



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ELMHURST SCHOOL FOR DANCE

**BOARDING WELFARE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	Elmhurst School for Dance
DfE Number	330/6111
Registered Charity Number	1040286
Address	Elmhurst School for Dance 247 Bristol Road Edgbaston Birmingham West Midlands B5 7UH
Telephone Number	0121 4726655
Fax Number	0121 4726654
Email Address	enquiries@elmhurstdance.co.uk
Principal	Miss Jessica Ward
Chair of Governors	Mr Roy Shields
Age Range	11 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	185
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (65 boys; 120 girls)
Numbers by Age	11-19: 185
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 47
Number of Boarders	Total: 138
	Full: 138 Weekly: 0
Inspection dates	20 Mar 2012 to 22 Mar 2012

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing primarily on compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. 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 October 2008 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding 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.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors conducted formal interviews with boarders, held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and the governors with responsibility for boarding and child protection, observed a sample of the dance activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended tutor periods. 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

Mrs Elizabeth Coley

Mr Tim Dewes

Mrs Deborah Newman

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of Classics,
HMC school)

Team Inspector for Boarding (Vice-Principal,
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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 last 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 Elmhurst School for Dance is a co-educational boarding and day school for pupils from the ages of 11 to 19. Its mission is to provide a world-renowned centre of excellence for the training and education of dancers. The school aims to give students a sound knowledge of allied dance genres, a quality academic education, and a principled, caring living and working environment, which combine to provide a solid foundation for their life-long learning. It is run as a charitable trust, administered by a board of governors.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1923 in Camberley as a vocational school for the performing arts. In 2004, it relocated to purpose-built premises in Birmingham and became one of only two specialist ballet schools in the UK. It has a partnership agreement with the Birmingham Royal Ballet, with some shared teaching, marketing and performance arrangements. The school is situated on a five-acre site and includes seven dance studios, a theatre, library, music rooms, classrooms and living accommodation. Four of the five boarding houses are on site and pupils are accommodated in twin or single rooms. The fifth boarding house, Lyndhurst, is for Year 12 pupils and is approximately two miles away. Pupils in Years 13 and 14 live in student accommodation in the area arranged directly by their parents. Pupils conclude their A-level studies in Year 13, and in Year 14 complete their dancing diploma. Most pupils leave the school at the end of Year 14 and go on to enter a wide range of national and international dance companies.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 185 pupils on the roll, of whom 65 were boys and 120 were girls. One hundred and thirty-eight pupils are boarders who come from around the UK with a small cluster of international pupils. Day pupils attend from Birmingham and the West Midlands. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds. Amongst the boarders, 18 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), but none has a statement of special educational needs. Nine boarders are learning English as an additional language (EAL), and seven receive support for their acquisition of the language. Twenty-seven pupils come from a minority ethnic background. The current principal was appointed in September 2010.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the sixth form and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
6.1	Year 12
6.2	Year 13
6.3	Year 14

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.1 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011, and therefore it must:
- ensure that enough toilets are available for boarders in Mortimer house [National Minimum Standard 5.1, under Boarding accommodation];
 - provide lockable protection for boarders' personal possessions [National Minimum Standard 9.3, under Boarders' possessions];
 - in future ensure that the necessary recruitment checks are carried out on all staff before they are appointed [National Minimum Standard 14.1, under Staff recruitment and checks on other adults; and, for the same reason, National Minimum Standard 11, under Child protection].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.2 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that boarders have direct input into the school's catering arrangements, including reflecting the diverse cultures of boarders.
 2. Develop further the new links across the dance, academic and pastoral faculties so that boarders' welfare needs are central to the work of the school.
 3. Provide more outdoor recreational equipment for the younger boarders.

