



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST CLARE'S, OXFORD

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Clare's, Oxford

Full Name of School	St Clare's, Oxford
DfE Number	931/6120
Registered Charity Number	294085
Address	St Clare's, Oxford 139 Banbury Road Oxford Oxfordshire OX2 7AL
Telephone Number	01865 552031
Fax Number	01865 310002
Email Address	admissions@stclares.ac.uk
Principal	Mrs Paula Holloway
Chair of Governors	Mr Richard Dick
Age Range	15 to 19
Total Number of Students	278
Gender of Students	Mixed (110 boys; 168 girls)
Number of Day Students	Total: 27
Number of Boarders	Total: 251 Full: 236 Weekly: 15
Inspection Dates	01 Mar 2016 to 03 Mar 2016

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 a governors' representative, and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited each of the boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured students. The responses of parents and boarding students to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Colette Culligan	Reporting Inspector
Mr Garry Binks	Team Inspector for Boarding (Housemaster, HMC school)
Mrs Sarah Godfrey	Team Inspector for Boarding (Assistant Head, HMC school)
Mr Philip Humphreys	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mrs Diane Riley	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of boarding, ISA school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Clare's, Oxford is a co-educational, residential school, catering for students from ages 15 to 19. It was founded in 1953 with the express purpose of fostering international education and understanding between students of different nationalities. The school is a registered charity overseen by a board of governors. It provides a one-year course for students entering at Year 11. This provides them with the basis for embarking on the International Baccalaureate (IB), which is studied in Years 12 and 13.
- 1.2 The school has 42 students in Year 11, enrolled on the Pre-IB course. Years 12 and 13 comprise of 236 students, studying for the IB. Of the 145 students with English as an additional language, 15 are identified as needing extra language tuition which is provided by the school. A total of 17 students have mild special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), none of whom requires extra support.
- 1.3 In keeping with its founding principles, the school currently educates students of 50 different nationalities, including students from Italy, Germany, Poland and Russia as well as the United Kingdom, with slightly more girls than boys. Most students are full boarders, with a small number of day students and weekly boarders.
- 1.4 The school owns 15 residential houses which are all within a few minutes' walk of the teaching facilities, many are converted Edwardian properties. Houses provide single-sex accommodation and each house is overseen by a resident warden. The school promotes its principle of international awareness and understanding by ensuring a mix of nationalities in each house. Its aims emphasise the encouragement of students' independence, personal responsibility and enduring commitment to internationalism, as well as the promotion of participation in school and city life.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection the school's teaching facilities have been extended to include two new blocks; one for science and maths, and another for visual arts. Boarding accommodation has been refurbished as part of a rolling programme. New boarding facilities were opened in 2015 and are currently in use by mainly Year 11 students.
- 1.6 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 NC equivalence is shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Pre-IB	Year 11
IB 1	Year 12
IB 2	Year 13

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. Monitor centralised records rigorously to identify and rectify inconsistencies between these and individual staff files.
2. Ensure that non-employee residence agreements always consistently reflect the age and expectations of the individual concerned.
3. Strengthen procedures to ensure that when boarders are not in lessons or activities that their whereabouts are known by staff.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI in March 2013. It found the quality of boarding to be excellent. The school was recommended to implement a systematic approach for the regular review and monitoring of policies. It has responded by establishing an annual review of legally required policies by the senior leadership group. Other policies are reviewed annually by the senior member of staff responsible.

