



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

SIDCOT SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Sidcot School

Full Name of School	Sidcot School		
DfE Number	802/6002		
Registered Charity Number	296491		
Address	Sidcot School Oakridge Lane Winscombe North Somerset BS25 1PD		
Telephone Number	01934 843102		
Fax Number	01934 844181		
Email Address	<u>info@sidcot.org.uk</u>		
Head	Iain Kilpatrick		
Chair of Governors	Paul Whitehouse		
Age Range	3 to 19		
Total Number of Pupils	555		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (302 boys; 253 girls)		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	38	5-11: 101
			11-19: 416
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	391	
Number of Boarders	Total:	164	
	Full:	153	Weekly: 10
	Flexi:	1	
Inspection dates	30 Apr 2014 to 02 May 2014		

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 February 2011 and can be found at 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 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 William Ibbetson-Price	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Elizabeth Worthington	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Liam Copley	Team Inspector for Boarding (Housemaster, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Sidcot School is a co-educational boarding and day school for pupils from the ages of three to nineteen. It has a Quaker foundation which can trace its origins back to 1699. It is located in Winscombe in the Somerset countryside to the south of Bristol and has occupied its current 160-acre site since 1808. The school's Quaker values remain at the heart of its ethos with strong emphasis placed upon mutual respect between all members of its community. The school is a registered charity administered by a governing body, at least half of which must be members of the Religious Society of Friends.
- 1.2 The school aims to foster pupils' natural intellectual curiosity and creativity, to develop self-motivation and independent thought. Pupils are encouraged to develop practical and personal skills and, in keeping with its Quaker values, the school strives to help pupils learn to work together, build teams and seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts.
- 1.3 At the time of inspection, 555 pupils were on roll. Of the 26 pupils in the Nursery, 23 attend part-time. In the junior school, 12 Reception pupils are aged under 5 years, 25 pupils are aged 5 to 7 years and 76 are aged 7 to 11 years. Of the 416 pupils in senior school, 269 are aged 11 to 16 years and 147 pupils are in Years 12 and 13. The total number of pupils includes 253 girls and 302 boys. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and a further 105 have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Of these, 68 receive learning support from the school.
- 1.4 Most day pupils live locally and come from professional families. The majority of boarders come from overseas and while most use English as an additional language (EAL), they are fluent English speakers. At the time of the inspection there were 164 boarders between the ages of eleven and eighteen, of whom 79 were girls and 85 boys. Boarders are accommodated in five houses, appropriately separated by sex, either within the main building or in detached buildings within a short walk. Since the previous Ofsted inspection, there have been no significant changes in boarding provision, other than some changes in staffing. Boarding in all houses is overseen by housemasters and housemistresses supported by a team of resident assistants and graduate interns. The school aims to create a family atmosphere where the pupils feel safe and supported in a homely environment. The current headmaster was appointed in August 2012.
- 1.5 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 2013.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Centralise records of disciplinary sanctions in order to ensure greater consistency between houses.
2. Ensure that the pupils have been introduced to the independent listener.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in February 2011, and made five recommendations. The school has resolved those relating to revising the boarding staff handbook, giving staff formal induction to their duties, refurbishing some showers and redecorating other areas. The school has partially addressed the recommendation relating to reviewing the school's discipline policy to ensure greater consistency across all boarding houses.

