



**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.**  
**Commission on Independent Schools**

July 15, 2020

Mr. Stephen B. Harrison  
Executive Director  
Kurn Hattin Homes for Children  
708 Kurn Hattin Road  
Westminster, VT 05158

Dear Mr. Harrison:

The Commission on Independent Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges met on June 22-23, 2020. At that meeting, the Special Progress Report submitted by Kurn Hattin Homes for Children was reviewed. Your Report was accepted, and the Commission acknowledges that any action regarding the unmet Standards and Initial Accreditation will need to wait until a Focused Visit is possible.

The Commission commends Kurn Hattin Homes for acknowledging the challenges it faces to improve the quality of the experience of the students, the Residential Life Program, and health and safety measures. Clearly, Kurn Hattin Homes understands the concerns raised by the Visiting Committee and has responded swiftly and in significant ways to address these concerns.

Addressing staffing levels in the afternoon and evening hours and providing additional professional development for residential staff were both key areas of concern. The Commission was pleased to note that Kurn Hattin Homes has taken advantage of the school closure during the pandemic to provide focused training to the residential staff. By the time students return to campus, ideally there will have been some adjustment to afternoon staffing support in the cottages. The addition of an experienced Director of Residential Life is providing much needed leadership as the Homes continues to improve the operational infrastructure needed to provide the best possible residential experience for children.

Communication and collaboration between the residential staff and the school staff appear to be improving with the change in Residential Life leadership. As noted by the Visiting Committee, Kurn Hattin Homes students will be best served by consistent and positive interactions with the adults in the community. The consistent use of the PBIS model and Restorative Practices protocol is essential for the students.

The Commission commends the school for adding additional security cameras in key locations in the cottages and around the campus. At the time of the Focused Visit, NEASC staff would like to meet with the Safety Committee to discuss actions taken since the time of the Initial Accreditation visit and issues on the table for this Committee.

NEASC staff would also like to meet with the Diversity and Equity Committee to talk about how the school is handling issues of religious education and gender fluidity. The Special Progress Report indicates that discussions on these topics have taken place at all levels: staff, administration, and Trustees. These issues merit the attention of all members of the Kurn Hattin Homes community, and we look forward to discussing how the transitional planning around these two topics is progressing. The Commission noted that the Kurn Hattin Homes leadership team has not avoided tackling some difficult issues nor only made the changes that were easy and without financial implications for the organization. The ambitious strategic planning process, Vision Quest 2020, is a testament to the commitment to the mission of Kurn Hattin Homes.

Please let our offices know as soon as you think it is feasible to arrange for a Focused Visit. The Focused Visit will consist of Associate Director, Beth Hamilton, and one member from your 2019 Fall Visiting Committee.

The NEASC liaison for Kurn Hattin Homes for Children is Beth Hamilton. Please do not hesitate to contact her at [bhamilton@neasc.org](mailto:bhamilton@neasc.org) or 781-425-7737 if she can be of any assistance as you continue your follow-up to the Self-Study and Visiting Committee Report.

On behalf of the Commission and the Association, I wish to thank you for what you have accomplished to date.

Sincerely,



Jay S. Stroud  
Director of the Commission

JSS:cd

cc: Mr. Mark Bodin, President, Board of Trustees  
Vermont Agency of Education