



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE PURCELL SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Purcell School

Full Name of School	The Purcell School
DfE Number	919/6239
Registered Charity Number	312855
Address	The Purcell School Aldenham Road Bushey Hertfordshire WD232TS
Telephone Number	01923 331104
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Email Address	d.thomas@purcell-school.org
Headmaster	Mr David Thomas
Chairman of Governors	Sir Roger Jackling
Age Range	8 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	169
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (77 boys; 92 girls)
Numbers by Age	8-11: 11 11-18: 158
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 45
Number of Boarders	Total: 124 Full: 124
Inspection dates	02 Oct 2012 to 04 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 chairman 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

Mr Adrian Underwood

Reporting Inspector

Dr Ernst Zillekens

Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of
Department, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Purcell School is a coeducational independent boarding and day school. It is one of four specialist music schools in England that are supported by the government's music and dance scheme. It was founded in 1962 as The Central Tutorial School for Young Musicians, based at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, and moved in 1997 to its present site in Bushey, Hertfordshire. The school aims to provide young musicians of exceptional promise and talent with the best possible teaching and environment in which to fulfil their potential, irrespective of their background.
- 1.2 The school admits pupils from 8 to 18. The total school roll is 169 (77 boys and 92 girls), of whom 80 are in the sixth form and 124 are boarders. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds including a number from overseas, 22 of whom are supported in the development of their English. Fourteen pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), six of whom receive specialist learning support. One boarder has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.3 The school offers a full boarding programme, although some boarders can go home at weekends or attend Saturday music colleges. Each house has a houseparent in charge, supported by the deputy head (pastoral) who is in charge of boarding and is a member of the senior management team. Since the previous inspection, the school has built a new pair of boarding houses and refurbished the other two boarding houses. At the time of the inspection, the refurbishment of one of the boarding houses was close to completion and the boarders in that house were living in alternative boarding accommodation within the school.
- 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 does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011, and therefore it must:
- ensure that the number of washbasins in Gardner House meets the requirements of The Education School Premises Regulations 1999 [National Minimum Standard 5.1, under Boarding accommodation]; and
 - ensure that the accommodation in the medical centre provides separate accommodation for male and female boarders [National Minimum Standard 3.2, under Boarders' health and well-being].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.2 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Unify the guidance for boarding staff into a *Boarding Staff Handbook*.
 2. Monitor more closely consistency of practice between houses.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

- 2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in November 2009. The three recommendations about the system of risk assessments, the decoration and the furnishing in the boarding houses have all been met.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

3.(a) Boarding provision and care

- 3.1 The school does not meet two of the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 In addition to form tutors who give academic guidance, the house boarding teams give support and advice. Boarders report that the induction process helps them settle into the life of the house with the support of buddies and welcoming social activities. In addition to the school's independent listeners, boarders have access in confidence to the counsellor and can use helplines. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 In keeping with their specialist music focus, boarders have a tailored programme of physical activity, including guidance on posture, fitness and prevention of injury. Boarders who are ill are suitably supported by the medical centre for first aid and illness. Accommodation for those who are ill does not include separate provision for boys and girls. Houseparents and matrons work closely with the medical centre. Medication is managed by the medical centre, although a few boarders follow guidance on self-medication. Medical records are kept confidentially by the medical centre. The issue and storage of medicines, both in the medical centre and the houses, are correctly documented and medical practices are regularly monitored. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can contact family and friends using house and mobile telephones. Internet access for contacting parents is currently limited. Monitoring of electronic communications to safeguard boarders is proportionate. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 With the building of the two new houses and the refurbishment of the other two houses, boarding accommodation is appropriate for the ages and genders of boarders. Most boarders personalize their bedrooms and a number enjoy the provision of pianos in their rooms. Study facilities are appropriate; boarders use their study bedrooms and the specialist music facilities. Toilet and washing facilities are appropriate, with the exception of the number of washbasins in Gardner House, and offer suitable privacy. Access to the houses and all school buildings is strictly controlled by an electronic system, including individual key fobs for boarders' rooms. The CCTV system to protect boarders does not intrude on their privacy but does add to the monitoring of security. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Catering facilities are hygienic and clean. Since the previous inspection these facilities have been upgraded. Menus are carefully planned, including provision for special diets, and boarders report a marked improvement in the quality and range of choice of food since a catering company was appointed. The student council makes recommendations to the caterer. Boarders can make snacks and drinks in their houses at appropriate times. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Boarders' clothing and bedding are suitably laundered. Boarders can buy essential personal and stationery items from local shops. They have bedroom safes where they can secure their possessions. Senior boarders have bank accounts and the pocket money for younger boarders in Avison House is managed by the houseparents. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 All boarders undertake a significant amount of instrumental practice each day and this is carefully monitored. They confirm, however, that they are able to enjoy house activities in the evenings and at weekends, but acknowledge that their musical commitments do, frequently, have to take precedence. House activities in the

