



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**AYSGARTH SCHOOL**

**BOARDING WELFARE  
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Aysgarth School

Full Name of School	<b>Aysgarth School</b>
DfE Number	<b>815/6009</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>529538</b>
Address	<b>Aysgarth School Newton-le-Willows Bedale North Yorkshire DL8 1TF</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01677 450240</b>
Fax Number	<b>01677 450736</b>
Email Address	<b>enquiries@aysgarthschool.co.uk</b>
Head	<b>Mr Robert Morse</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Mark Stroyan</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 13</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>197</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed 3 to 8; Boys 8 to 13</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>3-5 (EYFS): 19    5-11: 109 11-13: 69</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>Total: 69</b>
Number of Boarders	<b>Total: 128 Full: 78    Weekly: 50</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>24 Nov 2015 to 26 Nov 2015</b>

## PREFACE

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) Regulations 2014, as amended. 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.

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 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 the boarding house 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 Sue Bennett      Reporting Inspector

Miss Kathryn Tipton      Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head and Head of Boarding,  
Society of Heads/IAPS school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Aysgarth School is an independent day and boarding preparatory school. Established in 1877, the school moved to its current location in Newton-le-Willows near the town of Bedale, North Yorkshire, in 1890. The pre-preparatory school, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is a day school for both boys and girls between the ages of three and eight years old. The preparatory school consists of boys aged eight to thirteen, the majority of whom are boarders. All boarders are accommodated in a sole boarding house. The school is set on a large country estate comprising of purpose-built educational facilities and extensive grounds for sports and countryside activities. The chapel is at the heart of the school, reflecting the school's Christian values and foundation. The school has a charitable status and is overseen by a board of governors.
- 1.2 The preparatory school aims to develop the best in every child by providing a caring, stimulating, safe and comfortable boarding environment. It seeks to provide a boarding experience that helps develop boys in every respect - to be happy, confident, courteous, independent and ambitious. Through the acquisition of these, the school aims to provide both day and boarding pupils the best all-round preparation for both their next educational phases and future lives.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection new recreational facilities, such as a sports hall and performing arts centre, have been built and the ongoing refurbishment of the boarding accommodation includes three new dormitories and extra bathroom facilities. The school has new leadership, the boarding management has been restructured and the range of evening and weekend activities has increased.
- 1.4 The school has 197 pupils on roll; 171 boys and 26 girls, with 19 in the EYFS. Currently 128 boys board from the age of 8, either on a full or weekly basis. Also, 39 pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, 37 of whom receive extra support for their learning. No pupils have statements of educational needs or Education and Health Care plans. English is used as an additional language (EAL) by 2 pupils, 1 of whom receives support for English. Pupils' families predominantly come from business, professional or armed services backgrounds. Most are of white British ethnicity, with a small minority from a broad mix of other nationalities and cultures.
- 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 NC equivalence are shown in the following tables.

***Pre-preparatory School***

<b>School</b>	<b>NC name</b>
PP1	Year 1
PP2	Year 2
PP3	Year 3

***Preparatory School***

<b>School</b>	<b>NC name</b>
Form 1	Year 4
Form 2	Year 5
Form 3	Year 6
Form 4	Year 7
Form 5	Year 8

## **2. SUMMARY**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.1 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Increase the range of resources for boarders' free time and relaxation in communal areas.
2. Improve the quality and variety of the evening meals provided for boarders.

### **(iii) Progress since the previous inspection**

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI as part of an integrated inspection in November 2012. No specific boarding recommendations were raised at the inspection. The school has continued to maintain compliance with all of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding.



