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of Prep Schools

IAPS

Report of Diagnostic Review Inspection Visit

to

Pembroke House

by an

IAPS Review Team

from

9th – 11th October 2011

IAPS DIAGNOSTIC REVIEW INSPECTION VISIT

REPORT ON

Pembroke House

Full name of school: Pembroke House

Address: PO Box 31, Gilgil 20116, Kenya

Telephone Number: +254 720476633

Email Address: headmistress@pembrokehouse.sc.ke

Head teacher: Mrs Deborah Boyd-Moss

Chairman of the Board of Governors: Mr Richard Fernandes

Age Range: 2 – 13 years

Gender: Mixed

Inspection Dates: 9th – 11th October 2011

The review does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The reviewers check the general health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter; they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their review of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features. Reviewers do not check in detail the school's compliance with prevailing regulations, nor have they been asked to comment on governance.

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1. Background to the school

- 1.1 Pembroke House School was founded in 1927 as a boys' preparatory school by Harold Turner, a Cambridge graduate who named the new school after his old college, Pembroke. Pembroke House is located in rural Gilgil, an hour and a half outside Nairobi on the road to Nakuru, high in the Great Rift Valley. Since 1959 the school has been a non-profit-making charity, Kenya Educational Trust Ltd, which is limited by guarantee with no shareholding and operates as a non-profit making company with all surpluses being reinvested to the school. The trust has a Council consisting of between eight and thirteen members. Girls have admitted to the school since 1988.
- 1.2 Currently the school has 167 pupils, consisting of 83 boys and 84 girls aged between six and thirteen, all of whom are boarders. In addition there are thirteen day pupils in the pre-prep aged between two and five. The 34 pupils who have been identified with special educational need (SEN) receive specialist support. Many pupils speak more than one language, but none at present need support for English as an additional language.
- 1.3 Entry to the school is non-selective. 72% of the pupils are of Caucasian descent, with 28% being of African or Indo-Asian backgrounds. The boarders come from a very wide geographical area.
- 1.4 The school is divided into four houses named after previous headmasters – Turners, Hazards, Opies and Fosters. Of particular note in the school is the Christina Chapel. Standing in the centre of the school the Chapel was built by the boys. The then Headmaster, Christopher Hazard, sat the pupils down to determine the necessary size of the Chapel. Having drawn around the group of boys and teachers, the boys then constructed the chapel by themselves between lessons. In due course the Chapel has been extended, but remains at the heart of the school.
- 1.5 The school's fundamental aims are to help each child develop to the very best of their ability, to use confidence and self-belief engendered in one discipline to drive progress in other areas; to give children a sound education across the spectrum of the curriculum; to develop balanced children with integrity and good manners; to help children develop respect and tolerance for all around them; to produce children who work well as a team but enjoy making decisions and are not afraid to take the lead; and to be a responsive boarding school but with every effort made to encourage and keep the majority taking up full boarding.
- 1.6 English National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. Pupils' standards and their attitudes to work and learning

- 2.1 Overall, the standard of pupils' achievements is good. Pupils apply their knowledge, skills and understanding effectively across the curriculum. They speak with confidence, and listen carefully to adults and each other, although there is a very wide ability range. Most pupils can read fluently and have well-developed numeracy skills, for example applying mathematical skills in a Year 5 geography lesson to locate points and measure distances on a map.
- 2.2 Pupils follow a challenging curriculum, in accordance with the aim of the school to help each child develop to the very best of their ability, and by the end of Year 8 the majority of pupils gain places at selective schools in the United Kingdom (UK), Kenya or South Africa, often achieving scholarships or high scores in Common Entrance Examinations. Pupils' progress is at least good, and often rapid, aided by small class sizes and specialist teachers. The school follows with interest the secondary education of its former pupils, many of whom go on to hold positions of responsibility at their senior schools.
- 2.3 Team and individual sporting successes are evident, with under 9, under 11 and under 13 teams representing the school. At all three levels, boys and girls play in matches and if there are sufficient pupils, A, B and C teams play at each level. Pupils are successful in the individual music examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and in the drama examinations of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.
- 2.4 Attitudes to learning are exemplary. Pupils approach every task with cheerful enthusiasm, concentrate well and persevere when work is challenging. They take pride in the presentation of written work. They collaborate well, for example in work in pairs in a Year 4 music lesson and in a Year 8 mathematics lesson when calculating areas and perimeters.

