

Newbury Hall School

Welfare inspection report for a boarding school

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{1,2}

Information about the school

Newbury Hall School in Berkshire is a non-affiliated independent international boarding school. It provides exclusively for students aged from 13 to 18 years for whom English is an additional language and who come to the school from all parts of the world. The school provides boarding accommodation for its students, either in purpose-built facilities on site or with host families in the Newbury area. There are 40 students on roll, of whom the majority are boys.

The school's central purpose is to enable students to improve their use of English and become accredited in GCSE and A-level examinations. This is the first inspection of the boarding provision of the school, which opened in 2009.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

² www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	inadequate
Outcomes for boarders	satisfactory
Quality of boarding provision and care	inadequate
Boarders' safety	inadequate
Leadership and management of boarding	inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The key findings of the boarding inspection are as follows.

- The overall effectiveness of Newbury Hall School is inadequate. The range of responsibilities and tasks of the three-person management team is such that they are insufficiently resourced. This means that the national minimum standards are not met.
- There is no governing body or equivalent to provide management oversight or quality assurance processes to develop boarding practice.
- The school fails to adequately safeguard boarders through poor recruitment practice, a lack of risk assessment and deficits in records, policies and procedures.
- Boarders are well cared for by staff on a day-to-day basis. Their healthcare needs are met as they arise but there is limited knowledge of their healthcare history or medication that may have been brought from home and is being self-administered. This means that boarders' health is not effectively promoted.
- There are no systems in place to give boarders a voice in the school. There is no-one identified for boarders to contact who is independent of the school. This is particularly significant for those boarders for whom the headteacher acts as guardian, thus isolating boarders from contact with an independent adult they can turn to in this country.
- Boarding accommodation is of a good standard and boarders particularly appreciate the en-suite facilities they have.
- Good relationships exist in the school and boarders describe positive relationships with boarding staff and with each other. Boarders generally socialise well and

benefit from the multicultural sharing that takes place. Equality and diversity are well promoted. The school communicates effectively with parents or their agents.

Outcomes for boarders

Outcomes for boarders are satisfactory. There are positive relationships between the boarders themselves and between the boarders and staff. There is a strong culture of respect for difference. There is some division between different language groups at times. Boarders see this as an occasional break from the stress of speaking and learning in English all the time, particularly for new starters in the school with limited English-speaking skills. Access to translators is available where required. Boarders care for and assist each other in effective communication with other boarders and staff.

Boarders can outline the progress they have made since coming to the school, as can staff, but it is difficult to evidence this in the records available. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of the individual support needs of boarders. Boarding staff assist young people to develop practical, social and life skills commensurate with their age, for example independent visits to town, arranging themed cultural evenings and help with ironing a shirt, for example.

Boarders are well behaved and respectful towards each other and the staff who look after them. They enjoy their time in boarding but feel that the school day is too long for them so that they are too tired to access both the on and off-site leisure pursuits during the week. There is a planned programme of excursions on alternate weekends which they enjoy, and some boarders have joined local weekend clubs. There are very limited opportunities for boarders to contribute their views towards improving their boarding experience and they do not feel that suggestions they make would be taken seriously. These shortfalls mean that most boarders feel that boarding is not an all round enriching experience but is too heavily weighted towards academic achievement.

Quality of boarding provision and care

The quality of boarding provision is inadequate. Boarders say that the power point presentation and discussion given by the house mistress when they arrive is useful but they would have appreciated more written information before arrival. Key written information for new boarders is not yet available. There is no formal mentoring system in place but staff link new pupils with a 'buddy' where there is an identified need. Details of one helpline are available but not that of the Children's Rights Director. Boarders say that staff are 'kind and easy to talk to' and 'would help with any worries'. There is no independent person identified for boarders to contact. This means that boarders may be limited to contacts within school to raise any concerns about the school.

The length of time a boarder may stay at the school varies significantly; some may come for a term and others for several years, dependent on which course they have signed up for. There are no care plans in place. The small staff team rely on regular communication to ensure that issues for individual boarders are addressed as they arise. Full medical information is requested for each pupil but is not always supplied by parents. There is a range of signed parental medical consent forms in place and all boarders are registered with a local GP practice. Dental treatment is arranged as required but there is no system for arranging routine healthcare appointments for those pupils who do not return home during the holidays. Boarders are supported to obtain additional help to promote their health, for example, access to smoking cessation advice. A stock of household remedies is maintained and the records of administration and stock control are thorough. However, the house mistress does not always know what, if any, medication is held and self-administered by boarders. This compromises boarders' health.

There is an open plan layout of the kitchen and dining area in the main common room. This lends itself to a relaxed, informal approach to mealtimes. There is limited choice of main meals but kitchen staff are on hand to provide alternatives if requested. Boarders are largely happy with the quality and quantity of meals provided. Boarders may prepare drinks and snacks in the boarding house common rooms. Boarders have some laundry done for them and also do some of their own to promote the development of self-help skills. Close proximity to the town means that boarders have easy access to a wide range of shops to buy the things they need or want.

