



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

STOWE SCHOOL

BOARDING WELFARE

INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Stowe School

Full Name of School	Stowe School
DfE Number	825/6001
Registered Charity Number	310639
Address	Stowe School Stowe Buckingham Buckinghamshire MK18 5EH England
Telephone Number	01280 818000
Fax Number	01280 818181
Email Address	enquiries@stowe.co.uk
Headmaster	Dr Anthony Wallersteiner
Chairman of Governors	Mr Christopher Honeyman Brown
Age Range	13 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	786
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (494 boys; 292 girls)
Numbers by Age	11-18: 786
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 114
Number of Boarders	Total: 672 Full: 672 672 Weekly: 0
Inspection Dates	29 Sep 2015 to 01 Oct 2015

PREFACE

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) Regulations 2014, as amended. 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.

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 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 chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended chapel and 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 Adrian Underwood	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Jenny Dwyer	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head, GSA and HMC School)
Mr Peter Goodyer	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Headmaster, HMC School)
Mr Philip Humphreys	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of Department, HMC School)
Mrs Christine Rees	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of Boarding Compliance, HMC School)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Stowe School is a boarding school for boys and girls aged 13 to 18; it is located just outside the town of Buckingham. The school is inextricably linked to Stowe House which was begun by Sir Richard Temple in 1676 and over the next century rebuilt into a great classical house surrounded by many acres of landscaped garden, with 31 listed temples and follies. In 1989 the school gave the garden and its many buildings to the National Trust, and in 1997 the Stowe House Preservation Trust took over the restoration of Stowe House. Ownership of the grounds is therefore shared with the National Trust, which also manages public access.
- 1.2 Stowe aims to provide an all-round education of the highest standard, and to establish confidence and tolerance of others in a supportive family atmosphere where a Christian ethos encourages pupils to develop a lasting sense of moral, social and spiritual responsibility. Pupils are expected to consider the rights and needs of others and to develop academic excellence, sporting prowess and artistic and musical creativity. They are encouraged to think for themselves, challenge conventional orthodoxies and to pursue their own enthusiasms. The school is a registered charity with members of the governing body serving as trustees. The work of the governing body is supported by six committees which meet on a regular basis.
- 1.3 Boarders are drawn from both the local area and further afield, including approximately fourteen per cent from abroad. They are accommodated in thirteen boarding houses, eight for boys, four for girls and one mixed sixth-form house. All the houses are on the school campus. The programme of redevelopment of boarding facilities has meant that, since the previous inspection, three boys' houses have been upgraded and a girls' sixth-form house has been converted into a girls' boarding house for girls aged 13 to 18. In addition a mixed sixth-form house has been opened and is being expanded and developed in three phases.
- 1.4 The school currently has 786 pupils, of whom 672 are full boarders. English is an additional language (EAL) for 77 pupils, 33 of whom receive specific support.
- 1.5 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. On occasions the term sixth form is used in place of Year 12 and 13.

School	NC name
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	Year 10
Fifth Form	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 2015.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure that the school's boarding protocols are consistently applied in all boarding houses.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI in October 2012. There were no recommendations for boarding.