evenings and at weekends include socials, food events and excursions. Boarders can watch national news programmes and read national newspapers. [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 ensures that boarders are protected from harm. The school has appropriate risk assessments and safety records are regularly monitored by the health and safety committee. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Fire safety policies and practice are appropriate; regular drills are held during boarding time, from which action plans are developed. All teaching staff have fire awareness training. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The safeguarding policy is in accordance with locally agreed inter-agency procedures and the school has suitable links with the Local Children Safeguarding Board and the Hertfordshire targeted advice service. The designated persons' child protection training is up to date. All staff are trained in child protection every three years and this is carefully recorded. Staff understand and implement safeguarding protocols. Child protection issues are monitored by the headmaster and reviewed by the whole governing body. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school's policy to promote good behaviour is understood by staff and boarders and is linked to the boarder agreement. Boarders appreciate the system of merits and demerits. Boarders confirm that sanctions are appropriate but they are rarely used due to the commitment of boarders to the ethos of the school. In interviews boarders reported that bullying was a rarity but was dealt with quickly and effectively. Policies for searching the pupils' possessions and physical restraint are appropriate, although no incidents of the latter have been recorded as having occurred. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 Staff recruitment policies, checks and records meet requirements. Persons over sixteen living on site that are not members of staff have written agreements with the school, are suitably checked and receive appropriate induction guidance. All visitors are monitored and no one has substantial unsupervised access to boarders. Guardians appointed by the school are known as 'host families'. All resident adults in host families are subject to the same checks as staff and the host families' coordinator carefully monitors all placements, including those guardians appointed by parents. [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 published on the website, in the *Pupils' and Parents' Handbook* and work in practice. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The development plan for new and refurbished boarding houses is about to be completed. Guidance for boarding staff is appropriate but not unified in a whole school *Boarding Staff Manual*. Senior boarding staff are experienced in the culture of boarding and monitor boarding policies and practice but some inconsistency in practice remains between houses. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Boarding staff have job descriptions. Induction, appraisal and training are appropriate and the appraisal of boarding staff forms part of the school performance review process. All houses are suitably staffed at all times to provide supervision of boarders and staff know the whereabouts of boarders and the action to take in the

- event of a missing boarder. Boarders know how to contact a member of staff at night and enjoy appropriate access to private staff accommodation for discussions and social events. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders confirmed that they were well supported by boarding staff who clearly understand the specific support needed by these specialist musicians. The school's equal opportunities policy is effective in practice. Boarders report, for instance, how well the different nationalities and age groups relate to each other. Those boarders with particular needs, including English as an additional language, receive the required support. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders' views are expressed through the student council, house meetings and informal discussions. The school's culture encourages boarders to express their views and these are acted upon appropriately. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The complaints procedure is published on the website and conforms to regulations. Complaints are appropriately responded to and recorded. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Prefects display responsibility and commitment and contribute to the leadership of the houses and give guidance to fellow boarders, notably the younger ones, who stated that prefects and senior boarders offer them friendship and support. Prefect training encompasses child protection and issues of confidentiality. Clear guidelines are laid down for prefects' responsibilities and the execution of their roles is monitored by houseparents. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for pupils. [NMS 20]