



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

KENT COLLEGE PEMBURY

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Kent College Pembury

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| Full Name of School | Kent College Pembury |
| DfE Number | 886/6009 |
| Registered Charity Number | 307920 |
| Address | Kent College Pembury Old Church Road Pembury Tunbridge Wells Kent TN2 4AX |
| Telephone Number | 01892 822006 |
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| Head | Mrs Sally-Anne Huang |
| Chair of Governors | Mr Edmund Waterhouse |
| Age Range | 3 to 18 |
| Total Number of Pupils | 671 |
| Gender of Pupils | Girls |
| Numbers by Age | 0-2 (EYFS): 0 5-11: 165 3-5 (EYFS): 37 11-18: 469 |
| Number of Day Pupils | Total: 582 |
| Number of Boarders | Total: 89 Full: 79 Flexi: 10 |
| Inspection dates | 16 Oct 2012 to 18 Oct 2012 |

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. 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 November 2009 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of ISI on the Ofsted website.

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, 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 Maureen Bradley

Reporting Inspector

Mr Rod Sharman

Reporting Inspector

Mr Richard Whymark

Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of Junior School, HMC school)

Mr Simon Wilson

Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Kent College, Pembury, was founded in 1886 and is an independent boarding and day school for girls aged 3 to 18. In 1939 it moved from Folkstone to its present location in Pembury, just outside Tunbridge Wells in Kent. The school is one of 9 boarding schools in the UK owned by the Methodist Church. The oversight of the school is delegated to a local governing body by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust. The school aims to provide a balanced and well-rounded education both in and out of the classroom with boarding at the heart of the school. They strive to meet the needs of each pupil and to ensure that each one has every opportunity to gain confidence and excel in a school community firmly grounded in Christian principles.
- 1.2 There are 671 pupils in the school with 202 in the prep school, including 37 in the EYFS, and 469 in the senior school including the sixth form. The school educates 79 full boarders and 10 pupils who flexi-board on a regular basis. Most of the pupils live in the surrounding towns and villages and are from a range of professional family backgrounds. A significant number of boarders are from families in the armed forces. The boarding community is culturally diverse with half the boarders coming from UK families and half from a wide range of nationalities. The school has identified 68 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and a range of support is offered to all of these pupils depending on their needs. There are 29 pupils who receive support for English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection in November 2009 there has been both new building and refurbishment of the site including new classroom accommodation and a dance studio. Refurbishment of boarding facilities has developed sleeping accommodation, washrooms and communal areas. Boarding accommodation is in two houses, one for the older pupils in Years 10 and above, and one for younger pupils in Years 5 to 9. Each house has its own housemistress or housemaster and an assisting team of staff.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.1 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2012.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Formalise arrangements for flexi-boarding through a written policy.
2. Standardise the completion of the daily diary across boarding.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in November 2009. Good progress has been made in fulfilling the recommendations made at that time. Arrangements have been put in place to reduce the use of the medical centre as a thoroughfare. Equipment has been fitted to windows to restrict the degree to which windows will open.

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 Appropriate induction and guidance is in place for new full boarders. Those in flexi-boarding are guided through the procedures by house staff but no formal policy is yet in place to ensure that a standardised procedure is followed. Clear handbooks and documents are provided to help boarders before they arrive and to guide them through their first weeks. Boarders say they have a choice of staff who they feel comfortable to approach if they have a concern or require guidance. In addition, an independent listener, a school counsellor, chaplain and a play therapist are available. Contact details are displayed for those who can offer advice outside the school, and for a number of help-lines. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school has suitable arrangements for all aspects of health care. Boarders have access to local medical specialist services as required, and their rights as patients are respected. Boarders who are ill are cared for in the suitably equipped medical centre by appropriately qualified personnel. Records of medical care and the dispensing of medicines are secure and well maintained. All medicines are securely stored. A small number of the boarders self-medicate and they are fully assessed as responsible to do so. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders contact their families with ease and with privacy and the responses to the boarders' and parents' pre-inspection questionnaire reflect this. Boarders are free to use mobile phones and house telephones. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding accommodation is well maintained, clean, warm and comfortable and offers appropriate privacy. Accommodation ranges from single rooms to bedrooms sleeping three or four boarders and all have access to suitable washroom facilities. Boarders may personalise their rooms and common rooms. Separate study facilities are available in day rooms and computer rooms within each house and many bedrooms have spacious work areas. The boarding house accommodation is for the sole use of the boarders during term time and is secure from unauthorised access. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Facilities for the preparation of food are clean and hygienic, including the house kitchens where snacks and drinks can be prepared. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a small number of boarders reported they could not make snacks and drinks when they wanted to, but inspection evidence shows that the facility is available for them to do so at appropriate times. Menus are planned for nutritional value, including provision for special diets. A choice of hot and cold meals of a suitable quality and quantity are prepared each day, including salad and fresh fruit. Boarders are consulted about food and as a result various new menus have been introduced at weekends. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Laundry provision is made for clothing and bedding and care is taken to ensure that boarders receive their own laundry. Facilities are available in both houses for additional laundry and ironing. Opportunities are provided to enable boarders to purchase toiletries and stationery and lockable furniture in their bedrooms allows them to keep their possessions safe and private. Facilities are available for money and valuables to be looked after by senior staff. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarders take part in a wide range of activities before school, at lunch time, in the evenings and at weekends. Choices are suitably monitored by tutors. House

