

Newbury Hall School

Welfare progress monitoring 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}

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

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.

Context of the inspection

The school's last inspection in October 2011 was a stand alone welfare inspection, focusing on outcomes for boarders only. This included the suitability of arrangements when placing students in lodgings and with host families. A total of 14 national minimum standards (NMS) for boarding were not met; resulting in 20 recommendations made because of non compliance. The school submitted an action plan in January 2012 and this plan was evaluated in February 2012. This short-notice inspection was undertaken to assess the action taken in meeting the standards and recommendations made.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

At the last inspection the school was not meeting national minimum standard (NMS) 2.1 because of shortfalls in the process of induction and guidance for new boarders. A dedicated 'boarding' handbook for students is now in place. This is available in hard copy and available from the school's website, providing easier access for

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

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

parents and their agents. The new handbook also gives students more specific information about boarding, which is in addition to general information about the school.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 2.3. This was due to boarders not having access to at least one person other than a parent, outside boarding and teaching staff of the school, who boarders may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the school. An independent listener has been appointed and their details are now displayed throughout the school with relevant contact details and a photograph. In addition, a school counsellor has also been appointed. Contact details of external professionals and agencies are vividly displayed and accessible to students. This includes details of the Children's Rights Director.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 3.3 as boarders were not routinely accessing primary health services. All boarders are now registered with a local dental practice on admission to boarding. Students are also attending routine appointments with a local optometric service. Specialist services are now being arranged through the General Practitioners surgery. The revised arrangements are now taking into account boarders' holistic health needs.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 10.1 because of a rigid timetable outside of school hours. Boarders are now accessing a broader range of activities outside of teaching time. A total of 13 new activities have been introduced. The school day now finishes at 16:30 hrs and not 17:00hrs. The vast majority of boarders welcome these changes. The routine homework times have been relaxed. Boarders are now completing their homework at their preferred times throughout the evening and not at times determined through school routines. Boarders welcome this change and enjoy the flexibility.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 13.3 due to insufficient evidence demonstrating that all of the statutory records specified in the NMS were being maintained and monitored. One Senior staff member is now responsible for monitoring and evaluating accidents. Duty rotas are now vividly displayed, detailing staff on duty at all times. A team of senior staff are now have delegated duties for monitoring the quality of statutory records. This system is being used for monitoring and acting on any trends and patterns during boarding times.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 6.1 because of significant shortfalls in health and safety. This was especially relevant to risk management processes. Significant work has been undertaken in developing and improving health and safety systems by approved contractors and school staff. School staff have attended risk assessor's training prior to developing risk management processes. Risk assessments are wide ranging and now take into account the different area of the school. Remedial work is being done in response to the outcome of a full health and safety audit. Water safety is now being assessed and an approved contractor is overseeing this work. The combined work undertaken demonstrates improved

awareness and compliance of safety throughout the school and not just the boarding provision.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 7.1 because fire safety arrangements were not fully complaint. This was especially relevant to the fire safety risk assessment. A full fire risk assessment is now in place. Work has been done to align the fire detection system such as the replacement of alarms. Since the last welfare inspection, the school has been inspected by the fire service and an independent contractor. The outcome of the inspection by the fire service states that the school 'broadly meets fire safety regulations'. It also recommends that the fire risk assessment is reviewed periodically. Systems are now in place for ensuring that the fire risk assessment is used regularly when undertaking environmental assessments of the premises. Overall fire safety systems currently in place are more efficient with clearer evidence of how and when fire safety checks are carried out.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 11. This was due to weaknesses with the school's policies on promoting boarders' safety and protection. The health and safety policy now includes relevant information relating to boarders' safety. The stand alone safeguarding policy was updated in December 2011. This policy covers an improved range of matters relating to boarders' safety. It is also accessible via the school's website.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 12.1 because of insufficient evidence and procedural guidance on behavioural management. All relevant policies are now in place and accessible via the school's website. Relevant information is also accessible to boarders and this information is included in the information given to boarders on arrival at the school. This includes information on: school rules, the consequence of substance use and the searching of pupils and their possessions. This updated information gives boarders a clearer understanding of what is expected of them and what they can expect from the school regarding discipline and compliance.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 14.1 because recruitment processes were not fully compliant with safer recruitment procedures. Newly appointed staff do not take up post now until a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau check is obtained. The minimum of two suitability references are also obtained prior to offer of employment. The revised process strengthens the recruitment process, while minimising opportunities for unsuitable people to work with boarders.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 14.3 because at the time, a written agreement was not in place between the school and any person over the age of 16 not employed by the school but living in the same premises as boarders. Since the welfare inspection, all adults living in boarding accommodation are now employed by the school and suitability checks have been carried out.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 14.6 because of the lack of