3. The curriculum

- 3.1 Overall, the school offers an outstanding curriculum which is broad and well balanced. Based around a core of English and mathematics, it offers pupils the opportunity in a range of other subjects, including science, French, geography, history, religious studies, Latin, Kiswahili and classical studies. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a discreet subject until Year 7 and all pupils have lessons in art, music, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and physical education (PE). Swimming is also part of the curriculum up to Year 6 and the teaching of games has a prominent part in the weekly programme for all pupils. In the pre-prep, the curriculum is based around the six areas of learning of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).
- 3.2 Pupils are taught in parallel classes up to Year 4 and are then divided by general academic ability from Year 5. This makes a positive contribution to the opportunities pupils have to make the most of the curriculum. Well-supervised evening prep sessions for pupils in Year 4 and above give valuable scope to

develop independent study skills. The music school is a relatively new part of the school, and each week about 100 individual lessons are given by a team of visiting music teachers.

- 3.3 Pupils with SEN are well supported by a strong learning support department based in the Coach House, with specialist teaching that enables them to benefit from the curriculum. In addition, assistants give very effective support in lessons when necessary. Pupils have clear individual education plans (IEPs) to assist with their learning and they spoke extremely highly of the support that they receive. Provision is also made within the curriculum for gifted and talented pupils, through recently introduced specialist scholarship classes in Year 8 which consider specific requirements for entrance to senior schools in the UK and elsewhere. They also help to give pupils a broader view of the world. At the time of the review visit, part of this scheme was provided by a tutor from a UK independent senior school, at Pembroke House on an eight-week secondment. The curriculum is augmented by special events, including World Book Day, an inter-school poetry competition, online international mathematics competitions and other themed, cross-curricular initiatives.
- 3.4 Overall, the curriculum is entirely appropriate to the age and ability of the pupils. Curriculum planning takes account of the specific needs of those of all abilities, and includes extension work where required. Sound planning contributes to the overall success of the curriculum, although some inconsistencies occur in the documentation between and within departments. Regular, minuted meetings take place, involving senior management and heads of subject departments, to discuss issues involving the curriculum. This has led to a number of new initiatives, such as a new integrated English scheme for the younger pupils. Other significant plans are in place to enhance the curriculum still further.

4. Extra-curricular activities

- 4.1 The provision of extra-curricular activities is outstanding and makes a significant overall contribution to the lives of the pupils. A wide range of both formal and informal activities is run by dedicated staff. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about horse-riding, skateboarding, 'Saracens and Crusaders' played on the slopes of a nearby hill, Scottish country dancing, jewellery making, tae kwondo, woodwork, water sliding and games run by the gap students. The regular, whole school swimming event known as 'Boats' is a great favourite amongst the pupils, fostering competition and team spirit. Extra-curricular opportunities abound throughout the week and at the busy weekends, with numerous outings and trips off-site, such as the recent Year 6 team building experience at Malewa.
- 4.2 The facilities for extra-curricular activities are excellent. These include extensive grounds with numerous pitches and woodland, a heated outdoor swimming pool, a large sports hall, an assault course, an outdoor chessboard and a skateboard half-pipe. A large number of staff are involved in the organisation of extra-curricular activities. Teaching staff receive excellent help from a 'super gap'

(graduate student), gap students (recent school leavers), sports assistants and other specialist coaches.

5. Teaching and assessment

- 5.1 The overall quality of teaching is good. In many of the lessons teaching is outstanding. Pace is rapid with frequent changes of task to maintain the pupils' interest; teachers have the highest expectations for work and behaviour, and plan very carefully for the needs and learning styles of each individual pupil. On other occasions teaching is only just satisfactory, and in a few cases it is unsatisfactory. Where lessons are less successful, in some cases all pupils carry out the same tasks, which are too difficult for some and insufficiently challenging for others. Sometimes teachers have low expectations or do not plan in sufficient detail.
- 5.2 Teachers mark pupils work promptly, but in a wide variety of styles, not always in accordance with the school's current marking policy. In a few cases marking is outstanding, with plenty of praise and targets for short-term improvement. However, in too many of the books and folders scrutinised, marking was seen to be perfunctory, and did not indicate how the pupil may improve and make progress. In interviews pupils said that the marking by some teachers is very helpful, but that this is not universal.
- 5.3 Assessment takes various forms, and in some cases influences future planning, but information on assessment is recorded in many different documents kept in a variety of places, making it difficult to track individual pupils' progress over time, or to enable teachers to ensure that every pupil is able to make optimum progress.

