



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

MILL HILL SCHOOL

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Mill Hill School

Full Name of School	Mill Hill School
DfE Number	302/6000
Registered Charity Number	1064758
Address	The Ridgeway Mill Hill London NW7 1QS
Telephone Number	020 8959 1176
Fax Number	020 8201 0663
Email Address	office@millhill.org.uk
Head	Dr Dominic Lockett
Chair of Governors	Dr Roger Chapman
Age Range	13 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	657
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (444 boys; 213 girls)
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 537
Number of Boarders	Total: 120
	Full: 74 Weekly: 46
Inspection Dates	17 Mar 2015 to 19 Mar 2015

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) 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.

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 designated governor for boarding and safeguarding, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and attended tutor 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 Timothy Holgate

Reporting Inspector

Miss Yvonne Powell

Team Inspector for Boarding (Head, GSA school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Founded in 1807 by a committee of non-conformist merchants and ministers, Mill Hill School is a mixed boarding and day school for pupils from the ages of 13 to 18, situated in north west London. It is part of a foundation that also includes a preparatory and pre-preparatory school on adjoining sites. Its buildings, including the original neo-classical mansion and a range of newer buildings, are set within 120 acres of parkland. Initially a boys' school, Mill Hill welcomed girls into the sixth form in 1975 and became fully co-educational in 1997. The three schools have a common governing body who are the proprietors and trustees of the foundation. Mill Hill School has three co-educational boarding houses a short distance from the main school campus. Two of them, Burton Bank and Ridgeway, accommodate boys of all ages and sixth-form girls, while the third, Collinson, accommodates boys and girls across the full age range.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide excellence in education which supports pupils in the passage from childhood towards adulthood. It seeks to develop in them self-discipline, responsibility, spiritual and moral values, and a pride in themselves and their own achievements. Since the previous inspection, the school has abolished compulsory Saturday morning lessons and created a programme of activities for boarders. It has also introduced weekly boarding. In 2013, the foundation acquired the nearby Mount School which has now closed; it is intended that it will re-open in September 2015 as the foundation's fourth school, a co-educational boarding school for international pupils from the ages of 13 to 16.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the school educated 657 pupils, 444 boys and 213 girls. Of these, 120 were full or weekly boarders, including 84 boys and 36 girls. Most of the pupils come from professional and business families. Day pupils are drawn from north London and the surrounding Home Counties and represent the broad ethnic mix of the capital. Sixty-seven boarders come from overseas, primarily from Europe and the Far East; altogether, thirty-six different countries are represented.
- 1.4 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 table.

School	NC name
Fourth Form	Year 9
Remove	Year 10
Fifth Form	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 2013.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Consider separating the roles of counsellor and independent listener.

(iii) Progress since the previous inspection

- 2.2 The previous boarding welfare inspection was undertaken by ISI in March 2012. No boarding recommendations were made.

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 New boarders receive an effective and carefully planned programme of induction, starting before they arrive and continuing through their first weeks in the house. New boarders are assigned a mentor to provide support and advice. Boarders identify a range of trusted adults to whom they can turn for help and guidance. Contact details of helplines, including that of the Children's Commissioner, are provided. Boarders are also familiar with the identity of the independent listener but she is introduced to them as the school counsellor. Her twin roles are thus somewhat blurred. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school maintains a full range of suitable medical and healthcare policies. An interactive electronic medical database provides a comprehensive record of pupils' consultations and treatment, and is accessible by both house matrons and the medical centre. The needs of those with chronic medical conditions are shared with relevant staff and suitable healthcare plans are drawn up. A small but appropriate central in-patient facility is available for both genders. Medical care is provided by three nurses, with additional cover from a nurse matron and a telephone triage service. Boarders have access in school to both a male and a female doctor. Local access to dental and optical services is available. Administration of prescribed medication is carefully controlled and appropriate assessment is undertaken for pupils to self-medicate. Nursing staff demonstrate a clear understanding of confidentiality, balancing pupils' wishes with the need to ensure their health and safety. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 Boarders are able to contact family and friends using a private telephone, their own mobile telephones and the internet. Inconsistency in the quality and viability of the wireless network connection in houses is acknowledged by the school, and steps are being taken to try to solve this. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Boarding houses are suitably furnished and all have facilities for study. Younger boarders share bedrooms, and the oldest generally have single rooms. Sleeping accommodation is appropriately separated by gender. Many boarders personalise their living space. They have comfortable common rooms and games rooms in which to relax. Visitors to the house are only allowed access to communal areas. Security surveillance equipment does not affect boarders' privacy. Toilet and washing facilities are light, clean and suitably maintained, and provide appropriate privacy. Accommodation is adequately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and decorated. Routine maintenance is effective. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 Meals are sufficient in quantity and quality and are varied and nutritious, with suitable choices available. Boarders are consulted about the planning of the menus and special dietary needs are met. A minority of boarders expressed dissatisfaction in questionnaire responses about the food and availability of snacks. Inspection evidence does not support this view. The catering facilities are hygienic, and due care and attention are given to food preparation regulations. In the evenings, a range of snacks is available to boarders in the house and they have facilities to prepare their own. [NMS 8]
- 3.7 The laundry arrangements are efficient, providing a 24-hour service for the return of clean clothes. Washing and drying facilities are also available to boarders in houses, and are well used. Boarders obtain items of stationery in school, and have

controlled access to local shops for personal shopping. They are provided with lockable storage in their rooms, and staff look after valuable items such as passports. [NMS 9]

