

Newbury Hall School

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Thomas Fisher-Smith

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Newbury Hall School in Berkshire is an international boarding school that provides exclusively for students aged from 13 to 18 years 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 the campus or with host families in the Newbury area. There are 39 students on roll, of whom just over half are boys. No student has a statement of special educational needs or has been identified as having a learning difficulty. The school's central purpose is to enable students to improve their use of English and become accredited in GCSE and A-level examinations; to do this it aims to 'put the student at the centre of a learning process that results in high academic achievement'. This is the first inspection of the school, which opened in 2008 and was registered in March 2009. The boarding provision was not inspected.

Evaluation of the school

Newbury Hall School provides a satisfactory quality of education and broadly meets its aims. The school's work is most effective in enabling students, who enrol with little knowledge of the English language, to gain qualifications that enable them to go on to British universities. The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory and this results in students making satisfactory progress. The curriculum is satisfactory; however the planning of this is insufficiently rigorous to ensure the progression in learning for younger students. The safeguarding arrangements for students are secure but the provision for the personal, social and health education of students is unsatisfactory, and the provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is inadequate, because the school fails to provide an appropriate range of planned opportunities to encourage effectively the personal development of its students. In addition the school fails to meet many other regulations.

Quality of education

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and curriculum and is successful in achieving its broad aim of enabling students to become accredited in

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

GCSE and A-level examinations. Many of its students go on to enter British universities.

The curriculum is sufficiently broad but the sparseness of planning and lack of an effective policy mean that progression in learning cannot be assured for all students. Older students, from Year 10 onwards, follow courses that are determined by GCSE or A-level syllabi. However, the progress of students in the younger years is compromised by planning of their learning that lacks rigour.

The school provides three main areas of study. Older students follow courses in GCSE or A-level while the younger students follow what the school describes as junior foundation courses (JFC). The latter is heavily weighted towards the acquisition of skills in the English language. The school is successful in this. The JFC also includes the required areas of learning. However, the timetabling of physical education and art is such that it is possible for some students not to study or experience one of these elements.

Students make satisfactory progress. The school has effective mechanisms that identify weaknesses in learning at an early stage and to which it responds by putting in place additional one-to-one support. This is an effective way to ensure that students do not fall behind in their learning. Teaching groups are also small and this ensures that all students receive an appropriate degree of support.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. The attainment of students is tested shortly after their admission to the school and the results enable the school management to provide students with the most appropriate support. Assessment of learning is continuous, for example through end of module tests, mock examinations and the marking of homework. The consistent provision of homework is a notable feature of students' learning. However, the marking of this varies in the quality of information it provides to students as to how they might improve their work.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Where teaching is most effective it is exemplified by detailed planning that takes account of the individual needs of each student. This planning shows good use of assessment data and a detailed knowledge of each student's attainment. These lessons are also characterised by a lively pace, with a variety of methods; these ensure that students retain their concentration throughout and thus make more secure progress in learning. A few teachers use the responses of students as starting points to further challenge the students' thinking. All lessons include careful and sympathetic consideration of the students' language needs; this is in keeping with a central aim of the school.

Where teaching is less effective, the style of teaching and learning is didactic and uninspiring. Although there is no shortage of resources these are used sparingly or not at all. Students' learning becomes restricted and this results in disaffected attitudes.

The school makes no provision for the personal, social and health education of its students. Students are, consequently, denied opportunities to discuss and learn about this aspect of their personal development. Careers advice exists only for older students and is focused mainly on options for university entrance. Younger students are denied opportunities to learn about the world of work and to add to their knowledge and awareness of career options. There is no international dimension to this awareness-raising, which the students might apply to their home country.

By the time they leave the school, students are prepared well for their next phase of education or learning. They become mature young adults. Many continue to British universities or return to their home country. In discussions, and also through their questionnaire responses, students show that they are broadly happy at the school. However, a significant minority indicated that they do not think all teaching is good. This correlates with the findings of the inspection.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is inadequate. Generally the provision lacks structure in its planning and much is offered on an ad hoc basis. Although many students appear to get on well together there is little evidence to indicate that this is because of what the school provides. Students say that there are few social events to bring the community together. Although the school celebrates major cultural events, such as Chinese New Year, the students' consensus is that there is little beyond that. A student's comment that 'There are not enough activities' was typical of others' responses.

The school management makes insufficient effort to provide social and cultural events that develop students' sense of belonging to either the school or the local community. On their admission to the school students are provided with information about life in Britain, but this mostly concerns practical elements, such as being able to use the post office or bank terminals. The acquisition of knowledge and awareness of British institutions is not planned within the curriculum and consequently students have an insecure awareness of these. The multicultural element to the provision is noticeably lacking and there is no planning or stated intention to counter this. This is a particular weakness within this setting. However, students are courteous to each other and respectful of their cultural differences. While students are reported to favour staying within national groupings, tensions between them are noticeably absent and they mix freely in social gatherings. Some students said that it was a positive feature that they now had friends from different countries and cultures. Links exist with a local school but the benefit that accrues from this is for a very few students who attend courses at that school.

