



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST MARY'S SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Mary's School

Full Name of School	St Mary's School	
DfE Number	865/6016	
Registered Charity Number	309482	
Address	St Mary's School Curzon Street Calne Wiltshire SN11 0DF	
Telephone Number	01249 857200	
Fax Number	01249 857207	
Email Address	office@stmaryscalne.org	
Head	Dr Felicia Kirk	
Chair of Governors	Mr Simon Knight	
Age Range	11 to 18	
Total Number of Pupils	340	
Gender of Pupils	Girls	
Numbers by Age	11-18	340
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	78
Number of Boarders	Total:	262
	Full:	262
Inspection dates	30 Apr 2014 to 02 May 2014	

PREFACE

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 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) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. From September 2011 the inspection of boarding welfare forms part of the inspection process. 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. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in March 2011 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

Inspectors

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Gordon-Brown	Team Inspector for Boarding (Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Dorothy MacGinty	Team Inspector for Boarding (Headmistress, GSA school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Mary's School is an independent boarding and day school for girls aged from 11 to 18. It was founded in 1873 by Canon John Duncan, the vicar of Calne, as an Anglican foundation. The school aims to maintain his vision of an excellent academic grounding for girls, offered in an environment where each girl is encouraged to develop her individuality and fulfil her potential. It seeks to develop in young women the academic and moral strength for them to become bold, resourceful, well-balanced individuals who have the capacity to lead and shape the modern world, through a boarding experience of the highest quality.
- 1.2 The school moved to its present site, in extensive grounds on the outskirts of Calne, in Wiltshire, in 1908. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors who also have oversight of the preparatory school, St Margaret's.
- 1.3 Around four-fifths of pupils are boarders, most from the UK, with just under a sixth coming from overseas. Around half of all pupils come from Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Somerset, and a quarter come from London and the home counties. Most are from families with professional backgrounds.
- 1.4 Boarders are accommodated in one of seven boarding houses on site, each housing a single year group. All boarders have their own bedroom from Year 10. In addition all are members of a Company, each of which includes pupils of all ages. Since the previous inspection the school has opened a new boarding house for those in Year 13, and has refurbished other boarding and staff accommodation and the chapel. New senior leadership posts have been introduced in pastoral care and boarding. The headmistress was appointed in January 2013.
- 1.5 At the time of the inspection there were 340 pupils on roll in the school, of whom 262 were boarders. Of 60 pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), 22 require and receive support for their English. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified 73 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and 54 of these receive learning support from the school.
- 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 National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Lower Fourth	Year 7
Middle Fourth	Year 8
Upper Fourth	Year 9
Lower Fifth	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.1 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Incorporate private dry-changing facilities into shower areas in all houses.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in March 2011. The school has met the recommendation about documentation, including in relation to there now being male house parents.

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 Boarders receive suitable induction which includes a day for new boarders and their parents, documentation, and pairing with an individual mentor of similar age and interests. Boarders spoke very appreciatively of the many adults to whom they can turn, including an independent listener, and counselling, medical and pastoral staff; information about national help-lines is posted in all houses. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Care for boarders who are unwell is focused on the medical centre, which is staffed throughout the day and night. Confidential support is provided through the implementation of appropriate policies for all medical conditions and eventualities. Suitable accommodation is available for those who are ill. Trained first aiders provide additional support and boarders have access to dentistry and other specialist health services. Prescribed medicines are held in locked facilities in houses. Administration by house staff follows guidance from the medical centre; the school's scheduled adoption of a more advanced information management system provides a method to communicate this administration more immediately to the medical centre. Assessment of those competent to self-medicate is appropriate and medicines for these boarders are kept securely locked in houses. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders contact their families with ease, most by using mobile telephones. Payphones provide a suitable alternative if needed. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation includes dormitories for younger boarders and individual rooms, of variable size, from Year 10. Ventilation, heating and lighting are appropriate; décor varies between houses but all are kept clean. All sleeping areas can be decorated by individual boarders. Houses include suitable social areas and facilities for private study. Governors ensure a planned cycle of renovation and refurbishment. This includes purpose-built sixth-form accommodation, the second element of which, for Year 12, is already built, and opens in September 2014. Plans to facilitate improvements to other boarding houses as a result of the additional space this development creates are well advanced. Access to washroom facilities and sufficient private showers are provided. Provision to ensure private dry-changing facilities in some houses with multiple shower rooms, is not consistent across all houses. Access to the boarding houses is controlled appropriately. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 All boarders eat dinner in a central dining hall although Year 13 boarders may eat breakfast and lunch in the house. Food is of suitable quantity and provides choice and variety. Specialist dietary requirements are catered for. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires a small minority of boarders expressed dissatisfaction with the food provided, particularly with regard to healthy options, and a few parents supported these views. Inspection evidence did not support these views. A good range of options is provided and boarders are encouraged to develop the discernment to choose a balanced diet. Snacks are provided regularly within houses, including plentiful fruit. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Clothes are laundered efficiently, some in houses and some externally. Boarders may purchase everyday items from the school shop or on trips into the town.