- 3.8 Evidence does not support the view expressed by a small minority of boarders in their responses to the questionnaire about unstructured time and activities. They have an appropriate balance between organised activities and free time. Boarders are generally pleased with the provision of evening and weekend activities, which include in-house events and trips to places of entertainment and cultural interest, as well as the formal Saturday morning activities programme. Boarders have access to numerous indoor and outdoor facilities, and there are places where they can be quiet or alone if they wish. Television, newspapers and the internet enable them to be aware of events in the world outside school. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school meets all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The effective implementation of relevant policies and procedures ensures boarders' health and safety. The school premises, including the boarding accommodation, are maintained to a standard whereby, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, welfare and safety of all pupils are safeguarded. Thorough risk assessments cover life in the school, activities and trips further afield. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 A fire risk assessment is carried out by external consultants covering all areas of the school. Monthly audits of fire prevention systems identify any concerns and issues for action. Clear procedures for evacuation and fire drills are routinely practised. External firms service all systems and equipment regularly. Boarding houses carry out at least one fire drill each term in 'boarding time'. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The safeguarding policy confirms that the welfare of pupils is suitably promoted. Higher level training for designated staff and refresher training for all other staff are up to date and carefully logged. A nominated governor carries out a comprehensive review of child protection procedures and practice, which is then discussed and formally agreed by the full board. Staff know what to do if they receive an allegation or have concerns about a pupil's welfare. The school makes prompt and effective contact with local agencies when needed, and internet safety is promoted well among pupils. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 Effective policies deal with bullying and promote good behaviour. Rewards and sanctions are effectively logged, analysed and monitored by senior staff. Sanctions escalate with the severity of misdemeanour, and are predominantly proportionate and consistent. The required policies on restraint and searching pupils are clear. Procedures have regard to relevant guidance and are known by pupils and staff, and implemented effectively. The issue raised in a minority of pupils' responses to the questionnaire concerning sanctions and rewards clearly referred to the way in which they are handled in the main school rather than in boarding provision. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 Safe recruitment procedures are well known, understood and efficiently managed. Checks are carried out correctly and are accurately recorded in the single central register. Additional family members over the age of sixteen living in boarding houses have an enhanced criminal record check and sign an accommodation agreement. Entry of unchecked adults to boarding houses is carefully controlled. The school does not arrange 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 comprehensive boarding handbook outlines suitable statements of boarding principles and practice, and is made available to parents, pupils and staff. The atmosphere and relationships in the houses demonstrate that these principles work in practice. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Effective leadership and management of boarding promote pupils' welfare and well-being, and benefit from regular consultation between house parents and senior leaders. Detailed manuals for boarding staff, tutors and matrons enable consistent practice to be achieved, as well as helping houses to develop their own identity. House parents evaluate the effectiveness of their houses and set targets for improvement. House tutors provide continuity between boarders' academic and pastoral lives. Boarding staff have appropriate expertise and experience. All required records are kept efficiently and monitored regularly. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Boarding staff have job descriptions and their roles and responsibilities are clear. Induction for newly appointed staff is thorough and appraisal is efficiently organised. Boarding staff, especially matrons, undertake professional development related to their role. Competent staff are well deployed in sufficient numbers. Duty rotas are clearly displayed and boarders know who is responsible for them. Regular checks and roll calls, and lists for signing in and out, enable staff to monitor boarders' whereabouts. The missing pupil policy is effectively implemented if needed. Overnight staff cover is always sufficient and boarders confirm that it is easy to contact any of the resident staff at night. Suitable self-contained accommodation is provided for resident staff, and boarders' access to this is appropriate and suitably controlled. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Appropriate policies to promote equal opportunities are successfully implemented. The community spirit in houses helps to guard against discrimination or intolerance and the care given by staff is sensitive to the needs of the boarders. The philosophy of boarding is to promote diversity and this is enhanced by the presence of pupils from 36 overseas countries. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 The school provides many opportunities for pupils to express their views and share opinions about boarding, including school, house and boarders' councils, and the anti-bullying and food committees. Published minutes and the views of those spoken to indicate that these work effectively and achieve worthwhile outcomes for boarders. This evidence does not support the contrary view expressed by a minority of boarders in their responses to the questionnaire. Pupils also feel comfortable in expressing their views directly to staff. There is a published procedure for pupils to raise concerns, resolve worries or make a complaint. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The complaints policy for parents is easily available. The number of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire was extremely small. A very small minority of those who did respond raised a view that their concerns are not handled well. The inspection found that concerns and complaints from parents are efficiently logged, with appropriate recording of investigations, actions taken and further follow up of any issues. [NMS 18]
- 3.22 Boarders' leadership roles rest primarily with heads of house and house prefects. House prefect teams may comprise the entire year group if Year 13 numbers are small. Generally, house prefects are clear about their roles and responsibilities; they receive briefing and guidance when new in post, and refresher training half way

through the year, although this varies slightly across the houses. Heads of house and prefects do not award sanctions, but can, and do, report misbehaviour to house staff. [NMS 19]

3.23 The school does not arrange lodgings. [NMS 20]