clarity as to whether the headteacher was officially acting as guardian. As a result, this standard was not being fully met. The headteacher is no longer acting as 'guardian'; parents and their agents are being asked to make alternate arrangements for boarders from September 2012. This information is now accessible via the school's website. These revised arrangements will not come under the school's responsibility.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 15.1 due to weak practices following the appointment of new staff. Revised systems are now in place and demonstrate improved arrangements for the induction and training of new staff. This includes: a revised job description, a more thorough and detailed induction programme, and the implementation of personalised training programmes.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 15.3. This was primarily due to the number of staff on duty at any one time which did not take into account the numbers of boarders resident and their needs. This especially related to the support and supervision of boarders when undertaking activities during boarding times. The appointment of four additional staff has improved the ratios of staff on duty at all times. A total of three staff are now on duty at all times. In addition, the activities coordinator is on duty at weekends and this improves the scope for supporting and supervising boarders with on and off site activities.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 17 because there was insufficient evidence demonstrating how boarders' views are taken into account. Significant improvements have been made in seeking and acting on boarders' views, wishes and preferences. Since the welfare inspection, boarders have been invited to complete surveys specific to school rules and general provisions. Changes have been made following the outcome of these surveys. In addition, house captains meet and advocate on behalf of students, routine weekly meetings are held with boarders and outcomes of all meetings including the food committee are now being properly recorded. Boarders are supported in expressing their views or raising concerns through a number of resources including opportunities for contacting professionals who are independent of the school team.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 18 because the complaints procedure was not fully accessible to boarders and/or their representatives. The complaints procedure is more visible now, by inclusion in parents' induction pack and displayed on walls throughout the school. Visual displays include procedural guidance for managing formal complaints.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 20.1. This was due to the lack of written evidence demonstrating the suitability of host family and lodging arrangements. An improved process is now in place for recording and detailing the outcome of initial visits and assessments to host families/lodging arrangements. Other processes now in place for demonstrating how host families are assessed and monitored for suitability include: A family 'data' record, a declaration agreed and

signed by the host family; this is used in conjunction with Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance. Improved systems are also in place for recording and monitoring the outcome of interim (follow-up) visits. The combination of systems in place, demonstrates improved ways of safeguarding and protecting students who are placed with host families.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 20.4 due to lack of information demonstrating how host families are vetted for suitability. The tracking of host families now provides clearer information when references are obtained prior to students being placed. A central data base is now in place and this gives a better overview of CRB checks; when they are carried out, when they are due for renewal and changes to individual's personal circumstances. This new system demonstrates a more thorough approach towards ensuring students' safety and protection.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 20.6 because host families were not being given sufficient information and guidance on the school's policies and practice for lodging students. Written information is now issued to prospective host families during initial visits. This includes detailed information in the form of an information guide which has been updated since the welfare inspection.

At the last inspection the school was not meeting NMS 20.7 because of the lack of evidence demonstrating that students in lodgings are formally consulted about these arrangements. Students who are accommodated in lodgings/host arrangements are now fully consulted every term. This is in the form of a written survey which students are invited to complete. Action is taken in response to students' feedback and views.

National minimum standards

The school has made good progress and now meets all the national minimum standards for boarding schools.