

# International Stanborough School

Independent school standard inspection report

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The inspection of boarding provision 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 the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.<sup>3, 4</sup>

## Information about the school

The International Stanborough School is separately registered and operates within Stanborough School, which is an independent secondary school. The school is situated on an attractive site on the outskirts of Watford and shares staffing and all facilities with the main secondary school. Both schools are owned by the British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and are open to students of all faiths or none. The International Stanborough School makes provision for students who are learning to speak English as an additional language. This provision is mainly for students who stay at the school for a short period either for four weeks or for between four and six months. Longer-term students who attend the school for between six months and four years are able to continue their studies with a full range of GCSE subjects alongside students in the Stanborough School. The International Stanborough School is registered for up to 25 students aged between 11 and 18 years, and currently 21 students aged between 11 and 16 years attend. Of these, 19 are boarders and the rest live locally with their families. The current students come from many different countries both in Europe and the Far East. The school aims to provide 'a caring secure Christian environment which enables all students to reach their potential', and to do this by providing a specialised, but broad and balanced, curriculum which promotes each student's well-being. The school and boarding provision for international students were last inspected in May 2009. An interim headteacher of Stanborough School and International Stanborough has recently been appointed.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents).

<sup>4</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

## Evaluation of the school

International Stanborough School provides a satisfactory quality of education. The curriculum is satisfactory as are teaching and assessment. Students who stay for up to six months make good progress with learning to read, write and speak in English. Students who stay for up to four years make satisfactory progress in developing a more advanced use of the English language and good progress with all the subjects they take at GCSE. The school makes good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and students' behaviour is good. The school's strong Christian faith is at the heart of everything that happens and the school meets its aims. The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are satisfactory. The school has made some improvement since the last inspection and now meets all of the regulatory requirements for independent schools, including those for making sure students are kept safe. Not all the recommendations from the last inspection have been achieved. The boarding provision is satisfactory and there are two areas of non-compliance within the leadership and management of boarding. This is an improvement since the last inspection of boarding when 13 standards were not met.

### Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. Policies and schemes of work are in place for all subjects, but not all plans state how international students will be catered for. The English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum for students who stay at the school for short visits and for up to six months meets their needs. Students rapidly pick up the basic skills to communicate in English. External examinations help students and their parents to check how much progress they make from their starting points. Results show this progress is good. However, the EFL curriculum for students who continue at the school for up to four years is not meeting their needs. Most EFL lessons are aimed at students at the early stages of learning English and those with better skills say this holds back their progress in developing a more advanced understanding of the English language. The director for international students does not monitor their English skills in other curriculum subjects so is not aware of gaps in their knowledge and understanding. There are no bespoke classes to help students improve their use of correct subject-specific English and grammar. All international students who stay in the school for up to four years have a good choice of GCSE subjects. There are a good number of after-school clubs but not all international students choose to go to these. Students in Year 10 have good quality work experience that is matched to their interests. The school organises a good variety of trips both to help students learn more about subjects like history and to help them get a good knowledge of British life and culture. There are no formal links between what students learn in the school and learning opportunities within the boarding provision.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers have excellent subject knowledge and explain new ideas carefully to the students. They encourage students to work together to talk through their ideas and move around the classroom to make sure that students understand the work they are given to do. This was

evident, for example, in a biology lesson where international students were able to come up with four differences between two types of cell. Where teaching is not as strong, teachers talk for too long and do not give international students enough time to think how to answer questions in English. In some lessons, students are repeating work they have done at a younger age in their home country. As a result, they start to lose interest because work is too easy for them. Lesson plans do not always show how teachers will help international students take a full part in the lesson. The school has a good marking policy but some teachers do not make full use of this. Some teachers' marking does not explain of why a piece of work is good or precisely what students need to do to improve. Students are not given enough time in lessons to improve their work.