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 Boarders receive a well-documented induction process on joining the school and say that they settle in quickly. House and other handbooks are available to provide guidance to boarders and their parents. Boarders are complimentary about the level of support they receive from the boarding staff and feel they have a variety of people to whom they can turn if they have a concern. House notice boards give the contact details of a range of external helpline numbers including those of the children's commissioner and the school's independent listener, although the latter is not well known to the boarders. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school implements appropriate first aid and medical policies overseen by a team of well-qualified nurses in the health centre. The school arranges doctor, dental and other medical appointments as necessary. Pupil information is held in confidence and their rights as patients are respected. All records are maintained appropriately and medicines are administered and securely stored. Boarders may self-medicate if assessed as responsible to do so by the school doctors who also decide upon Gillick competence. In the pupil questionnaire, a small minority of boarders felt that they are not well looked after if ill or injured, but inspectors found relevant staff caring, and accommodation for boarders who are unwell is appropriate and suitably staffed. There are suitable arrangements for boarders who become ill at night or at weekends. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can readily contact their families using their mobile phones or house payphones and there is easy access to emails and the internet throughout the houses. The school has monitoring systems and restriction of access to certain websites to assure cyber wellbeing, although this can limit access to some social networking sites. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Accommodation, suitably separated for boys and girls, is of an appropriate standard overall although there is variation in style and quality across the houses. Boarders have comfortable rooms although not all rooms have a desk, and so some boarders study in the library and elsewhere. All houses have adequate social facilities for relaxation and recreation. In the previous Ofsted report, it was recommended that there should be a programme of redecoration of the houses and refurbishment of showers. The school has addressed these issues and inspectors found houses well maintained, clean and appropriately lit, heated and ventilated. Bedding is clean and warm. Bathroom provision is appropriate and affords the necessary levels of privacy. Boarders are able to personalise their rooms. Boarding house accommodation is for the sole use of boarders and is secure from unauthorised access. A small number of senior girls are allowed to live in accommodation where they have greater independence. CCTV use in the school is very limited, and respects boarders' privacy. (NMS 5)
- 3.6 In the pre-inspection questionnaire a large majority of boarders expressed discontent with the food. During the inspection, boarders made favourable comments about the food both during interviews and at mealtimes. Inspectors found food to be nutritious, healthy and plentiful with a wide range of options available. Those with special diets or allergies are properly identified and catered for. All food is prepared and served in hygienic conditions. Boarders can voice their opinions

through both the food and the boarders' councils, and the school aims to implement their requests. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of boarders complained about provision and availability of snacks. House kitchens are well equipped and supplied with a variety of foods to enable boarders to make their own snacks. Drinking water is readily available and clearly labelled. The 'Hub', a café and shop, provides boarders the chance to purchase a variety of snacks and foods, including healthy options such as fresh fruit salad. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 In the pre-inspection questionnaires a small minority of boarders stated that their belongings are not safe. There have been incidents of belongings going missing but records show that the school has dealt promptly and effectively with these. Boarders have plenty of storage space and can secure their belongings in lockable drawers and cupboards, although many choose not to use these. Pocket money, passports and any valuables are looked after securely by house staff. House matrons do the boarders' laundry and it is returned promptly. Senior boarders have the facilities to do their own laundry if they wish. Stationery items are available for purchase at the school library and the health centre stocks some essential toiletries. Boarders may go to the local shops at certain times of the week and there are opportunities to go shopping further afield at weekends. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Boarders have a range of well-advertised after-school activities to choose from, and the weekend activity programme is equally varied. Boarders have access to a number of recreational facilities on site including comfortable house common rooms, the sports hall and other recreational facilities. However, there are limited central social events on week-day evenings. Daily newspapers, television and the internet ensure that boarders have access to a range of sources of information about 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 Comprehensive policies and procedures, including detailed risk assessments promote the welfare, health and safety of boarders both on and off the school site. The school premises are well maintained and equipment is regularly checked for safety. Access to boarding accommodation is suitably controlled and unsupervised access is not permitted. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school complies fully with fire regulations, and appropriate measures protect boarders from risk of fire. The school undertakes systematic fire prevention checks and keeps detailed records. Fire extinguishers, alarms and emergency lighting are regularly maintained and staff are appropriately trained. Boarders and boarding staff are aware of fire evacuation procedures and fire drills are held at least termly during boarding hours. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The school makes the required arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its pupils. The governor who has specific responsibility for safeguarding reports annually to the full board of governors who review the implementation and effectiveness of the school's child protection arrangements. The recently updated safeguarding policies and procedures are now accurate in content and records of child protection concerns indicate that the school refers on to external agencies as necessary expeditiously. All staff receive child protection training at the required intervals and at the appropriate level for their roles. They are

aware of their responsibilities and newly-appointed staff receive induction training in child protection. [NMS 11]