Lockable storage is available for boarders, with phones and laptops looked after by house staff for younger boarders. [NMS 9]

- 3.8 Boarders participate in the school's programme of daily activities and enjoy these, including many sporting, music, drama and outward-bound activities. They participate in Company events which unite boarders of different ages, such as a supper in fancy dress. Opportunities to be quiet or alone are provided through areas such as the fiction reading room or the chapel. Many boarders appreciate the weekend activities but also the free time they are given to relax. Boarders have access to newspapers and other media to maintain an interest in the outside world. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The boarders' health and safety are ensured through effective implementation of the health and safety policy, and procedures which are reviewed regularly. Prompt attention is given to any deficiencies identified. Risk assessments for activities on and off the school site show awareness of potential hazards and the boarders' welfare is safeguarded on residential trips. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Fire risk assessments exist for all areas and any identified necessary actions are carried out appropriately. Fire drills are held both in and out of regular school hours. Appliance and alarm checks are appropriate. All records are kept centrally, monitored and reviewed. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The school's child protection policy and procedures reflect recently amended statutory guidance and an effective action plan has been drawn up for their implementation. Required information has been made available to all staff, including non-teaching and contract staff. Named, designated persons are suitably trained, including in inter-agency working, and ensure appropriate training for all other staff. The school's procedures, including a minuted annual review of child protection measures by all governors, are followed effectively. Contact with other agencies is prompt and advice is followed. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school implements appropriate policies to promote good behaviour and guard against bullying, which boarders consider to be extremely rare and untypical of the school's caring ethos. In response to questionnaires, a small minority of boarders disagreed that teachers are fair in the way they give sanctions. Inspection evidence does not support this view. Serious sanctions identified in the behaviour policy are applied appropriately, are suitably recorded and reviewed by senior staff. Individual houses apply lesser sanctions fairly and in accordance with the age of the boarders. Arrangements for searching boarders and their possessions and for applying physical restraint are appropriate but used extremely rarely. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school's system for the recruitment of governors, staff and volunteers ensures that criminal record checks are carried out before or as soon as practicable after appointment. These and other checks, including checks against the list of those prohibited from teaching, are recorded appropriately. Where a criminal record check is not received prior to appointment, a check is always made against the barred list and risk assessments and supervision are instigated and recorded in staff files, as required. Visitors to boarding areas are carefully supervised. All those over sixteen who live in boarding areas but are not employed by the school have a criminal record check; they sign appropriate written agreements with the school and affirm

their understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures. The school does not appoint guardians for boarders but monitors the boarders' welfare in this context. [NMS 14]

3.(c) Leadership and management of the boarding provision

- 3.15 The school meets all the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 A statement of the school's boarding principles is published widely and is reflected in boarding provision and practice. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Structures ensure clear management of boarding. All staff understand and implement their respective roles and responsibilities and demonstrate that they have the required levels of experience to do so. Effective monitoring of procedures and boarding policies by senior managers enables self-evaluation to inform whole-school development planning. This reflects the needs and future improvement of boarding, supported by governors. Links between boarding, academic, and pastoral staff are maintained through regular meetings and strengthened by the teaching roles of housemistresses and masters. Boarders appreciate the presence of academic staff during prep who act as house tutors. Liaison between house staff on duty during the day and housemistresses and masters ensures continuity. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Supervision arrangements ensure that sufficient staff are always on duty. Those who are resident have accommodation suitably separate from that of the boarders. Any access to this by boarders is appropriate. Night care is provided and boarders know where and how to obtain help. Arrangements for the boarders' registration, and to sign in and out, ensure that their whereabouts are known. Staff understand the procedures to be followed in the event that a boarder should go missing. Induction and appraisal procedures support house staff who receive regular training including in fire prevention and other areas of welfare, health and safety. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders of different nationalities are integrated into school life and this group confirmed that they feel valued and supported. A small minority of parents, in response to questionnaires, felt that the school does not treat their child as an individual. Inspection evidence does not support this. All boarders, including those with particular needs, are enabled to participate equally in school life. The school helps the particularly able to benefit from opportunities in evening and weekend activities. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 In response to questionnaires a minority of boarders disagreed that the school asks for their opinions and responds to them. This view is not confirmed by inspection evidence. Numerous opportunities for boarders' views to be heard include the school council, food and charity committees, and house meetings as well as the open communication evident between boarders and their tutor, and with house staff. The school responds quickly and clearly to suggestions made. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were extremely positive. All concurred that the school keeps boarders safe, achieves high standards of behaviour and that boarding helps their child's progress and development. Inspectors agree. The school has a suitable complaints policy for parents, and all parents' concerns are dealt with promptly, even-handedly, and in detail. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Prefects have a structured training programme and fulfil varied roles, including as mentors; they receive appropriate guidance and supervision. [NMS 19]

3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for any of its boarders. [NMS 20 not applicable]