



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

PRIOR PARK COLLEGE

BOARDING WELFARE

INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Prior Park College

The preparatory school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	Prior Park College
DfE Number	800/6001
Registered Charity Number	281242
Address	Prior Park College Ralph Allen Drive Combe Down Bath Somerset BA2 5AH
Telephone Number	01225 835353
Fax Number	01225 835753
Email Address	info@priorpark.co.uk
Head	Mr James Murphy-O'Connor
Chair of Governors	Commodore Christopher York
Age Range	11 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	561
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (313 boys; 248 girls)
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 424
Number of Boarders	Total: 137
	Full: 88 Weekly: 49
Inspection Dates	26 Nov 2013 to 28 Nov 2013

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 December 2009 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 the chair 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 Rodney Fox

Reporting Inspector

Ms Maggie Guy

Team Inspector for Boarding
(Deputy Head, Society of Heads school)

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 SUMMARY	2
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	2
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	2
(iii) Progress since the previous inspection	2
3 COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS	3
(a) Boarding provision and care	3
(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding	4
(c) Leadership and management of the boarding provision	5

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Prior Park College is one of three schools owned by The Prior Foundation, the other two being Prior Park Preparatory School and The Paragon Junior School. The foundation is a Roman Catholic educational charity, governed by its trustees, with each school being overseen by its own advisory committee of the trustees.
- 1.2 The school's vision is to provide high quality Catholic Christian education that aims to develop as fully as possible the academic and other talents of each boy and girl, to ensure an education of the whole person in ways that are both exciting and full of opportunities, and to provide pastoral care that is encouraging, supportive and disciplined. It seeks to create an outward-looking ethos, which builds links with parents and the local community, celebrates the richness of cultures from around the world, and promotes the pupils' personal development to enable them to become confident, capable, compassionate and independent-minded adults.
- 1.3 The school, founded in 1830, occupies a Grade I listed Palladian mansion, and the grounds surrounding it, overlooking the city of Bath. It is attended by boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 19, admitting boarders from the age of 13. Three of the nine houses at Prior Park accommodate boarders, one for girls and two for boys, each with its own premises and house staff.
- 1.4 Of the 561 pupils in the school, 137 are boarders, 84 boys and 53 girls. Of these, 49 are weekly boarders. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified 68 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, all of whom receive specialist support. A total of 51 pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and receive help with their English language skills. Boarders mostly come from families with professional or business backgrounds. About two in five come from overseas. The school welcomes pupils from both Catholic and non-Catholic families who are likely to benefit from, and contribute to, its ethos.
- 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 table.

School	NC name
Lower 3	Year 7
Form 3	Year 8
Form 4	Year 9
Lower 5	Year 10
Upper 5	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. Ensure that catering committee discussions regularly focus on boarders' needs and tastes.
2. Monitor the potential risks posed by low parapets at the front of the main school building.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

2.3 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by Ofsted in December 2009. That inspection made one recommendation, concerning the repair and maintenance of flooring in some boarding accommodation. The school has responded effectively to that recommendation by replacing the flooring in the two boys' houses and by conducting a redecoration and refurnishing programme.

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 A comprehensive induction programme, including pre-visits, overnight stays, the allocation of 'buddies' and help in setting up email accounts, assists new boarders to settle. Pupils who have EAL receive additional guidance for boarders from overseas. A useful boarding handbook lists suitable adults, including the chaplain, nurses and an independent listener, to whom boarders can turn for help. Contact details for a range of helplines, including for the Children's Rights Director, are prominently displayed on house notice boards. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school has detailed medical policies and protocols. Suitable arrangements are made for boarders who are unwell. A qualified nurse is on call during day and night times, and a doctor visits weekly. Up-to-date lists of staff with first-aid qualifications are posted about the school. Medicines are stored securely in locked cupboards, in the medical centre and in houses. Medicine or homely remedies are only dispensed by those with specific authorisation. The health centre is suitably equipped and contains separate accommodation for boys and girls, with appropriate toilet and washing facilities. Boarders have access to local hospital, dental, surgery and other specialist services as necessary. The dispensing of medication is carefully recorded. Prescription labels on all medication ensure that medicine is only dispensed to the intended recipient. Boarders from overseas provide prescriptions in English. Pupils aged 16 or over may self-medicate after appropriate risk assessment and signing to acknowledge that they understand the procedure. Boarders' rights to medical confidentiality are appropriately respected. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders can easily contact family and friends in private by telephone or email and through the internet. A recent upgrade in the internet provision has improved contact for boarders. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 The accommodation provided is suitable for boarders' needs in terms of size, furniture and facilities. Boarders have appropriate rooms for working, games and television. Sixth-form boarders have personal study space. Sufficient washing facilities are appropriately private and easily accessible from bedrooms. Houses are warm and well ventilated. Some facilities for those with restricted mobility exist on the ground floors and the school is able to make reasonable adjustments as needed. All accommodation is appropriately furnished and decorated. Bedding is clean and warm. Rooms may be personalised if boarders wish to do so. Day pupils have access to the ground floors of houses, but are not allowed upstairs. There are suitable arrangements to prevent unauthorised access. Security cameras are not intrusive. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Boarders responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed concerns about the provision of food. In interviews, they recognised a noticeable recent improvement in the food, but said that it is inconsistent and does not always match their varied international tastes. Inspectors found the food to be nutritious and ample in quantity, and that it provides a suitable range of choices, including for those with particular dietary needs. The catering committee offers pupils the opportunity to relay their preferences to the caterer, but only occasionally does it focus on the boarders' needs. The school kitchens are hygienically maintained and close to the main school dining room, where all meals are taken. Boarders have appropriate access to drinking water and morning snacks. Suitably equipped house kitchens