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 All boarders undergo appropriate induction procedures. Each has a choice of staff from whom to seek advice; a peer support system provides further help. Boarders may contact an independent listener confidentially, whose contact details are prominently displayed in houses along with those of appropriate helplines and the office of the Children's Commissioner. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school has appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell or injured. These are implemented effectively so as to ensure that boarders' physical, mental and emotional well-being are promoted. A small minority of students said in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses that they are not well looked after when ill, inspection evidence judged that the care provided meets requirements. Boarding staff are suitably trained in first aid and the administration of home remedies, and the surgery is staffed six days a week by a qualified nurse. Three en-suite rooms are set aside and separated by gender to provide suitable accommodation for sick or injured boarders. The school provides boarders with information about local medical, dental and optometric services as requested. It has a college counsellor, to whom boarders may self-refer. All medication is securely stored by the nurse and wardens, and clear electronic records are kept of its administration. Boarders who are assessed as suitably responsible are allowed to self-medicate. The confidentiality and rights of boarders are appropriately respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Telephones and internet facilities enable boarders to contact their parents and families in private. Suitable internet filters are in place to ensure safe use of electronic communications. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 The sleeping accommodation provided for boarders is appropriate. It is well organised and managed with any findings of risk assessments acted upon. Bedrooms have suitable working space; boarders also have access to the library until late in the evening. Each house has a common room. Suitable private toilet and washing facilities are provided, some rooms have en-suite facilities. The houses are clean, well lit, ventilated and heated. Maintenance issues are dealt with promptly. Ground floor bedrooms are available for boarders with restricted mobility. Furniture is suitable and the school provides warm, clean bedding. Boarders may choose to personalise their rooms. School facilities are not used by members of the public when boarders are in residence and security systems on all buildings prevent access by unauthorised people. Surveillance equipment does not intrude on boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a minority of boarders expressed dissatisfaction with the food. Inspection evidence does not support these views. The school provides boarders with a wide selection of plentiful, nutritious food catering for all dietary, religious and medical needs. Regular themed menus reflect the range of cultures amongst the boarders. Kitchen and storage areas in the main building and in houses are clean. Boarders are able to prepare their own snacks and drinks in the houses, and drinking water fountains ensure that water is readily available. In addition to the central dining hall, a café provides snacks and drinks throughout the day. No students with disabilities require assistance at meals. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Adequate laundry provision is made for boarders. Boarders do their own personal laundry using washing machines provided in houses. Bedding and towels are laundered weekly by the school. Boarders have unrestricted access to local shops to purchase personal items. They may store valuables securely in lockers and key-coded safes. Any searches of boarders' possessions are carried out in accordance with the appropriate guidance. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 A comprehensive programme of activities and trips is available during weekdays and at weekends, supported by suitable risk assessments. The school is responsive to boarders' suggestions for new activities or clubs. A very large majority of boarders report that they enjoy the varied programme and also have enough unstructured time to relax. Boarders have safe indoor and outside spaces where they can socialise or be alone if they wish. Boarders can access local facilities appropriate to their age and are informed of events in the wider world by newspapers, internet and television. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 A written health and safety policy complies with statutory requirements and is appropriately implemented. The school has a written risk assessment policy and actions are taken as necessary. Premises are maintained to a standard which ensures that the health, safety and welfare of boarders are reasonably assured. The overwhelming majority of parents feel that the school keeps their children safe. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school's fire procedures conform with regulations. Fire risk assessments are accurate and comprehensive, and subsequent actions taken are appropriately logged. Fire equipment is regularly tested and maintained. Induction procedures for new boarders include an explanation of fire procedures. Fire drills are carried out regularly, at least one each term while boarders are asleep, and recorded properly. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The school has satisfactory arrangements, reflecting the latest guidance, to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders. Staff are trained appropriately and at the required intervals. Suitable relationships have been established with local agencies for children's welfare and safeguarding. Any concerns are recorded and stored confidentially. The vast majority of boarders report that they are confident that the school provides them with a safe and secure environment. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school regulations provide appropriate written guidance to promote good behaviour amongst boarders. Boarders provide written confirmation of their acceptance of these regulations. In interview, they expressed that the regulations are reasonable and that they value the school's emphasis on personal responsibility and trust. A few boarders indicated in their questionnaire responses that the school does not deal well with bullying. However, in discussion boarders were adamant that no bullying or cyberbullying occurs and were confident that the school would deal with any such issues promptly. Records confirm that the school takes its responsibilities seriously and any disagreements that arise are effectively managed. The majority of boarders confirm that they are treated fairly and consistently by boarding staff. Policies for searching or restraining students are suitable; the latter has never had to be implemented. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school's recruitment process meets requirements and all required checks are carried out. Suitable risk assessments are put in place when required. In the course

of the inspection, the school acted to ensure that central records consistently reflected entries in individual personnel files. Non-employee adults and family members living on site are checked as required, although the agreement originally signed by children over 16 had not been sufficiently tailored to reflect their age. This has now been rectified. The school does not appoint 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 A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practices is available on the school intranet and displayed in houses. The demeanour of the students and the school's atmosphere demonstrates that is working in practice. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 College governors monitor the effectiveness of the leadership and management of boarding and welfare provision, taking appropriate action as necessary. The practice and development of boarding is led clearly and consistently, with effective links made between academic and residential staff. Senior leaders work closely with wardens, with regular meetings and frequent informal communication. They are skilled and knowledgeable about boarding welfare, ensuring that standards are consistently met. Governance and management actively promote the well-being of boarders, and senior leaders are experienced and trained. All specified records are maintained and monitored as required. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Staff and volunteers have accurate job descriptions and receive suitable induction. Frequent training opportunities and a biennial appraisal system support their professional development. The role of spouses in boarding is made clear. Supervision is sufficient for the age of the boarders, so that boarders are always under the responsibility of an identified member of staff. The current paper-based signing in and out system for boarders is not always used appropriately and staff rely heavily on the use of mobile telephones to determine the whereabouts of boarders. Clear procedures should a boarder go missing are established and understood, including carrying out active searches if necessary. Always at least one adult member of staff is resident in each house overnight, to whom boarders can easily contact. Resident staff have suitable accommodation to which boarders do not have inappropriate access. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders value the international nature and philosophy of the school, saying that it results in an open-minded understanding of personal, religious and cultural differences. Boarders do not experience any discrimination; the opportunities provided are equally available for all boarders. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Inspection evidence does not support the views expressed by a few boarders that the school does not listen to them. Boarders' opinions are gathered in house or college council meetings and by questionnaires, and are valued by the school. Examples of actions taken include changes in menus and in the facilities available in house kitchens. Boarders know that any concerns will be taken seriously and that they will not be penalised for raising a complaint in good faith. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school's complaints procedure meets requirements and is suitably implemented. Records appropriately identify any complaints relating to boarding and the actions taken as a consequence. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 The school does not use any system of prefects. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not use long-stay lodgings. [NMS 20]