(iii) Progress since the last inspection

- 2.3 Good progress has been made in most of the ten areas identified for improvement at the time of the previous Ofsted inspection. These aspects covered: confidentiality of personal information; the child protection policy; written risk assessments; contact with parents and families; satisfactory accommodation; consistency in the application of sanctions; the provision of sufficient staffing for weekend activities; and staff training. Issues concerning recruitment of staff and outdoor recreational facilities are not yet fully resolved.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

3.(a) Boarding provision and care

- 3.1 The school does not meet all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.2 The induction process for new pupils and their parents begins on the day of their audition and continues until they arrive at the school. Before they begin, pupils receive a handbook which gives details of the house to which they have been allocated and its routines. Within the handbook is a list of people they may contact should they want guidance or support, including independent listeners, and boarders confirm that they have someone to whom they can turn. Other telephone numbers of national organisations are also published in the telephone booths in each house and posted around the school. [NMS 2]
- 3.3 The school has, and implements, appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell. Any boarders who are ill are looked after in suitable accommodation by the qualified nurses who offer 24-hour care, including dealing with medical emergencies, supported by many qualified first aiders on the staff and appropriate policies. The nurses oversee the administration of medicines, both prescribed and household, which are recorded appropriately. Risk assessments are carried out on those who self-medicate. Medical records and personal information are kept confidentially, an improvement since the previous inspection. Twice-weekly surgeries are arranged with local doctors and a wide range of other health professionals is consulted as required. [NMS 3]
- 3.4 In line with a previous inspection recommendation, many boarders, including those from overseas, now have daily electronic contact with their parents and each house has coin-operated telephone booths. [NMS 4]
- 3.5 Accommodation for boarders is arranged in twin or single study bedrooms. Whilst the toilets and bathing facilities give appropriate privacy, not enough toilets are provided in Mortimer house for the number of pupils accommodated. The furnishings are suitable and the school has done much since the previous inspection to try to bring all houses up to the same standard as far as possible, although there is still some variation in quality. The school is continuing to implement a programme of maintenance and refurbishment of the boarding accommodation. Some rooms with special adaptations have been designated for any pupil who is disabled. Boys and girls reside in separate areas and staff flats are provided within each house. Common rooms have comfortable furniture, televisions, board and electronic games. Boarders personalise their rooms with their own chosen artefacts and have appropriate areas for study. Access to the boarding accommodation is tightly controlled but security arrangements do not intrude on pupils' privacy. [NMS 5]
- 3.6 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a significant number of boarders were critical about the food provided, but inspectors do not agree with their views. Provision is made for particular dietary requirements and boarders are given three main meals each day which are nutritious, with water continuously available. However, there is no way in which boarders can contribute their ideas for menus, and insufficient attention is given to providing food representing the cultures of overseas pupils who attend the school. Boarders can make their own snacks in their house kitchens in the evenings. Kitchen facilities for the preparation and serving of food are hygienic. [NMS 8]

- 3.7 Each house has its own laundry, and boarders' clothing and bedding is laundered, stored and returned to the correct pupil. Sixth-form pupils in Lyndhurst attend to their own washing. Pupils obtain personal items and stationery either through their house-parents or at the weekend when they sometimes have opportunity to shop for themselves. Whilst boarders are provided with facilities for securely storing valuables, these have not been adequately maintained, an issue raised by pupils in their pre-inspection questionnaire. [NMS 9]
- 3.8 Another issue raised by boarders was the range of activities provided at the weekends, which inspectors believe is generally adequate. During the week, their daily routines as dancers are relatively heavy, and their time in the evenings is rightly designated as free time, with very few organised activities. This enables them to have an appropriate balance which does not compromise their welfare. Since the previous inspection, the school has purchased more equipment for the houses and provided more staff on duty to enable a range of activities to be organised at the weekends. However, there is currently not enough recreational equipment for the younger boarders to use outdoors. Pupils can use their study bedrooms as a place to enjoy their own company. Apart from their continual access to laptops, world news and current affairs are regularly discussed in tutor periods. [NMS 10]