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 All new boarders receive appropriate induction support, including an introductory weekend in their house in June. Induction is also given to boarders joining the school at non-standard start times. New boarders are supported by boarding staff and a buddy system. Boarders confirmed there was a range of people they could talk to, including the sixth-form peer support group (PSG). All members of the PSG are appropriately trained. Helplines are on noticeboards in the houses including the Office of the Children's Commissioner and the independent listener. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Boarders who are unwell are appropriately cared for in the medical centre. All medical staff are appropriately qualified and sufficient in number to keep the medical centre open at all times. It is suitably equipped and facilities include separate accommodation for male and female boarders. Only boarding staff who are appropriately trained dispense medicines, following clear medical protocols. Prescription medicines are only dispensed to those for whom they have been prescribed. All medication is securely stored in locked cupboards and dispensation is correctly recorded. Policies include suitable guidance for dealing with boarders with chronic conditions and with medical emergencies. Boarding and medical staff are aware of the correct procedures should a boarder require hospital treatment. Medical staff and the three counsellors actively promote boarders' welfare. Boarders have access to local optometric, dental and other specialist services. The confidentiality and rights of boarders are properly respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders are able to contact parents using their own mobile phones, internet devices and landlines. The school's awareness of world time zones enables overseas boarders to contact parents at appropriate times. During the inspection, boarders made inspectors aware of their concern regarding the policy change for Year 10 having access to mobile phones. An inconsistent approach regarding when phones were handed in to staff was observed across houses. The school is responding to these concerns and is reviewing the period of time when boarders are able to access their phones. At the same time inconsistency of phone access across houses is being addressed. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding houses vary in age, design and decoration. All are appropriate for the ages and number of boarders. Houses have bedrooms for multiple occupancy and single rooms, some of which are en-suite. Bathrooms are fitted with appropriate washing facilities and provide a sufficient level of privacy. All bedrooms are well lit, ventilated and provide a suitable study space which can be personalized. Risk assessments have been carried out for all boarding houses. All houses have a designated handyman for routine maintenance repairs. Clean bedding is provided on a weekly basis. Houses have areas where boarders can relax. Boarders learn about world events through internet news and newspapers in the library, and have access to indoor games, television and magazines. Houses are equipped with appropriate security measures, including CCTV at entrance doors, which does not compromise boarders' privacy and fire exits. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Meals are healthy and nutritious. The kitchens are well equipped and clean. Menus are on a three-weekly cycle and provide suitable choice and variety. All meals are served in a communal area in the mansion. Individual meals are provided for those

with special dietary needs. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of boarders felt that the food was not good. In conversations with boarders in all houses there was general agreement that the food had improved since the beginning of the summer term and the school acknowledged that the improvements needed to be maintained. Boarders make their tastes known through the food committee. Boarding houses all have suitably equipped kitchens. However, boarder access to house kitchens was found to be inconsistent across houses. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of boarders reported that they were unhappy with the availability of snacks and drinking water. Drinking water is readily available in all houses with bread, milk and fruit delivered daily. Boarders who require assistance to eat at mealtimes are suitably supported. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Laundry provision for clothing is appropriately frequent. All boarders have a lockable area in their bedroom and, in addition, pocket money deposited with boarding staff is appropriately recorded. Correct protocol is used by boarding staff when required to search a boarder's personal belongings. Boarders can purchase personal items and stationery from the school shop. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 A wide variety of free time activities are available both during the week and at weekends. Boarders have the opportunity to go to Buckingham on Saturday afternoons using school organized transport. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of boarders felt that there was not the right balance between activities and free time. Discussions with boarders and examining their timetables did not support this view. The extensive buildings and grounds provide many spaces both indoors and outdoors where boarders can safely be alone if they wish. Boarders may also request to have an early night in the medical centre. [NMS10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school takes due care of boarders' safety. Thorough arrangements protect the welfare, health and safety of boarders with continual monitoring and improvement of practice, including regular oversight by governors. Trips and activities are rigorously risk assessed in the planning stages. As the mansion is owned by the Stowe House Preservation Trust, tours of the mansion do take place, guided by an official trust guide, in line with the school's safeguarding and security procedures. Boarders stated that they feel safe within the school surroundings. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Appropriate policies ensure suitable precautions are taken against fire. Fire drills are carried out regularly during boarding time. These are centrally recorded with action points. Fire appliances are appropriately checked and maintained. The school has links with the local fire authorities, including site specific training exercises. Any recommendations from the fire authorities are implemented. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The school's arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders are effective. All staff are regularly trained in child protection procedures and provided with regular safeguarding information. The school has already held update sessions for preventing radicalisation and reporting female genital mutilation (FGM). A formal training programme for these areas from *Bucks Safeguarding* is timetabled from early October. Safeguarding training for new staff is a major element of their induction programme. The school works with with the local authority, and safeguarding is carefully monitored by the governing body termly and in their annual

safeguarding review. Appropriate checks are made on visiting speakers in line with the policy, which is sent to all speakers. [NMS 11]

