



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ACKWORTH SCHOOL

BOARDING WELFARE

INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Ackworth School

The Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	Ackworth School
DfE Number	384/6000
Registered Charity Number	529280
Address	Ackworth School Ackworth Pontefract West Yorkshire WF7 7LT
Telephone Number	01977 611401
Fax Number	01977 616225
Email Address	reception@ackworthschool.com
Head	Kathryn Bell
Clerk to the School Committee	Alison Tyas
Age Range	2 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	494
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (248 boys and 246 girls)
Numbers by Age	2-3 (EYFS): 5 5-11: 108 3-5 (EYFS): 34 11-19: 347
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 385
Number of Boarders	Total: 109 Full: 109 Weekly: 0
Inspection dates	27th to 29th November 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 March 2010 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 and held discussions with senior members of staff and with the Clerk to the School Committee, representing the governors. They observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, attended registration sessions, house meetings and a morning Meeting for Worship. Inspectors visited each of the boarding houses and the health centre 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 Rodney Fox

Reporting Inspector

Mrs Sarah Williamson

Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Ackworth is a Quaker school. The prospectus states, 'Quakers believe that there is something of God in everyone. They recognise no barriers of ethnicity, class or gender. Simplicity, trust, equality, peace and sustainability are at the heart of the Quaker way of life'. These principles underlie the school's aim to create a happy and secure environment in which all pupils realise and develop their own special abilities, in constant awareness of the needs and claims of others. The school is governed by the School Committee, which consists of nine members nominated by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), one treasurer, two current parents, two former pupils and two who are nominated by the staff. The School Committee reports to Ackworth General Meeting, composed of members of Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, which convenes annually at Ackworth.
- 1.2 Founded in 1779 to educate the children of Quaker families 'not in affluence', Ackworth is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between two and nineteen, and welcomes children from many faiths and across the world. Located on the edge of the Yorkshire moors, close to Pontefract, it occupies historic listed buildings on a spacious site. Pupils below Year 7 are members of Coram House, a separate junior school on the school campus, which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), with its nursery in a separate building nearby. The two boarding houses, one for boys and one for girls, are located in the main school buildings. Each has its own accommodation, resident staff and distinctive ethos. The International Centre (IC) provides a range of courses for about twenty pupils from overseas wishing to develop their English language skills. These pupils are members of the boarding houses. The Autism Resource (AR) is a specialist unit for a small number of pupils, none of whom boards at present.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the school had 494 pupils, including 22 in the IC and 5 in the AR. Years 12 and 13 (the sixth form) consisted of 47 boys and 42 girls. The boarding houses accommodated 61 boys and 48 girls, all of whom were in Year 7 and above. Boarders come from a wide range of countries around the world, those from the IC adding to the diversity of culture and nationality in the houses.
- 1.4 The present head has been in post since September 2009.

- 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 tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage

School	Age of children
Nursery	2 to 4
Reception	4 to 5

Junior School (Coram House)

School	NC name
Year 1	Year 1
Year 2	Year 2
Year 3	Year 3
Year 4	Year 4
Year 5	Year 5
Year 6	Year 6

Senior School

School	NC name
First Year	Year 7
Second Year	Year 8
Third Year	Year 9
Fourth Year	Year 10
Fifth Year	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 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Develop a formal procedure for the regular review of boarding practice in each house, and associate it with the writing of house development plans.
2. Take measures to deal with the pupils' desire for menus that meet a higher proportion of the national tastes represented among the boarders.
3. Provide more varied weekend activities for younger boarders, and greater opportunity for them to go off the school premises.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in March 2010. It made four recommendations concerning recording the names of staff taking part in fire drill practices; maintaining the rolling programme of repairs and renewals in the boarding houses; including the contact details of Ofsted in the complaints procedure; and maintaining records of the training undertaken by boarding staff. The school has implemented all four of these recommendations.

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 The induction of new boarders is based on straightforward written instructions, reinforced by frequent guidance from staff and the ready support offered by older boarders. House staff are the primary source of support for boarders, although pupils have a choice of adults to whom they can look for help, including their form tutors and a counsellor, who is independent of the teaching staff. Contact numbers for outside agencies and helplines are clearly displayed in both boarding houses. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 Suitable arrangements are made for boarders who are unwell. The health centre is staffed during the daytime by a qualified nurse, and the doctor visits weekly. House staff are first-aid trained. Sick boarders are cared for in their houses, which those interviewed liked. Each house has a sick room for those needing privacy. Care is managed by the nurse, supported by house matrons. Boarders have access to local medical and other specialist care as needed. Over-the-counter medication is dispensed in houses. Appropriate protocols ensure that prescription medicines are only dispensed as prescribed. Risk assessments are conducted for those few boarders who self-medicate. Medicines are securely stored. Medicine dispensed is carefully recorded both in the houses and in the health centre. Verbal cross-referencing occurs, but no system informs the nurse of remedies dispensed until she next visits the house. Boarders' rights to medical confidentiality are properly respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders are able to contact their families easily and in private by telephone, email and the internet. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding houses are comfortable and recently redecorated. Some rooms in the boys' house have en-suite facilities, and all accommodation is suitable in size, furniture and facilities for the boarders' ages and needs. Both houses have suitable recreational space and privacy is appropriately respected. Living areas can be personalised. Individual study space is provided and, additionally, sixth-form boarders have separate studies located outside the house. Access to boarding accommodation is secure and pupils feel safe in their houses. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Whilst a significant number of boarders responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire criticised the food, during the inspection numerous pupils confirmed recent improvement, particularly in the choices at supper. Inspectors found that meals are nutritious, sufficient in quantity and of suitable quality. Special dietary needs are met, but options do not reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds and palates of the boarders. The school kitchens are hygienically maintained. Boarders have access to drinking water, mid-morning refreshments are available and houses are supplied with food in the evenings, including bread and fresh fruit, so that boarders can prepare evening snacks in suitably equipped house kitchens. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 Clothing is laundered regularly and efficient systems are established for returning laundry. Sixth-form boarders in both houses have access to washing machines. Personal items are available from house stores and stationery from the school office. Each boarder has a lockable cupboard. Pocket money is kept securely by house staff, but pupils do not regularly sign for withdrawals. [NMS 9]