- 3.13 The written behaviour policy stresses that good behaviour is expected and details the rewards and sanctions available. The previous inspection recommended that the school review its discipline policy in order to ensure greater consistency across all boarding houses. The school has made some progress in this regard, but inconsistencies still exist between the houses, particularly in the way in which sanctions are recorded. Inspectors found the pupils to be extremely well behaved and very polite and considerate. Pupils and staff understand and support the school's anti-bullying policies. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a few boarders said that they had experienced bullying. In interview, boarders report that bullying is rare and that any instances are dealt with promptly and effectively. This view was supported by written records which show that the school takes allegations of bullying seriously and works hard to tackle any examples. Boarders also remarked on how boarding staff were quick to resolve disputes on the few occasions that they occurred, and confirmed that they feel safe in their houses. There are policies for use of restraint and the searching of pupils and their possessions, but records show that these measures have not been needed recently. Inspectors saw many examples of kind and respectful relationships between pupils and with staff. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school follows safer recruitment procedures and the central register of staff appointments is accurately maintained. Visitors to the school do not have unsupervised access to the boarding accommodation. Residents on the premises who are over sixteen and are not employed by the school have criminal records checks and have signed agreements about the terms of their residence. 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 A statement of boarding principles and practice, which reflects the school's Quaker values and tradition, is made known to boarders and is published to staff and parents. It is fully implemented. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The headmaster, governors and senior boarding staff provide clear leadership of boarding. Boarding staff handbooks are comprehensive and there is thorough and documented induction of new members of the team by the experienced senior boarding staff. These measures address two recommendations in the previous report. The governors support and value boarding and it is included in the school development plan. Links between the boarding and academic staff are frequent and effective and ensure that all aspects of boarders' development are considered and concerns identified. The required records are properly maintained and stored. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All staff working with boarders have job descriptions, annual appraisals and opportunities for professional development. Boarders know who is responsible for them at all times and staff know the whereabouts of boarders in their care through clear signing-in and out procedures. Staff have pupils' mobile phone numbers, and pupils know how to contact boarding staff. Staff also know and understand the procedures to follow if a boarder should go missing. At least one member of staff is resident in each house overnight and boarders know how to contact them if

- necessary. Residential staff are provided with appropriate accommodation which boarders are not allowed to enter. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Boarders, including those from overseas, confirm that they are well cared for and that staff treat them equally and sensitively according to their needs, in accordance with the school's equality policy. The special educational needs co-ordinator keeps detailed records of pupils with SEND and there are appropriate care plans which are known to all. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 In their questionnaire responses, a small minority of the boarders felt that the school does not seek their opinions or respond to them. Inspectors saw minutes from the boarders' forum which included feedback to suggestions, and attended house meetings at which suggestions for improvement were discussed. There is also a food committee and school council to which boarders can and do belong. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school's complaints procedure is appropriate, and scrutiny of written records shows that complaints have been dealt with promptly and carefully. In their responses to the questionnaire, all parents who responded indicated that their children enjoy boarding and the school keeps them safe; the overwhelming majority of parents expressed great satisfaction with all aspects of the boarding provision. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 There are no prefects within the boarding houses. A small minority of pupils commented in the questionnaire about a lack of opportunity to take responsibility. The Quaker ethos is that people should serve others willingly and there are a range of opportunities for boarders to do this, including volunteering for various posts, to being selected as head of house or school. Two pupils act as Quaker Elders, taking responsibility for ensuring that Quaker values are known and followed throughout the school. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for pupils. [NMS 20]