3.(b) Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding

- 3.9 The school does not meet all of the NMS under this section.
- 3.10 The arrangements for ensuring that boarders are protected from harm are well organised, with risk assessments covering all aspects of safety and comprehensive records being kept; this is an improved position since the previous inspection. All maintenance checks are carried out regularly. [NMS 6]
- 3.11 The school minimises the risk of fire by carrying out regular fire drills during boarding time, undertaking an annual review of the fire risk assessment and maintaining all fire equipment in good order. [NMS 7]
- 3.12 The child protection policy is suitable in content, an improvement since the previous inspection, and is implemented appropriately on a day-to-day basis. However, there has been some difficulty with staff recruitment checks in the past, although arrangements now meet guidance. The nurses as designated officers for child protection have had their training updated recently and all staff including ancillary and volunteers are trained at least every three years. The governors undertake their annual responsibility for reviewing the policy, procedures and the efficiency with which duties are carried out. [NMS 11]
- 3.13 The school has a written policy to promote good behaviour, which includes rewards and sanctions. It links to the anti-bullying policy, school rules, guidance for physical contact and restraint, and the arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions. A new system of merits and consequences is currently being introduced, and the school is adjusting to these arrangements. All staff, pupils and parents have access to the policy and staff have made stronger efforts to apply rewards and sanctions more fairly across both genders and all boarding houses since the previous inspection. [NMS 12]
- 3.14 Staff recruitment has not always been carried out with sufficient rigour in the past, a continuing problem since the previous inspection, with some required checks not undertaken on staff before they began work at the school. However, all staff have been checked with the Criminal Records Bureau and all procedures have now been

completed as far as it is possible to do so. A central register of appointments is kept. Written agreements with adult members of staff households residing on site are ready to be completed to ensure the safety of pupils should this situation arise. Procedures ensure visitors are not allowed unsupervised access to boarders or their accommodation. A few boarders have parents living overseas and their families make their own arrangements for guardians in the UK. [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 The ethos of the boarding provision is published within the school's documentation on their website. The statement of principles and practice is reflected in the provision made for the boarders. [NMS 1]
- 3.17 Currently, the principal oversees boarding provision and, together with the house-parents and assistant house-parents, demonstrates clear management and leadership, as seen in the self-review process recently undertaken and the boarding objectives within the whole-school strategic plan. Some of the boarding staff are also involved in the academic life of the school, and this year cross-faculty communication meetings have been instigated, so that staff can track pupils' progress in all aspects of school life and share strengths and areas of concern. However, these are not yet fully embedded in the school's practice. Senior boarding staff are well qualified and experienced, and others are undertaking relevant training. All appropriate records are kept and monitored by the school, with any resulting action being taken as necessary. [NMS 13]
- 3.18 Boarding staff have job descriptions reflecting their responsibilities and are given induction training on appointment. They participate in performance management review and have opportunities for professional development, including in the areas of health and safety, child protection, first aid and food preparation, representing an improvement since the previous inspection. Sufficient staff supervise boarders outside teaching time and pupils know who is responsible. Staff are aware of where boarders are at all times and know what to do in the unlikely event that a boarder should go missing. Two adults reside in each house and pupils can contact at least one easily during the night. Whilst a small minority of boarders perceived a lack of fairness in their questionnaire responses, no evidence from records confirmed this point of view. Access to staff is only possible in the house office and not in their personal accommodation. [NMS 15]
- 3.19 Staff understand that discrimination on any grounds is not acceptable and evidence shows that they are sensitive to the needs of individual pupils. It was observed that special care is given to pupils who are less mobile and staff discussions and records about the individual needs of boarders are thorough. [NMS 16]
- 3.20 Pupils know how to raise concerns and make complaints which they can do without being penalised in any way. The school council is the main vehicle for this. Most boarders can also approach their house staff during house meetings but this practice is not consistent across houses. The school carried out a survey three months ago and is gradually responding to the views put forward. [NMS 17]
- 3.21 The school's complaints policy is available on the website and makes clear the procedure to be followed. It has not been needed in the last two years. [NMS 18]

- 3.22 The school has a prefect system within houses and a pupil leadership team in the sixth form. Members of both of these have specific written duties and know that any difficulties encountered with other pupils are to be reported to the appropriate house staff for them to resolve. [NMS 19]
- 3.23 The school does not arrange long-stay lodgings for its pupils; the school makes it clear that these arrangements are made directly by the parents for pupils in Years 13 and 14. [NMS 20]