- 3.8 A wide choice of after-school activities is available, which was appreciated by parents and pupils in questionnaire responses. Weekend activities are more limited in variety, and mostly occur on Saturday mornings, as was also noted by pupils in their questionnaire responses. Older pupils welcome the freedom to visit the cinema or local towns at the weekend. Provision for younger pupils, particularly boys, is more restricted. An occasional programme of trips and activities on Sundays, some of which is focused on the interests of younger boarders, is arranged. Access to safe recreational areas in school to play sport or practise music is available. Younger boarders are reliant on older pupils to accompany them to visit local shops. Boarders have appropriate access to information about world events through newspapers and periodicals, television and the internet. [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 for securing the health, safety and welfare of the boarders in all parts of the school are thorough, often involve outside consultants, and are carefully monitored by the School Committee. The policies and procedures adopted have proper regard to national guidance. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Measures taken to minimise risk from fire are rigorous and fully compliant with fire regulations. Fire evacuation practices are conducted regularly at different times of the school day, and at night, and are carefully recorded. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders are rigorous. All staff receive regular training in child protection procedures. The arrangements made conform scrupulously to both nationally and locally agreed procedures. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Arrangements to promote positive behaviour and constructive relationships are clearly set out and consistently implemented. Pupils and parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaires confirmed that bullying is uncommon and effectively dealt with if it occurs. The Quaker ethos of respect for other people is apparent in the manner in which pupils and staff behave towards each other. All required policies are in place and understood by staff and pupils. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 Rigorous procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and other adults with access to boarders are established and diligently applied. The school's centralised register of appointments made, which includes all those involved with boarding, is properly maintained, although doing this is not the responsibility of a single person, which restricts accessibility. Adults over sixteen years of age, not employed by the school but living on the same premises as boarders, are appropriately checked through the Criminal Records Bureau and the terms of their accommodation are specified in a written agreement. Visitors to boarding houses have to be admitted and do not have unsupervised access. The school does not appoint guardians and makes it clear that this is the responsibility of 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 A suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available to parents and pupils on the school website. It is effective in practice and stems from the school's Quaker values and ethos. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The two heads of house and the head of boarding, who is the deputy head (pastoral), together provide effective leadership and management of boarding. Their weekly meetings with the head and the deputy head (curriculum) ensure close links between academic and residential staff. No structure exists for formal review of the practice in each house, and the production of house development plans, but this does occur informally as a result of the deputy head (pastoral) making frequent visits to, and being closely involved with, the houses. Written welfare plans for boarders with particular needs are not currently prepared, although the progress of individual pupils is discussed at the weekly meetings. The heads of house have appropriate experience and expertise to fulfil their roles effectively. They are well supported by a team of staff, including a resident matron, in each house. The school maintains all the required records and monitors them appropriately. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All boarding staff have written job descriptions and receive appropriate induction and support. The boarding practice of individual staff is monitored by senior staff, particularly through the close involvement of the deputy head (pastoral). A register is kept of training undertaken by staff. Any role within the boarding house of spouses or other members of staff households is made clear. Boarding houses are suitably staffed with sufficiently experienced and trained personnel. The number of staff in each house ensures that an identified and appropriately experienced person is on duty at all times. The availability of senior staff means that staff always have someone to whom they can turn for support. Well established procedures for checking boarders, and for signing in and out of the houses, ensure that staff know the whereabouts of boarders in their charge at all times. Staff know the procedure if a pupil is missing, including actively searching and, if appropriate, involving the police. At least one, and normally several, members of staff sleep in each boarding house at night. Boarders can easily contact staff at night. Boarders and staff usually meet in the house office; access to staff living accommodation is not usual and does not involve one-to-one contact. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 The school community, in accord with Quaker teaching, is a genuinely tolerant community in which inappropriate discrimination is alien to the ethos. The procedures adopted are intended to ensure provision of care that is sensitive to individual needs. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Both the boarding houses hold weekly meetings at which boarders may raise any concerns and offer suggestions about the running of the houses. Boarders can identify instances where their views have brought about change. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 A suitable complaints procedure is in place and scrutiny of files reveals that concerns and complaints are properly and diligently investigated and, where possible, resolved at an informal stage. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 The school officers' policy sets out the range of duties and responsibilities to be undertaken by pupils designated for these roles, including running the sixth-form council. School officers do not issue punishments, though may report inappropriate

behaviour to staff. All school officers attend a training weekend organised by the head of the sixth form. [NMS19]

- 3.23 This standard is not applicable. The school does not arrange lodgings for pupils. [NMS 20]