has a kitchen where appropriate snacks and drinks are available. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Adequate laundry provision, in houses and out of school, is made for clothing and bedding. Boarders are able to buy essential stationery and toiletries. All rooms have adequate wardrobes and a lockable cupboard for personal possessions. Valuable items and pocket money are kept by house parents. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 A full programme of sporting, cultural and artistic activities is offered on weekdays and at weekends, and supervised by suitably trained staff. House staff organise weekend trips and visits, including those to cultural venues but also to places of entertainment and relaxation. The Combined Cadet Force and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme are popular. At weekends senior pupils, and younger ones under supervision, are able to make shopping trips to the nearby town. Houses have a wide selection of recreational facilities including table football, table tennis and television games. Pupils have access to the outside world through newspapers, television and the internet. All recreational areas on the extensive site are safe and closely monitored. [NMS 10]



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

- 3.9 The school meets all of the National Minimum Standards under this section.
- 3.10 Appropriate policies ensure that the welfare, health and safety of boarders are a priority at all times. Risk assessments are carried out for all areas of the school premises and land. Any major incidents and breaches are logged and immediate action is taken. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Effective fire prevention equipment is regularly serviced. Fire exits are clearly marked, with easy access from all parts of each building. Notices around the boarding houses, and fire drills, including some at night, ensure that boarders are clear about what to do in case of a fire. Fire log books are kept in each house and checked to ensure that they are suitably maintained. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Arrangements to safeguard boarders are in place and meet all requirements. They include a training programme to ensure that staff are clear about their responsibilities for child protection. Links with the local children safeguarding board are maintained. Boarders say that they feel safe and are clear to whom they should report any child protection concerns. Sixth formers receive training and know how to respond to any disclosures. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 A written policy, circulated to boarders and their parents, promotes positive behaviour and relationships. The anti-bullying policy is supported by focused discussions in personal, social and health education lessons. Boarders do not find bullying a concern and any inappropriate actions are dealt with speedily. Sanctions are proportionate and recorded. These are reviewed in house staff meetings to share good practice and ensure consistency. Arrangements for restraint and searching boarders' possessions are in place but have not needed to be implemented recently. Positive and supportive relationships contribute to the family atmosphere in the houses reported by boarders. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school operates safe recruitment procedures and the central register of appointments is suitably maintained. No adults other than staff live on site. A written policy and the arrangements for visitors make them feel welcomed, yet allow the school to supervise them adequately. Parents make their own guardianship arrangements. The school makes clear the role and responsibilities of guardians with whom they maintain regular contact. [NMS 14]

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

- 3.15 The school meets all of the National Minimum Standards under this section.
- 3.16 The school's statement of aims for boarding is clearly displayed on the website for parents of current and prospective boarders and made available to boarders and staff. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 An appropriately trained, experienced member of the senior management team, acting as head of boarding, oversees the organisation and management of the provision. House parents, and their deputies and boarding assistants, liaise with academic tutors to ensure the well-being of each boarder. Each house has an action plan that is reviewed by the governing body. The records required to be held by the school are suitably maintained and monitored. [NMS 13]

- 3.18 House staff understand their duties as outlined in their job descriptions. In response to a recommendation in the previous Ofsted report, an induction programme for new appointments has been introduced and all house staff have received formal training. Senior staff carry out regular reviews of their performance and identify targets for development and improvement. Duty rotas and details for contacting duty staff at night are posted on the main notice boards. Formal roll calls are made through the day and evening, and an appropriate routine is ready to be followed in the case of a boarder going missing. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders do not experience inappropriate discrimination and feel well cared for by house staff and by each other. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Questionnaires and regular house meetings secure boarders' views and suggested topics for discussion in the school council. The boarding council for debating the outcomes has not met for some time. In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, boarders felt that they are well cared for. They were less satisfied with the range of extra-curricular activities; the inspection found no evidence to support this view. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 All boarders, their parents and house staff are made aware of the policy for dealing with and logging complaints. The policy conforms to requirements. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Senior boarders are elected to carry out duties in each house. Their induction and briefings ensure that they are appropriate in their actions and relationships. They are never left in sole charge of boarders. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20]