activities include visits and outings to a range of venues. Recreational and leisure areas, including the school grounds, also provide quiet areas. Television news programmes, newspapers and the internet enable boarders to keep up with events in the world outside. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The school's arrangements and procedures reflect the attention paid to protecting boarders from harm. Risk assessments are in place to ensure the boarders' safety both in school and during educational visits. The necessary records are kept and scrutinised to ensure that any deficiencies are quickly remedied. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school has appropriate arrangements in relation to fire safety. Clear instructions and signage, together with regular drills, enable all boarders to be fully aware of procedures for evacuation during the day and in hours of darkness. Fire drills are logged and evaluated; where necessary, improvements are made. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Due attention is paid to child protection. A designated person, supported by a team of deputies, ensures that staff have the necessary training and that new staff are fully aware of child protection procedures. Staff have an *aide memoire* card which reminds them of the key aspects of the school's arrangements. The child protection policy is in line with that of the local safeguarding authority and is reviewed annually by the governing body. The governors' awareness is maintained through training provided by the designated person. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school makes it clear to boarders through its behaviour policy the standards expected of them. A culture of self discipline and respect within the boarding houses promotes good behaviour and results in few sanctions. In the pupil pre-inspection questionnaire a small number of boarders felt that staff are not always fair in the way they give sanctions but inspection evidence did not support this view. A suitable anti-bullying policy is understood by all members of the school community and is fully implemented. Boarders report that they rarely encounter any bullying and if it does occur it is seen to be handled quickly and thoroughly. A suitable policy is in place on the use of physical restraint which is understood by staff. Arrangements for searching boarders and their possessions are clearly defined. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school operates safe recruitment procedures for the appointment of staff, governors and volunteers. The central register of appointments is suitably maintained. Visitors are carefully supervised so they do not have unsupervised access to the boarding accommodation. Appropriate recruitment checks and agreements are in place with all persons over the age of sixteen who reside in school. [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 suitable statement of the school's boarding principles is outlined in documents for pupils, parents, prospective parents and staff and is clearly displayed in boarding houses and on the school web site. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 A clear management structure for boarding staff has been established. Job descriptions define individual's responsibilities. The headmistress has overall responsibility for the line management of boarding staff. Senior house staff are responsible for the management of the two houses. Regular meetings enable matters concerned with pupil welfare to be discussed. Effective links are made between boarding and academic staff. All required records are maintained, kept securely and reviewed regularly. Diaries are used by staff to record daily concerns about boarders effectively in most areas of boarding but not in all, which results in a lack of consistency of practice and the potential for some concerns not to be fully monitored. Parental responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire express confidence in the management of boarding. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Supervision in the boarding houses is by suitably qualified staff and is suitable, both day and night. Duty rotas are displayed which enable boarders to contact a member of staff at all times. Staff with boarding responsibilities have a thorough induction and appropriate job descriptions. The roles of other adults resident in staff households are clear. All house staff are appraised and this process leads to personal support and training. Procedures are in place for boarders to sign in and out of houses. There is close liaison between boarding staff and those in the day school. Regular registration ensures that the boarders' whereabouts are known at all times. There is a missing child policy which is known to staff. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 In discussions, and in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, boarders reported that they are treated equally and that there is no inappropriate discrimination. Boarding staff ensure that due attention is paid to the cultural needs and customs of boarders who come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders make full use of the range of opportunities provided for them in both houses to express their views, to make suggestions or to express their concerns. They are confident in doing so knowing that their views will be listened to. A small number of boarders reported in the pre-inspection questionnaire that they thought that the school does not seek their views or respond to them. Inspection evidence does not support this view. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 A clear complaints procedure which conforms to regulations is available for all parents of pupils in the school and to prospective parents. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Prefects in the senior house act in a supportive role and assist with evening duties. In the junior house, the elected heads of houses play a key role in helping new boarders to settle in, support boarders who need help, and to act as a conduit to assist boarders to express their views. Both prefects and heads of house receive training and support for their roles by the senior boarding staff. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings for any of its boarders. [NMS 20]