



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION REPORT
FOR SCHOOLS WITH RESIDENTIAL PROVISION**

THE PURCELL SCHOOL

FEBRUARY 2018



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	The Purcell School			
DfE number	919/6239			
Registered charity number	312855			
Address	The Purcell School Aldenham Road, Bushey, Hertfordshire, WD23 2TS			
Telephone number	01923 331104			
Email address	info@purcell-school.org			
Head	Dr Bernard Trafford			
Chair of governors	Sir Roger Jackling			
Age range	10 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	177			
	Boys	74	Girls	103
	Day pupils	38	Boarders	139
	Juniors	5	Seniors	87
	Sixth Form	85		
Inspection dates	7 to 8 February 2018			

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 The Purcell School, a coeducational day and boarding school for pupils aged 10 to 18, was first established in 1962 and has been on its present site in Bushey, Hertfordshire since 1997. It is a company limited by guarantee, governed by its directors. It is one of four specialist schools in England supported by the government's music and dance scheme and has charitable status. The interim headmaster has been in post since January 2018. Since the previous inspection there has been refurbishment of some teaching areas and an extension of social facilities for pupils and staff.
- 1.2 The four boarding houses are all situated on the school's campus. Avison house is co-educational accommodation for pupils in Years 6 to 8. Girls in Years 9 to 13 live in either Sunley House or Graham House, and boys of this age are accommodated in Gardner House. The majority of boarders are British citizens, with a wide range of ethnic origins. The 32 overseas boarders come from countries within Europe or as far afield as Japan and Australia. All day pupils are attached to one of the boarding houses.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school sets out to provide young musicians of exceptional promise with the teaching and environment to enable them to fulfil their potential. It aims to help its pupils understand their responsibility to the wider world and to develop the personal integrity, spiritual awareness, self-confidence and adaptability which will sustain them throughout life.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is above average and that of sixth-form pupils broadly average. Entry to the school is dependent upon musical ability and potential and pupils of all ages are significantly above average in this respect. The school has identified 34 pupils as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), mainly for dyslexia, dyscalculia or organisational difficulties, of whom 19 receive extra support from the school. There are two pupils who have educational or health care plans and the school provides specialist support for them. Of the 43 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), 20 receive specialist support in school.

2. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools ('boarding NMS'). It also comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding NMS. It identifies any standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the standards.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards, including the boarding NMS, may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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 specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets almost all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and associated requirements. In order to meet all the standards, the school should take immediate action to remedy the deficiency as detailed below.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the year 2014, the only year for which comparable data is available, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2014, the only year for which comparable data is available, have been in line with the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.
- 2.5 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 Arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils do not fully pay due regard to current statutory guidance. Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.11 The standard on child protection (NMS 11) is not met and represents a failure to safeguard boarders.
- 2.12 While safeguarding practice is secure, records of those attending the required update training in safeguarding matters indicate that several members of staff have not received training in the latest guidance. The school started action to remedy this during the course of the inspection but in order to achieve full compliance the school must establish a means of recording staff training that clearly identifies any staff who have missed a training session and take swift action in response.

- 2.13 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16 are met but those in paragraphs 7 (a) and (b) [safeguarding] and 8 (a) and (b) [safeguarding of boarders] and in NMS 11 [child protection] are not met.**

Action point 1

- **The school must ensure that all staff receive suitable update training and that systematic records are kept of all training undertaken. [Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b), 8 (a) and (b) and for the same reason NMS 11].**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.14 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised.
- 2.15 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.16 Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.17 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.18 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for those with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, and its results in public examinations, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.19 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and statement of boarding principles [NMS 1] are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.20 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.

2.21 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.22 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.

2.23 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are met.

3. INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors and attended tutorial meetings. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Colette Culligan

Reporting inspector

Mr Paul Dunn

Compliance team inspector (Deputy bursar, HMC school)

Mr Neil Chippington

Team inspector for boarding (Headmaster, IAPS school)