The purpose-built accommodation is well maintained and decorated. There is one shared bedroom; the others are single and all have en-suite facilities. The rooms are small and the use of cabin beds with storage underneath means that a built-in desk and chair can be accommodated. Boarders can and do personalise their rooms. Boarders' accommodation has good security with electronic key cards required to access the house and individual bedrooms, which only boarders and staff hold. Additional security measures to safeguard boarders include the locking of the main gate at night and the use of external security cameras.

There are very limited facilities on site for boarders to enjoy a full range of activities. A member of staff is employed five nights per week to provide and support boarders in undertaking activities. Some of these make use of community facilities and others take place in the main common room. Boarders say that the school timetable, particularly the length of the education day and the way free time is allocated, mitigates against participation in some activities and leisure pursuits.

Boarders' safety

The school makes inadequate provision to safeguard boarders' welfare. The procedures implemented for the recruitment of staff do not meet the required standard. For example, written references are not taken up prior to the appointment

of house staff and there is insufficient supervision of staff starting work before a Criminal Records Bureau check is obtained. The agreement between the school and adults not employed by the school but living on site does not contain all the detail outlined in the standard. The headteacher acts as guardian for a number of the pupils. The headteacher is aware of the responsibilities in relation to this role but there is no supporting paperwork to underpin these arrangements and there is no monitoring in place. This does not secure the welfare of boarders.

A number of policies and procedures are inaccurate, lacking the necessary detail and/or are out of date. This includes the child protection and health and safety policies which were the subject of recommendations both at the time of registration and following a monitoring visit. Most staff have received child protection training which is regularly updated. There have been no allegations or suspicions of harm. There is a lack of clear detailed guidance on the action to be taken when a young person is missing from school. These deficits lead to boarders being put at risk due to a delayed or uninformed response by staff.

Boarders say that they feel safe. Their behaviour is generally good and they have a sound understanding of the rules and the consequences of infringement. The 'no alcohol' and 'no smoking' rules are strictly enforced and may result in permanent exclusion by the disciplinary panel in place. The use of sanctions is infrequent. Boarders say they are treated fairly and there is no bullying in the school but all groups feel that others are favoured occasionally. The behaviour policy does not contain any reference to when restraint may be used or the arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions.

Risk assessments have not been maintained and some are out of date. This includes the fire risk assessment which has not been updated since the kitchen was installed in the first floor main common room. Fire drills and routine tests and maintenance of equipment take place as required. Some staff say they have received fire training but this training is not evidenced by the records. There is no risk assessment of the accommodation, exposing boarders to accidents. Accidents are recorded but there is no evidence of review to determine if any measures are required to prevent recurrence. These factors compromise the health and safety of boarders.

Leadership and management of boarding

The management and organisation of boarding are inadequate. There is no governing body as the headteacher reports to the sole proprietor of the school, and there is no evidence of any management oversight or quality assurance processes. There are clear aims for boarding on the school's website but there is a lack of written information for parents and boarders. All of the boarders attend the school with the aim of growing their English language skills and come from a number of different countries and cultures. There is a strong emphasis on the promotion of equality and the celebration of diversity. For example, boarders lead an evening sharing aspects of their culture, including the preparation and cooking of a meal. A

Japanese evening has taken place and Russian and Chinese evenings are scheduled.

Boarders benefit from a consistent approach by the very small staff team, who are familiar with, and who implement, the day-to-day routines effectively. Boarders say that they can always contact a member of staff and that there are usually a minimum of two staff on duty during boarding time, but there are no duty rotas available to confirm this. This is not always sufficient, particularly at weekends. This has been recognised and additional boarding posts have been created with interviews scheduled. There is an on-call system in place in the event of an emergency. Staff say that their job descriptions do not fully reflect their current roles as these have evolved in response to the growth in the number of boarders. Staff do not receive regular appraisals and in the absence of clear records it is not possible to evidence that staff have up-to-date training. This means that the professional development of staff is not properly managed or adequately monitored.

Boarders say that boarding staff are approachable but there is no formal system for boarders to make their views and opinions known, neither are their views actively sought, for menu planning, for example. The school maintains good links with parents, or their agents where parents do not speak English. A parent confirmed that communication with the school is good; staff both respond to and raise any concerns or queries promptly. The complaints procedure is not immediately accessible to boarders or parents and the complaints record does not contain all the required information, so it is not possible to evaluate how complaints are managed.

