



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**ST EDMUND'S COLLEGE**

**BOARDING WELFARE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## St Edmund's College

Full Name of School	<b>St Edmund's College</b>
DfE Number	<b>919/6115</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>311073</b>
Address	<b>St Edmund's College Old Hall Green Ware Hertfordshire SG11 1DS</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01920 821504</b>
Fax Number	<b>01920 823011</b>
Email Address	<b>enquiries@stedmundscollege.org</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Paulo Duran</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Jeremy Gillham</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>835</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (480 boys; 355 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	3-5 EYFS: <b>46</b> 5-11: <b>163</b> 11-18: <b>626</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>713</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>122</b> Full: <b>103</b> Weekly: <b>19</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>30 Apr 2014 to 02 May 2014</b>

## 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](http://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**

Mrs Jean Marsland                      Reporting Inspector

Mr Michael Brewer                      Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of Boarding, HMC school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Edmund's College is an independent, Roman Catholic school for boys and girls aged from 3 to 18; boarding is available for pupils aged 11 and over. Originally founded in Flanders in 1568 as the English College, the school moved to its present 400-acre site near Ware, Hertfordshire in 1793. Girls were first admitted to the sixth form in 1974 and the school became fully co-educational in 1986. The school is an unincorporated charitable trust, with the trustees providing governance. Since the previous inspection a new headmaster has been appointed and took up post in September 2012.
- 1.2 Rooted in Catholic beliefs, the school aims to realise the God-given potential of all members of its community through service and leadership, and to provide a rounded education for the whole person — intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual. In doing so, the school seeks to reflect the scholarship of St Edmund by offering a balanced and challenging curriculum for each individual, to show concern for all within the school community, to demonstrate collective commitment to be truly Christ-centred in all that it does, and to ensure that the pupils' experience of relationships within the school reflects the Gospel maxim, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'. It sets out to make prayer, worship and liturgy a central part of its life, to create meaningful interaction between the school, home and the wider community, and to prepare pupils to make their way in the world while making a difference to it.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 835 pupils on roll. Of these, 209 were in the Prep School, including 46 in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and 626 were in the Senior School, including 160 in the sixth form. One hundred and twenty-two pupils were either full or weekly boarders, and a further twenty-two boarded on a flexible basis. Across the school as a whole and in boarding, there were slightly more boys than girls.
- 1.4 Pupils come predominantly from business and professional backgrounds. Day pupils come from a radius of around 20 miles. Just over half of pupils are from white British backgrounds; others are from a wide range of ethnicities. Within boarding, over 20 nationalities are represented. The school has identified 109 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, of whom 5 receive specialist learning support. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Of the 100 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), 47 receive support for their English.
- 1.5 Boarders are accommodated within the school's main building, within separate areas for boys and girls. Senior boarding staff are resident in each house and are assisted in caring for the boarders by teams of staff with specific boarding roles.

- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used in the Prep School and throughout this report to refer to year groups. The year group nomenclature used by the Senior School and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

***Senior School***

School	NC name
Elements	Year 7
Rudiments	Year 8
Grammar	Year 9
Syntax	Year 10
Poetry	Year 11
Rhetoric I	Year 12
Rhetoric II	Year 13

## **2. SUMMARY**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

### **(ii) Recommendation for further improvement**

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure that effective feedback is given in response to boarders' requests and concerns.

### **(iii) Progress since the previous inspection**

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in March 2011. The school has successfully responded to the recommendations made at that inspection. Staff have received training in maintaining boarders' privacy. The programme of refurbishment has continued and is now almost complete. In undertaking the refurbishment, the school has taken steps to ensure that facilities are equitable for boys and girls.

### **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 Prior to their arrival, new boarders receive welcome letters and a handbook outlining boarding arrangements. The majority of boarders from overseas attend the on-site summer school where those with EAL needs are given support ahead of commencing their studies. All new and returning boarders attend an induction weekend to help them get to know each other and the staff. A very small minority of boarders responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire disagreed that boarders get on well together in the houses. Discussions with boarders did not support this view. In questionnaire responses, a small minority of boarders indicated that they do not have a member of staff or older pupil to whom they can talk. Inspectors found that boarders are given contact details for a range of people within school to whom to turn for guidance or help. These are displayed in the boarding houses, along with details of external helplines, an independent listener and the Children's Commissioner for England. All parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that they can easily make contact with the person who cares for their children. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Detailed and well-considered arrangements are made to care for boarders who are unwell, including for any with chronic conditions or disabilities. Round-the-clock care is provided by the school's infirmary, which offers suitable accommodation for boarders who are too unwell to return to their house or to school. Careful records are kept of medical needs and treatment given. Medicines are stored safely and due care taken in their distribution. Boarders have access to a local doctor and other medical services if required. Staff are conscientious in respecting boarders' confidentiality in medical matters. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders are easily able to contact their family and friends outside school using their own mobile telephones and the internet, with appropriate safeguards in place. They can also make private use of the boarding house telephones. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders. It provides adequate storage and study areas for each boarder. Younger boarders share twin rooms and older boarders have single rooms. Some rooms have their own bathrooms; other toilet and washing facilities are easily accessible from sleeping accommodation and provide privacy. Both houses have a number of small common rooms, and a large, central common room, with television and games tables, is available to both boys and girls. Boarding areas are well maintained and appropriately lit, heated, ventilated and cleaned. A programme of refurbishment is underway and boarders speak appreciatively of the new facilities. Reasonable adjustments are made, where possible, to meet the needs of boarders with restricted mobility. Bedding is clean, suitable and sufficiently warm; additional bedding is available if required. Boarders can personalise their rooms and many do so. Boarding accommodation is protected from access by unauthorised individuals. Boarders' privacy is not intruded upon by the use of CCTV cameras. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Provision is made for boarders who have special medical, religious or other dietary needs. In their responses to the questionnaire, the majority of boarders expressed dissatisfaction with the provision of food. However, boarders spoken with gave a more positive view and were particularly complimentary about the quality of breakfast. Meals taken with the boarders were plentiful and nutritious, and offered a