- 3.13 The school implements a range of policies to promote good behaviour, and appropriate records are kept. The system of rewards and sanctions is well understood by boarders. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of boarders stated that teachers were not fair in the way they gave sanctions. However, boarders confirmed that, in houses, sanctions were fairly given. The house sanctions records confirmed this. Policies and practice to promote good behaviour and combat bullying, both physical and cyber, comply with relevant legislation and guidance. The acceptable use policy is signed by both boarders and their parents, and use of devices is monitored by boarding staff and by the school's filtering system. Boarders stated that bullying is rare and that they feel safe in their houses. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school's detailed procedure to ensure safe recruitment of staff is rigorously implemented. All necessary checks are carried out and are appropriately recorded in the single central register. All adults living in the same premises as boarders, but not employed by the school, are vetted and they sign appropriate residence agreements. Careful arrangements are in place to supervise all visitors in the boarding houses and no one has inappropriate unsupervised access to boarders. The school does not appoint guardians. [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 The school's boarding principles and practice are displayed in the houses and they are suitably implemented. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The governing body effectively monitors the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision. Governors visit boarding houses and meet boarders and boarding staff on a regular basis. Each term the governors' executive committee monitors the progress on meeting the targets of the boarding action plan and the pastoral strategic plan. In addition, governors use pupil surveys and the views of parents to assess the success of the boarding life of the school. The well advanced plans for the development of a number of boarding houses confirm the governing body's commitment to improving physical facilities. The school leaders effectively manage the school's boarding life. Teachers work closely with the boarding teams, reflected, for example, in the daily merit awards for academic work which are announced at evening house meetings. Boarding and teaching staff liaise regularly to ensure that boarders have both support and encouragement in the academic sphere. They track boarders' academic and personal development and parents regularly receive progress reports. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were strongly supportive of the boarding life of the school. The school's leaders are highly experienced in boarding education and use their expertise to ensure that boarding standards are met and, in many cases, exceeded. They are also committed to the promotion of the wellbeing of boarders. This is reflected in initiatives such as the *Vanguard* programme for promoting boarders' self-confidence, the welfare register for boarders who need targeted support and the responsibility given to housemasters and housemistresses to tailor a boarder's schedule of commitments to reduce any undue stress. All the required policies and documents are in place and senior leaders regularly monitor boarding records. [NMS 13]

- 3.18 Houses are appropriately staffed and staff have suitable job descriptions. The induction programme for new staff is thorough. The annual appraisal cycle for all boarding staff identifies strengths and areas for development. The latter are supported by the school's commitment to boarding training which includes day courses, notably, for a school committed to well-being, in mental and physical health, two-year courses in the management of boarding and training in mentoring staff new to boarding. Supervision of boarders at all times is appropriate and boarders are certain how to contact staff at night. Knowledge of boarders' whereabouts is assured by regular registrations at house *Stance* (morning and evening house meetings) and by the use of signing-out books. Staff know the procedures should a boarder be reported missing. Staff accommodation is suitable as are the protocols for entertaining boarders in that accommodation. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders were happy to confirm that they experience no favouritism or discrimination and that all are treated fairly. Boarding care plans are developed to meet particular pastoral needs and these are monitored by the pastoral committee. Those boarders with learning needs or those who need help with their English are appropriately supported. Boarders from other countries are well integrated in the houses. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders confirmed that they prefer to express their views informally to their housemaster or housemistress or to a house prefect. They can also submit ideas to house councils, which publish minutes of their deliberations. In many houses, the decision of how to spend the annual house allowance is the sole responsibility of the boarders. In the questionnaire, a small minority of boarders stated that the school does not listen to their views, but, evidence from the minutes of house and school councils, the results from the recent pupil survey and discussions with boarders did not uphold this view. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The complaints procedure is available on the website and conforms to regulations. Complaints are appropriately responded to and recorded. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 The houses have a head of house and house prefects. These house leaders are trained and have job descriptions, including protocols about giving minor punishments. The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for boarders. [NMS 19 and 20]