The school carefully tracks the progress of international students through external examinations in English and through GCSE examinations. Students make good progress from their starting points in learning English because, in the words of one student, 'We speak English all the time here, in class and after school and that's what really helps us get on so well.' Students who stay at the school have set themselves targets and this also makes them determined to do well. One student wants to be good enough to pass an English examination in Spain which means he can study to be an English teacher. International students are really keen to do their best and this helps them make good progress in all their GCSE subjects. Most gain five or more A\* to C grades. However, the grade targets teachers set are not always challenging enough and students say they could do better if they knew exactly what the grade levels required.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good. The strong promotion of the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is made clear in every part of school life, including the boarding provision. Students regularly lead morning and evening worship as well as school assemblies. There is time for reflection and prayer at the start of lessons. The recently introduced spiritual learning objective helps students to see how lessons relate to their personal faith. However, as yet students are not given time at the end of lessons to think about how well this objective was met. There is a strong moral code in the school. This is supported by a good reward system that helps students to make good choices about their behaviour. Most international students' behaviour is good. Students make friends easily and say everyone is very friendly and kind towards each other.

Students get on well together and this is evident in lessons, at break and meal times, and in the boarding provision. Boarders treat staff and their fellow students with care, respect, and understanding. They say they get a good feeling at the school and very good encouragement from adults. They are part of the local Adventist church community and take part in church services. International students who are at the school for more than six months take on specific responsibilities, for example as prefects.

International students have a good understanding of other cultures because of the many different nationalities in the school. They develop a good understanding of British culture and institutions through the curriculum and the good quality educational outings to places of political and cultural interest. The many groups of visiting students who come to the school add to students' understanding of different cultures. For example, during the inspection a small group of students from Beijing joined classes and stayed in the boarding accommodation with their teachers. Students contribute to wider society through raising money for a variety of charities, including an orphanage in India. Some international students joined students from the main school in visiting India last year.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The education and boarding promotion of students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Most of the national minimum standards for boarding are met. Safeguarding procedures and the revised policy meets requirements. Recruitment procedures meet requirements, although occasionally records do not include full written confirmation of the steps taken and the decisions made. All staff are trained in child protection at the correct level and are alert to possible concerns. Parents have access to the safeguarding policy via the school's website and on request. Staff know the students very well, leading to highly positive relationships. Students say there is no bullying in the school. As one student said, 'No one makes fun of you if you don't understand something.' There is occasionally some low-level teasing within the boarding provision but all students are confident to talk to an adult if this happens and say any problems are sorted out very rapidly. Students who spoke to inspectors and completed questionnaires said they felt very safe and well cared for. In the words of one student, 'Boarding is a safe and lovely environment and any child would feel relaxed and accepted in the school.' Students have a great deal of trust and confidence in all boarding staff, but particularly the head of boarding, who is also the school pastor. They value his approachability and say he is, 'like a dad'.

Food choices at the school and for boarders are satisfactory. Food is hygienically prepared, is nourishing and reflects the cultural, religious and dietary requirements of the Adventist faith. However, a large majority of boarders do not think the food is good. Satisfaction with the food has been a long-standing issue for boarders, although they report some recent improvements. There is no regular and formal opportunity for students to meet with school and boarding staff to give their views and suggestions about food quality. There are good opportunities for physical activity in school but boarders say they do not get enough use of the gym at weekends. Risk assessments are up-to-date and meet requirements although the role of health and safety manager is not included within the leadership team.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school has carried out the required checks on all staff and proprietors prior to their appointment, to make sure there are no reasons why they should not be employed to work with or care for children. The required checks are recorded in a single central register. Recruitment procedures for boarding are satisfactory.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school and its grounds comply with regulatory requirements. Boarding accommodation is provided with regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools. It meets all the national minimum standards. Classrooms are in good condition and suitable for the curriculum and numbers of students at the school. The boarding accommodation is satisfactory. There are communal facilities and up to four boarders share a bedroom with an en-suite shower. Bedrooms are of reasonable size and have sufficient facilities for study and comfort. Students personalise their bedrooms based on individual choice. The school has plans to redecorate the boarding facilities next year.

## **Provision of information**

The information about education is clear, accurate and up-to-date for current and prospective parents, carers, inspectors, Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE) on request. There is a clear and helpful prospectus and the website is being updated to include all required policies so that parents have even easier access to these. The school has clear aims which are shared with parents and carers, students and staff. However, there is not a clear statement that describes the aims of the expanded boarding provision with its different elements and management. No parents' views were received through Parent View. The school is in regular contact with parents by telephone, email and visits to keep them suitably informed about their child's education. Written reports are sent to parents once a year for those students who stay at the school for over a year.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's complaints procedure meets the requirements.