Some pupils are accommodated with host families in lodgings arranged by the school. There are significant shortfalls in meeting the national minimum standards relating to this, thus boarders' welfare is compromised. References are not taken up, despite this being a recommendation of the monitoring visit to the school. There is insufficient written guidance for host families. The records lack detail and do not show termly discussions with pupils or detail the annual checks on accommodation. There is evidence from pupils that their views are sought and changes made if necessary. The organiser has established good links with the local authority, and host families are registered as private foster carers where this is necessary.

National minimum standards

The school must meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools.

- There is an appropriate process of induction and guidance for new boarders. (NMS 2.1)
- The school identifies at least one person other than a parent, outside the boarding and teaching staff of the school, who boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at school. The school ensures that boarders know who this person is, and how to contact them. Boarders are also provided

with one or more appropriate helpline(s) or outside contact numbers, including the Children's Rights Director, to ring in case of problems or distress. (NMS 2.3)

- In addition to any provision on site, boarders have access to local medical, dental, optometric and other specialist services or provision as necessary. (NMS 3.3)
- There is an appropriate range and choice of activities for boarders outside teaching time, including sufficient and suitably timed free time each day. (NMS 10.1)
- The records specified in Appendix 2 (Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards) are maintained and monitored by the school and action taken as appropriate. (NMS 13.3)
- The health, safety and welfare of the occupants are reasonably assured in every part of the school's land and buildings. (NMS 6.1)
- The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards') and any requirements set out in regulations relating to school premises. (NMS 7.1)
- The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 11)
- The school has and consistently implements a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils. This policy includes: measures to combat bullying and to promote positive behaviour; school rules; disciplinary sanctions; when restraint is to be used; and arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions. (NMS 12.1)
- Schools operate safe recruitment procedures and vet staff in line with the regulatory requirements and having regard to relevant guidance (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards') issued by the Secretary of State. (NMS 14.1)
- There is a written agreement between the school and any person over 16 not employed by the school but living in the same premises as boarders (for example, members of staff households). This specifies the terms of their accommodation, guidance on contact with boarders, their responsibilities to supervise their visitors, and notice that accommodation may cease to be provided if there is evidence that they are unsuitable to have regular contact with children. They must be required to notify an unrelated designated senior member of staff if they are charged with, or convicted of, any offence. (NMS 14.3)
- Any guardians (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards') appointed by the school are subject to the same recruitment checks as staff, and their care of pupils is monitored. (NMS 14.6)
- Any person employed or volunteering in a position working with boarders has a

job description reflecting their duties, receives induction training in boarding when newly appointed, and receives regular reviews of their boarding practice, with opportunities for training and continual professional development in boarding. (NMS 15.1)

- The staff supervising boarders outside teaching time are sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, number and needs of boarders, and the locations and activities involved. (NMS 15.3)
- Boarders have an opportunity to contribute views to the operation of boarding provision, are able to raise concerns and make complaints, and their views are given appropriate weight in decisions about the running of the school. Pupils are not penalised for raising a concern or making a complaint in good faith. (NMS 17)
- The school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory standards (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 18)
- Any lodgings arranged by the school to accommodate pupils provide satisfactory accommodation and supervision, are checked before use, and are monitored by the school during use including checks at least yearly (as referenced in 'Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards'). (NMS 20.1)
- The school visits all potential lodgings, and interviews the adult who will be responsible for the accommodation of the pupils in each lodging, takes up references, and has recorded a satisfactory assessment, before any pupil is placed there. The school can demonstrate that members of the host family aged over 16 are checked through Criminal Records Bureau, with a satisfactory outcome known before any pupil is placed. (NMS 20.4)
- The school provides satisfactory written guidance to host families accommodating pupils on behalf of the school, covering the school's policy and practice for lodging pupils. (NMS 20.6)
- At least once per school term a member of staff discusses their lodgings separately with each pupil accommodated by or on behalf of the school in lodgings, recording the pupil's assessment in writing and taking action on any concerns or complaints. (NMS 20.7)

What should the school do to improve further?

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



19/10/2011

boarders

Inspection of Newbury Hall School

As you will know, Ofsted recently inspected the boarding provision in your school. Thank you for making me feel so welcome and for taking the time to talk to me about what it is like to be a boarder at your school. I also spoke to boarding staff and looked at records.

I judged the overall effectiveness inadequate because the school fails to meet so many of the national minimum standards. These were mainly about: your safety, the lack of a person outside the school you can talk to about concerns, the absence of a forum for asking for and responding to your opinions, insufficient written information for you and your parents, and gaps in records and policies and procedures. Your biggest concern was the length of the school day and how the day is structured so that you feel there is little chance to do the things you want to do. I have asked the headteacher to look at this.

I think that you all get on well together in school and respect each other's different backgrounds and cultures. Staff help you to celebrate difference. I thought the photos of the Japanese evening were splendid; it looked like you enjoyed yourselves.

I enjoyed meeting you and visiting your school. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Maire Atherton

Yours sincerely,

Maire Atherton