### **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 systems provide new boarders with a clear introduction to boarding life. On arrival they receive helpful guidance and information on health and safety procedures and daily routines. They are also provided pastoral support information, such as contact details for national helplines and for the independent listener. New boarders are assigned 'guides' to help them settle in. Boarders, during discussions, said that they have a choice of staff to approach for personal guidance and support. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school implements effective policies and procedures for the care of boarders who become unwell, including for their physical, emotional and mental well-being. These cover first-aid procedures, dealing with medical emergencies and care for boarders with chronic conditions. Counselling support is available to boarders as and when needed. Individual welfare plans are compiled for boarders with an identified need, which are circulated to all appropriate staff. The surgery, staffed by a qualified nurse, is suitably equipped and located centrally. The sick room, with a designated toilet and washing facility, is appropriately separated. Medication is securely stored and treatment records carefully maintained. Medicines are administered by appropriately trained and qualified staff and only to those boarders for whom they are prescribed. Household remedies are administered with parental consent. Boarders also have access to specialist services, such as the local doctor, optometrist and dentist. Older boarders, assessed as suitably competent, are allowed to self-medicate towards the end of their final year in preparation for moving on to senior schools. Pupil information is held in confidence and boarders' rights as patients are fully respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders are able to contact their families by email, electronic communication or by using one of the house telephones. Proportionate systems are in place to monitor electronic usage in order to detect abuse or unsafe use by boarders. In addition boarders can use the telephone in the matrons' room, with permission, should they require greater levels of privacy. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 The boarding accommodation is well organised and managed, appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, and easily accessible for all boarders. All areas are clean and suitably maintained; risk assessments are regularly reviewed and any shortcomings are promptly acted on. Each year group has a spacious communal area, these are comfortable but have a limited range of resources for boarders to enjoy during evening free time. Suitable provision is provided for boarders to complete their prep. Dormitories are suitably sized and furnished for the number, ages and needs of boarders, and appropriately separated from adult accommodation. 'Poster walls' enable boarders to personalise their rooms. Boarders may supply their own bedding. Washroom and toilet facilities are appropriate in number, easily accessible from dormitories and offer suitable privacy. The accommodation is for the sole use of boarders and is secure from unauthorised access. Safety measures, including CCTV cameras, do not intrude on boarders' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Meals are prepared in a well-equipped, hygienic kitchen and provide for pupils with specific dietary, medical or religious needs. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a few boarders said that they are unhappy with some of the food provision. During discussions, boarders stated that evening meals lack variety and

are not as appetising as the food on offer at breakfast and lunchtime. Inspection evidence concurs. Most meals are nutritious and balanced in quality and quantity, but evening suppers lack variety and quality. Boarders have unlimited access to water, milk and fruit. Bedtime snacks are also provided. None have disabilities that require support with eating. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Suitable provision is made for boarders' laundry needs, including measures to ensure that belongings are returned to the correct individual. Boarders are able to obtain necessary personal items and stationery when required. Younger boarders store personal possessions in lockable tuck boxes, whilst older boarders have lockers. Money and valuable items are looked after by the house staff. Staff are trained and aware of the guidance to follow in the unlikely event that they need to search a boarder or their possessions. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 An appropriate balance of activities and free time is provided for boarders, both in the evenings and at weekends. Suitable risk assessments are in place for all activities, including those of high risk, such as shooting and climbing. Boarders have access to a variety of communal areas inside and outside for relaxation or time alone. They are aware of the areas that are 'out of bounds' and the reasons for this. Daily newspapers and magazines in the library provide boarders easy access to world news and current affairs. No onerous demands are placed on boarders. [NMS 10]

### **3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding**

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 Comprehensive arrangements for health and safety are compliant with legislative requirements and appropriately implemented. All areas of the school premises, facilities and boarding accommodation are suitably maintained, and prompt action is taken to address any identified issues. Detailed risk assessments for both the site and for off-site visits ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of boarders. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Stringent measures are in place to reduce the risk from fire. External specialists periodically test fire systems and equipment for safety. Regular fire drills take place, including during boarding time; all are carefully recorded, maintained and monitored. Boarders have a clear understanding of emergency evacuation procedures. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 Safeguarding arrangements effectively promote boarders' welfare. Staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding have appropriate advanced training qualifications and a thorough understanding of their roles. They ensure that all staff receive regular training in child-protection practice, including for the recent requirements on radicalisation awareness. Staff have a clear understanding of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns, including contact with the local safeguarding board for advice if required. The school's governance conscientiously undertakes the annual review of safeguarding arrangements; documented minutes appropriately reflect the depth and breadth of discussions. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Written policies to promote good behaviour and guard against bullying, including cyberbullying, provide clear guidance for staff, parents and boarders. These procedures are implemented consistently in practice and well understood by all. In their questionnaire responses a very small minority of boarders commented negatively on staff fairness in administering sanctions and the school's handling of bullying. Inspection evidence does not concur. During discussions boarders said