Students' behaviour and attendance at lessons are good. In lessons they show a keenness to learn and put in much effort to improve their knowledge and understanding. This also boosts their self-confidence and self-esteem.

The provision does not generally have a significant or positive impact on the personal development of students. While students are prepared well for their future lives by being taught skills they might need, the broad provision lacks the planning to rigorously secure and enhance their wider personal development. They are denied broader opportunities to develop their characters as well as their individual characteristics.

Welfare, health and safety of the students

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is satisfactory. The procedures to ensure safeguarding and child protection are secure. All staff have been trained appropriately in awareness-raising, to ensure that students are and remain safe. The impact of this is that all students indicated that they feel safe at the school.

All appropriate policies are in place and are implemented effectively to ensure the health and safety of students. The procedures that underpin these, in both the campus residence and with host families, are implemented rigorously and the school responds immediately if it becomes aware of any difficulty in the social or emotional provision for its students. This is a strong feature of the school's provision.

The school does not meet the requirement to keep effective records of sanctions imposed on students for any serious misdemeanours. Whilst records are kept in students' files, these are often undated, do not indicate who has made the report and do not show what was the final outcome. Similarly, the school does not have an appropriate admission register nor does it maintain attendance registers as required.

There is no three-year plan in place by which the school can show how it intends to address the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes appropriate and rigorous checks to ensure that all staff, proprietors and other personnel are suitable to work with children. These are correctly recorded on a central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is located in a former Victorian school that has been refurbished to provide a safe and effective environment in which students can learn. The school has recently completed a purpose-built residential block that provides high quality, single-room accommodation for its students. Although the school has sufficient washrooms for its staff and students, these are not separately designated and so do not meet requirements.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school does not provide the full range of required information for its parents and others. The school communicates with many of its parents through its website, a brochure or by using the services of international agents in the students' home countries and who refer students to the school. A list of the omissions is given below. Despite this the school has effective mechanisms to provide parents with informative reports about the progress made by their children.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints policy and its procedures for the handling of complaints do not meet requirements. The omissions are listed below.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure there is a curriculum policy, set out in writing, which is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work, and which it implements effectively (paragraph 1(2))
- provide personal, social and health education, which reflects the school's aims and ethos (paragraph 1(2)(f))
- provide appropriate careers guidance for all students (paragraph 1(2)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- encourage students to show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life (paragraph 2(c))
- assist students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and others' cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (paragraph 2(e)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for students' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

³ www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm

- keep appropriate and full written records of sanctions imposed upon students for serious disciplinary offences (paragraph 3(8))
- maintain an admission register and an attendance register in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 and provide separate washroom accommodation for students and staff (paragraph 5(k)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- provide the name of the headteacher in its information to parents and others (paragraph 6(2)(a))
- give to parents the full name and address of the proprietor for correspondence during both term-time and holidays and a telephone number or numbers on which he may be contacted at all times (paragraph 6(2)(b)).

The school should make available to parents:

- particulars of the school's policy on and arrangements for discipline and exclusions (paragraph 6(3)(a))
- particulars of the curriculum policy of the school (paragraph 6(3)(c))
- particulars of policies relating to sanctions adopted in the event of students misbehaving (paragraph 6(3)(d))
- information about students' academic performance during the preceding school year, including the results of any public examinations (paragraph 6(3)(e))
- details of the complaints procedure adopted by the school, together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(3)(f))
- information about the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications (paragraph 6(3)(g))
- publish on its website or, send to parents of students (and of prospective parents on request) a copy of its safeguarding children policy (paragraph 6(4)).

The school should ensure that it provides to outside bodies:

- access to the admission register and attendance registers (paragraph 6(7)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- ensure that a copy of the complaints procedure is made available to parents of students and prospective students (paragraph 7(b))
- where parents are not satisfied with the response to a written complaint, ensure that there is provision for the establishment of a hearing before a panel appointed by the proprietor of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 7(f))
- where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, ensure that there is provision that one person on the panel is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g))
- allow for parents to attend the panel hearing, and, if they wish, to be accompanied (paragraph 7(h))
- empower the panel to make findings and recommendations and ensure that a copy of the findings and recommendations are:
 - sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about, or be
 - available for inspection on the school premises by the proprietor and the headteacher (paragraph 7(i))
- provide for written records to be kept of all complaints indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage, or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing (paragraph 7(j))
- provide that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are to be kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended, the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.⁴

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/ukpga_19950050_en_1

Inspection judgement recording form

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 students			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs			✓	
How well students make progress in their learning			✓	

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students			✓	
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School details

Name of school	Newbury Hall School
DCSF number	869/6016
Unique reference number (URN)	135819
Type of school	International boarding School
Status	Independent
Date school opened	2008
Age range of students	13–18
Gender of students	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time students)	Boys: 21 Girls: 18 Total: 39
Annual fees (day students)	£23-25,000
Address of school	Newbury Hall School Enborne Road Newbury Berkshire RG14 6AD
Telephone number	01635 36879
Fax number	01635 48400
Email address	James.martin@newburyhall.com
Headteacher	Mr James Martin
Proprietor	Till Gins
Reporting inspector	Mr Thomas Fisher-Smith
Dates of inspection	11–12 February 2010