## **Leadership and management of boarding**

The boarding facility has undergone a period of change in leadership and rapid expansion in the provision. As a result, there is not a suitable and full statement of the school's current boarding practice that reflects the expanded and imaginative boarding provision. There is a skilled and respected head of care who has pastoral experience of working with children, but has no experience of managing boarding provision. The headteacher is supporting his wish to achieve a management qualification and they are working to identify a suitable course.

The governance of boarding is improving and beginning to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of provision, including how the boarding and education parts of the school can work together to support students' learning and personal development. However, there is no formal system for quality assurance of the boarding by the governing body or by the headteacher that takes account of the effectiveness of the provision or consults with boarders.

There are sufficient staff on duty to supervise boarders and this takes good account of the numbers and needs of boarders throughout the school day. Staff are well trained and informally supported. They all have the essential skills to give good care to boarders.

The school takes a pro-active approach to enabling boarders to make complaints and always makes a full investigation and replies quickly to any complaints they make. There is good partnership with parents and carers. The school is a diverse community and respects difference and individual need so that all have equality of opportunity. The hotel accommodation used for visiting overseas boarders is appropriate, safe and provides comfortable places for boarders to lodge.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

### **National minimum standards**

In order to meet the national minimum standards for boarding schools or residential special schools and associated regulations, the school should:

- ensure a suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available to parents and staff, made known to boarders, and is seen to work in practice (NMS 1)
- ensure there is clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding in the school, and effective links are made between academic and residential staff (NMS 13.1).

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Ensure that the English as a Foreign Language curriculum fully meets the learning needs of all international students.
- Ensure that work in all lessons is well matched to the ability level of international students and that targets set for them are a true reflection of their ability in every subject.
- Ensure that teachers' marking explains clearly why a piece of work is good, precisely what students need to do to improve and that students are given time in lessons to improve their work.
- Implement formal and regular reporting on the quality of care, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of the provision by the head of care, the headteacher and the governing body, that incorporates consultation with boarders, particularly about the quality of food and activities.
- Ensure a full record is kept in staff files of the safer recruitment decision-making and procedures used at the school.
- Strengthen the role of the health and safety manager within the leadership of the school.

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education			✓	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience

<b>Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience</b>			✓	
Outcomes for boarders		✓		
Quality of boarding provision and care			✓	
Boarders' safety			✓	
Leadership and management of boarding			✓	

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary day and boarding school		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2005		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 10	Girls: 11	Total: 21
<b>Number of boarders</b>	Boys: 9	Girls: 10	Total: 19
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£8,925		
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£22,056		
<b>Address of school</b>	Stanborough Park, Watford WD25 9JT		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01923 673268		
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:ldixon@stanboroughpark.herts.sch.uk">ldixon@stanboroughpark.herts.sch.uk</a>		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lorraine Dixon (interim headteacher)		
<b>Proprietor</b>	British Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists		

**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.**

16 November 2012

Dear Students



### **Inspection of International Stanborough School, Watford, WD25 9JT**

Thank you very much for your hospitality when we visited your school. It was great to meet so many of you and hear all the things you like about the school, including how friendly and welcoming it is.

The school offers you a satisfactory quality of education. You make good progress in learning English and this is mainly because, as you explained to us, you speak English all the time at school and are really keen to learn so that you can travel or get a better job. We agree that the English examinations you work for are helping you to know that you make progress. We also agree that, once you have got past the basic level of English, the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lessons are not helping you to get a more advanced understanding of the English language. You do well in your GCSE exams but we think you could do even better if you knew exactly what the criteria are for the higher grade levels. Teachers' marking of your work does not explain exactly why your work is good or what you need to do to get better results. You do not get much time, if any, to improve your work in lessons.

We were very impressed with your spiritual development and how confident you are in leading morning and evening prayers in the boarding accommodation. You get on very well together most of the time and take full advantage of getting to know students from different countries and cultures, as well as learning about British life and culture while you are here. Your behaviour is good in lessons and this is because you enjoy learning most of the time. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that teachers take your ability in different subjects into account when planning activities for you. Many of you commented how safe you feel in the school and in boarding. A lot of you told us you did not like the food choices you are offered and we have asked the school to give you regular opportunities to talk to them about improving these. We have also asked the school to improve its record keeping when appointing staff and give an even higher priority to ensuring health and safety.

My colleague and I would like to wish you every success for your future lives.

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard

**Her Majesty's Inspector**