6. Pastoral care, welfare, health and safety

- 6.1 Overall, the arrangements for pastoral care, welfare, health and safety for pupils in the school are good. Pupils are surrounded by adults who are dedicated to their needs and to nurturing their development. Relationships with staff are very strong and pupils have great loyalty to their school, describing it as 'their extended family'. Pupils have a very good sense of community, fostered through the house system that is a positive part of the rewards and sanctions system that pupils said was administered fairly. The behaviour of the pupils is almost invariably good, and they are polite, open and approachable.
- 6.2 From the pre-prep through to Year 4, pupils have a form teacher. From Year 5, pupils have tutors who are responsible for individual pastoral care and personal development and know their allocated pupils extremely well. The intention is that tutors will be assigned for the full final four years that each pupil attends the school, but new staff appointments often prevent this. Regular meetings take place to discuss each individual pupil. Pupils said that they feel safe and are well looked after. Beyond the teaching staff is a strong network of other staff to which pupils can go if they wish. Discrepancies and anomalies exist in some

policies, which do not always fully reflect current practice. This leads to inconsistencies in levels of care, particularly if new staff are not fully acquainted with actual procedures. Year 8 pupils have the opportunity to be appointed as prefects, and then have the added responsibility for supervising other pupils. They meet regularly with the headmistress to discuss issues that arise, and showed an impressive maturity in exercising their duties.

- 6.3 Good measures are in place for safeguarding pupils in the school. A designated child protection officer and deputy are in place and have received appropriate training from UK safeguarding specialists. Most staff have received training in child protection, and there is a positive atmosphere of safeguarding within the school. There is also a designated member of Council with oversight of safeguarding. The deputy child protection officer is also responsible for PSHE. A well-developed programme makes use of external agencies to deliver more specialised guidance to pupils. A well-placed 'problem box' enables pupils to communicate confidentially with the deputy child protection officer. Pupils relate extremely well to each other and show real care. The anti-bullying policy is comprehensive and pupils reported that any rare potential incidents of bullying were dealt with quickly and appropriately by staff. Pupils did not see it as an area of concern at their school.
- 6.4 The provision for health and safety is good. The overall security of the site is a priority and a substantial, electric fence surrounds the perimeter, meaning that pupils may freely and safely move between the various buildings within the site. The single access point from the road to the school is staffed around the clock to monitor arrivals and departures and security patrols take place, including at night. The designated health and safety officer carries out regular checks to identify issues and a designated member reports to Council.
- 6.5 Medical provision is excellent. The secure and well-equipped surgery is located adjacent to two separate rooms designated for pupils who are unwell. The medical staff are extremely caring and well-qualified. They are able to attend to most medical issues including minor surgery. Good relationships have also been forged with more specialised medical assistance including the flying doctor service. The school doctor holds a weekly clinic. Many other staff are also trained in first aid, including some with paediatric qualifications.
- 6.6 Fire precautions receive prominent attention and fire practices are held regularly, including at times when the boarders are asleep. Staff and Year 8 pupils receive appropriate training in fire-fighting and there is an appointed fire officer.
- 6.7 Food at the school is good and the diet is balanced and healthy. Three main meals a day can be supplemented by snacks, and pupils said that cocoa before bedtime is a great favourite. The pupils exercise regularly both formally through the games and activities programmes, but also because of the magnificent outdoor life that they are able to live at the school.

7. The quality of leadership and management

- 7.1 Overall the quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headmistress works tirelessly for the good of the school and knows every member of the community as an individual. She is ably assisted by the various members of the senior management team, although no job descriptions are in place, and it is not always clear where responsibilities fall.
- 7.2 A system for staff appraisal is in place, but as yet not all staff have been appraised. In addition, the system does not yet provide for robust or rigorous monitoring of the standards of teaching and learning.
- 7.3 Documentation is variable in quality and substance. During the review visit, the staff handbook in particular was found to co-exist in a number of editions, none of which was entirely up to date, although new staff had been required as part of their contract to confirm that they had received and read this document.
- 7.4 The headmistress and the council of trustees have exciting plans for the future, and have drawn up a document outlining immediate projects and longer-term developments leading up to the school's centenary in 2027.
- 7.5 The school makes every effort to attract and appoint staff of the highest calibre, although this is not always easy. Turnover of teaching staff is higher than would be usual in the UK, partly due to the fact that staff from other countries are only able to obtain permits to work in Kenya for two years at a time. All appropriate checks are made in relevant countries to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children.
- 7.6 A dedicated team of support staff makes an invaluable contribution to the success of the school, including the newly-created position of commercial director.