wide choice. A minority of boarders responding to the questionnaire indicated that they were not happy with the availability of snacks and drinking water outside of mealtimes. The inspection found provision of both snacks and drinking water sufficient for boarders' needs. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Laundering of boarders' clothing and bedding is undertaken on site, with items returned the next day. Boarders can obtain personal items within the houses and stationery from the school shop. Weekly shopping trips into local towns are also offered. Boarders are provided with lockable cupboards. Valuables can be kept securely by staff. Boarders' pocket money is also kept securely by staff and boarders have weekly access to this. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarders are offered a range of activities at lunchtimes, after school and at weekends. A minority of boarders expressed in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses dissatisfaction with the balance of free time and activities. Published schedules and discussions with boarders indicate that the balance is appropriate. At weekends two trips are usually arranged; boarders in Years 12 and 13 can also take leave to go into local towns and cities. Boarders have safe areas, both indoors and out, where they can be alone if they wish. They have access to information about events in the outside world through television, the internet, newspapers and school assemblies. [NMS 10]

### **3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding**

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 Close attention is given to ensuring that so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of boarders are assured. Risk assessments are in place for the boarding houses and for boarders' activities, and staff receive regular training in health and safety. All parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that the school keeps their children safe, which was confirmed by records seen and in discussions with staff. In their questionnaire responses, a very large majority of boarders said that they feel safe in their boarding houses; this was confirmed by boarders spoken with. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Appropriate arrangements are in place to protect boarders from the risk of fire. A regular audit of potential fire risks is undertaken and fire-fighting equipment checked and serviced regularly. Staff receive training on procedures to follow in the case of fire. Fire evacuation arrangements are made clear to boarders and fire drills held at least termly, including during boarding time. Records are kept and any necessary improvements made. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Child protection arrangements are thorough. Governors undertake an annual audit of the effectiveness of these, and updates are given at each meeting of the full governing body. All staff receive child protection training appropriate to their roles. The school ensures that all new staff are made aware of their responsibilities for child protection. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Expectations of good behaviour are made clear to boarders; they respond well and understand the consequences of any breaches of the code of conduct. An appropriate anti-bullying policy makes clear the school's stance on bullying of any kind. Boarders spoken with and records seen indicate that incidents of bullying are rare and taken seriously by the school. Guidelines are given to staff should they ever need to restrain a boarder or search a boarder or their possessions, and records kept of any such incidents. [NMS 12]

- 3.14 Thorough procedures ensure that the required pre-appointment checks on staff are carried out and recorded. In the past, a few checks were not carried out sufficiently promptly. The school has since taken all possible steps to remedy this. The required checks have been carried out on those over the age of 16 who live on site but are not employed by the school; agreements with them set out their responsibilities for ensuring that the boarders' welfare is safeguarded. The school is assiduous in ensuring that any visitors to boarding are prevented from having unsupervised access to boarders. The school does not appoint guardians for boarders. [NMS 14]

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

- 3.15 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.16 A statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available on its website and displayed in the boarding houses, and was seen to be put into practice. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Clear, well-considered leadership and management are evident in both the practice and development of boarding. All parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that boarding is well organised and managed effectively. This was confirmed by documentation seen and discussions with staff and boarders. Regular and in-depth review of the boarding provision ensures that areas for further development are identified. Boarding staff have appropriate levels of experience and training. Frequent and effective communication between academic, boarding and support staff ensures that the all-round needs of boarders are well known to staff. All required records are maintained and are monitored to identify any patterns or necessary actions. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All staff involved in boarding have job descriptions that set out their roles and responsibilities. Staff new to boarding receive appropriate induction training in the organisation of boarding, child protection, and health and safety arrangements. Annual appraisals allow boarding staff to reflect on their effectiveness and to identify any areas for further training or development. The roles of staff spouses or partners and other adult members of staff households are made clear. Staff supervising boarders outside teaching times, including overnight, are sufficient in number, training and experience. Boarders know which staff are on duty and know how to contact staff during the night should they need to. The requirement for boarders to sign in and out of the houses ensures that staff know their whereabouts. Should a boarder be missing, staff are aware of the actions they should take. Boarding staff are provided with suitable accommodation, appropriately separate from boarders, to which boarders do not have access. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 A suitable policy promotes equal opportunities for boarders. Of the parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority said that staff do not treat their children as an individual. Discussions with staff and boarders, and documentation seen, indicate that the school takes great care to meet individual boarders' needs. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, half of the boarders said that the school does not ask for their opinions or respond to them. Inspectors found that boarders have a number of ways to contribute their views on boarding, to raise concerns or to make complaints. Each house has a suggestions box, and boarders can put their views to the boarding council and food council, complete the questionnaires regularly undertaken or speak directly to staff. Discussions with boarders and scrutiny of minutes of school meetings held with boarders indicate that

the school takes their views into account. However, the reasons for not meeting requests are not always communicated effectively to boarders. [NMS 17]

- 3.21 The school has an appropriate complaints procedure, and complaints are handled in line with this. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 A number of older boarders take on leadership positions. They receive appropriate training, and they clearly understand the scope of their roles and the associated responsibilities. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20]