that they have a clear understanding of the school rules and feel that the sanctions are fair and in line with those published in their boarding diaries. They also said that bullying is rare; they are confident that staff would promptly address any such occurrences. Behaviour records, including those detailing sanctions and rewards, are carefully maintained and monitored by senior staff. Staff understand the procedures to follow in the use of physical restraint and for searching boarders and their possessions, should the need arise. [NMS 12]

- 3.14 The school operates appropriate procedures for the safe recruitment of all staff, volunteers and governors, which is fully in line with official guidance. Appropriate disclosure and barring service checks are undertaken on all residents over the age of 16, who live on the premises and are not employed by the school. Written agreements ensure that there is a clear understanding of residency terms. A rigorous protocol prevents school visitors, contractors and maintenance personnel from having unsupervised access to boarders or their accommodation. The school does not appoint any guardians to care for boarders. [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 boarding principles and practice is readily available to parents, boarders and staff, both on the school's website and within boarding handbooks. These values are accurately reflected in current boarding practice. Boarders comment on the caring attitudes of staff, that they feel safe and enjoy the community atmosphere of boarding. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Boarding has a prominent focus in the school's organisation and, as such, the effectiveness of leadership and management is carefully monitored by the governing body. It is a discussion priority at every board meeting. Appropriate action is taken to remedy any emerging issues which may impact on the welfare provision, such as the recent addition of two extra dormitories and bathroom facilities to provide more amenities for boarders. Boarding leadership and management has a clear structure; senior staff have appropriate levels of training and experience and, as a result, good knowledge and skills to undertake their respective roles. Self- evaluation processes accurately evaluate the provision against regulatory boarding standards, enabling a clear vision for future boarding development. Links between the academic and residential staff are effective. Regular staff meetings facilitate discussion about boarders' pastoral and academic concerns. Electronic communication systems ensure that all staff are fully aware of boarders' needs. Policies and related documents are appropriately maintained. Records are carefully monitored by senior staff to improve outcomes for boarders and actively promote their well-being. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses the vast majority of parents were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of boarding. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All staff working with boarders have detailed job descriptions which clearly reflect their responsibilities. New staff receive appropriate levels of induction for their roles. Regular appraisals and training opportunities provide suitable support for professional development. Written documentation ensures that additional adults in staff households clearly understand their roles. Boarders are well supervised at all times by sufficient numbers of experienced and qualified staff, both during the day and at night. Regular registration systems and 'sign in and out' books ensure that staff always know boarders' whereabouts. Duty rotas on house notice boards ensure that boarders know who is responsible for them. Boarders can easily contact residential staff and matrons during the night should the need arise. Staff have a clear understanding of the procedure to follow in the event that a boarder goes

- missing. The accommodation for residential staff is appropriately separated and boarders do not have any unsupervised access. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 The school's inclusive ethos ensures that boarders do not experience any discrimination and that are all treated equally. During discussions, boarders commented on the importance of mutual tolerance and that staff understand and provide support for their individual needs, such as help with prep. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 In their questionnaire responses, a few boarders commented that the school does not ask for their opinions. Inspection evidence does not support this view. During discussions, boarders said that they are actively encouraged to contribute their ideas and opinions during house meetings and through school council representation. Recent suggestions have resulted in the addition of colourful wall posters to communal areas and boarders gaining the option to change into home clothes after sports on Wednesdays. Boarders feel that they can openly raise concerns and make complaints without penalty in any way. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school has an appropriate complaints policy which clearly sets out the procedures to follow and is compliant with regulatory standards. Written records show that parental concerns receive careful consideration and prompt response, and include detail of any action taken by the school. [NMS18]
- 3.22 Boarders with prefect or dorm captain responsibilities have written role descriptions to ensure that they understand their specific duties. Training and regular meetings with senior staff ensures appropriate levels of supervision to counter possible abuses of their responsibility roles. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for boarders. [NMS 20]