allow boarders to prepare evening snacks: fresh fruit, bread, milk and cereal are available. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Clothing is laundered regularly, with efficient systems for returning clean items. Sixth-form boarders may do their own laundry in house washing machines, overseen by matrons. Some houses have their own small 'tuck shop', selling drinks and sweets, and personal items and stationery are readily available from a nearby village store. All boarders have safe storage for locking away valuables. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 A full programme of activities is available after school and for the 'Saturday Active' programme. Sporting fixtures mostly take place on Saturday afternoons. Suitable free time is available in the evenings each week day. Sixth-form boarders may visit Bath on Saturday evening. Access to safe recreational areas, both indoors and outdoors, is freely available, as are places where boarders can safely be alone if they choose. Boarders have easy access to national and international news through television, radio, newspapers, the internet and assemblies or evening prayers, which often reflect upon current issues or events. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 Suitable policies promote health and safety both on site and during school trips. Their operational effectiveness is closely monitored at termly meetings of the health and safety committee, and the minutes of this committee are reviewed by the governors. Thorough risk assessments are conducted before school trips and these are checked by the educational visits co-ordinator. School premises are suitably maintained so as to protect pupils' welfare, health and safety. Appropriate measures have been taken to separate moving traffic from pedestrians on the school site. The school was made aware of a potential hazard posed by the low parapets in front of the main building. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 Fire prevention policies and procedures are appropriate. Regular fire evacuation practices are conducted, including during sleeping hours. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure the regular testing and maintenance of fire safety equipment and appliances. Careful records are kept of these procedures. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The school has an effective policy to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. All staff, governors and volunteers are trained in child protection procedures as part of their induction, and training is refreshed at least every three years. The school has designated a senior member of staff as its child protection officer (CPO). The CPO receives higher level training, updated at least every two years. The governors carry out their responsibilities for reviewing the child protection policy and its effectiveness annually. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school has effective policies and procedures to promote good behaviour. In interviews, pupils confirmed that bullying is rare and that, if it does occur, the school acts promptly and appropriately to curb it. The school's code of conduct and the reward and sanctions that may be deployed are clearly set out. Clear guidance is provided as required on the use of physical restraint and for searching pupils or their possessions. All these policies comply with relevant guidance and are understood within the school community. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 The school conducts rigorous recruitment procedures to ensure the suitability of staff and other adults who may have access to pupils. All the required checks are meticulously recorded in a single central register. People over the age of 16 who

are neither pupils nor employees of the school but who live on the same premises as boarders are checked through the Disclosure and Barring Service. They are required to enter into a written agreement with the school, setting out the terms of their accommodation and the school's expectations with respect to the ways in which they conduct themselves. Visitors to boarding accommodation cannot gain entry to the houses without being admitted and escorted to the member of staff on duty. The school does not recommend guardians to parents, nor does it appoint them on behalf 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 clear statement of boarding principles and practice is provided in handbooks sent to parents, on house notice boards and on the website; and the principles outlined are evident in practice. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 The leadership and management of boarding are suitably guided by senior leadership staff, who hold weekly meetings with housemasters and housemistresses. Annual action plans are written for individual boarding houses. The boarding housemasters, housemistress and tutors are all teachers, ensuring effective links between academic and boarding staff. The housemasters and housemistress have all attended professional training in boarding provision. All required records are carefully maintained and suitably monitored. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 All adults working with boarders have suitable job descriptions and appropriate induction, through handover time, shadowing and handbook information. An effective appraisal system for all boarding staff, including matrons, ensures regular review of boarding practice and enables the identification of training and development needs. The role of spouses, partners or other adults living within boarding houses is made clear in the agreements that house staff have with the school. The number of staff in each house ensures that an identified and appropriately experienced and trained adult is on duty at all times, with access to back-up assistance if required. A clear policy for signing in and out ensures that staff know where boarders are supposed to be at all times. The school has an appropriate procedure to follow in the event that a pupil goes missing. This is known to members of staff, who understand the steps that should be taken. At least one member of staff sleeps in each boarding house overnight, takes responsibility for the boarders in the house and is easily contactable during the night if needed. Staff accommodation is appropriately separated from that of the boarders. Boarders do not enter staff accommodation except in groups. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 The school ethos is one that values the individuality of pupils. The school has suitable policies to promote equality of opportunity and these are seen to be effective throughout the school community. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Boarders have a range of ways in which to contribute and to make their views and concerns known. Each boarding house has a suggestions box and a house committee, with members of every year group represented. Boarders may express their views with confidence that they will not be penalised for so doing. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school has a suitable complaints policy that meets the relevant regulations. Scrutiny of files confirms that parents' concerns and complaints are dealt with promptly and with due diligence. [NMS 18]

- 3.22 The school does not have a formal prefect system, but Year 13 boarders are all involved in the efficient management of the school. A few have roles as heads of house or on committees charged with representing pupil views on, for example, catering, the environment, and house or school management. These roles are clearly defined, taken seriously, offer no scope for abuse and provide appropriate opportunities for boarders' opinions and concerns to be brought to the attention of the school's senior management. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings on behalf of parents. [NMS 20]