8. Boarding

- 8.1 The provision for boarding is outstanding. It is the cornerstone of the school and makes an all-embracing contribution to the overall education and development of the pupils.
- 8.2 Separate, well equipped accommodation is provided for boys and girls. Each boarding house is staffed by a housemaster or housemistress as well as a resident assistant, who are supported by other members of the teaching staff and a good number of gap students. In addition, the majority of staff live on site and play a full part in the welfare of the boarders. Pupils sleep in dormitory areas for about six pupils, with Year 8 boarding prefects located alongside younger pupils to help look after them. The committed and experienced staff are instrumental in creating the happy and safe environment in which the pupils live and thrive. The school is considered by pupils a 'home from home', but the

boarding houses are run in an appropriately disciplined and structured fashion. Routine is adhered to and the rhythm and balance of the day gives pupils confidence and makes them feel secure. The dormitory areas are safe, clean and well-maintained. Pupils are respectful and tolerant and are well mannered, thoughtful and organised individuals, as seen by a younger boarder who was using his initiative one evening to collect the necessary items of sports kit for the following day. The school achieves the delicate balance between childhood and a more sophisticated life and a refreshing maturity is evident, created by the boarding experience. There is a real sense of fun and camaraderie, permeating through the whole school community.

- 8.3 Pupils are able to maintain contact with their parents at well-considered times via their personal mobile phones and school email accounts. They also have a formal weekly opportunity to write a letter. Parents can communicate directly with relevant staff, who are always available to discuss any issues that may have arisen. Informative guidance is provided for parents and, initially, any new pupils are supported by more experienced boarders.
- 8.4 Pupils can go out with parents or friends at the weekend, but for those who opt to stay at school they enjoy a further array of activities, including a Saturday DVD night at a local club which takes them into the community. Popular trips are arranged at weekends, for example lengthy walks or trips to Nairobi for ice-skating or bowling.

9. Overall conclusions and recommendations

- 9.1 Pembroke House School provides a particularly good quality of education for its pupils. Pupils have exemplary attitudes to their work, and this contributes to their success in achieving entry to selective senior schools, often with scholarships. The positive and cheerful outlook of the vast majority of pupils is infectious. Progress by all pupils is always good or better, including by pupils with learning difficulties, who are enabled to realise their full potential. Good teaching plays an invaluable part in this success, with much excellent practice evident, although not all teachers currently maintain the highest standards observed in some lessons, and the quality of marking is also variable. The curriculum is outstanding, and is augmented by an exceptional range of extra-curricular opportunities, thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils.
- 9.2 Pupils' personal development is good, supported by much excellent pastoral care and sound arrangements for welfare, health and safety. Relationships within the school are excellent, built on mutual trust and respect. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but with clear vision for the future success of the school. Documentation is inconsistent in its quality and is sometimes out dated or does not reflect actual practice and procedures.
- 9.3 The quality of boarding is outstanding. In the pre-visit questionnaire, pupils were overwhelmingly supportive of the whole boarding experience, and the review findings confirm that the boarding houses are a friendly, homely

environment where pupils feel safe and can flourish, becoming confident young people, often with maturity beyond their years.

- 9.4 The school's physical environment is excellent where all members of the community are able to enjoy a healthy, happy and fulfilled lifestyle, making the most of the excellent climate and facilities.

Recommendations

In order to build on the many good or excellent features of the education the school provides for its pupils, it should seek to:

1. Build on the embryonic staff appraisal system so that standards of teaching and learning are monitored robustly, to support teachers and to enable every pupil to make optimum progress and thereby realise their full potential.
2. Develop more robust and efficient systems of recording pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress.
3. Improve the quality of documentation, so that all policies and procedures are up to date, accurate, consistent, and reflect actual practice.
4. Make sure that all marking of pupils' work is detailed, to include advice for future improvement in addition to praise, and to be in accordance with an agreed policy.

10. Evidence Summary

- 10.1 The visit was carried out from the 9th - 11th October 2011. In advance of the review, school documents were scrutinised. Other documentation was considered during the course of the review. In addition a sample of pupils' work from each year group was scrutinised. Discussions were held with pupils and classrooms and other school facilities were visited. Discussions were also held with senior staff. Registration, lunch, break times and assemblies were also observed.

Review Team

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