



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Report for a Material Change Visit

Downsend School

May 2022

School's details

School name	Downsend School			
DfE number	936/6065			
Address	1 Leatherhead Road Leatherhead Surrey KT22 8TJ			
Telephone number	01372 372197			
Email address	office@downsend.co.uk			
Head Teacher	Mr Ian Thorpe			
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Limited			
Age Range	6 to 15			
Number of pupils on roll	615			
	Juniors	359	Seniors	256
Date of visit	19 May 2022			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Downsend is a co-educational day school, looking to offer full GCSE provision from September 2022. The school was purchased by Cognita Schools Limited, the proprietor, in 2004. Oversight is provided by the proprietor. Pupils from Years 2 to 6 are members of the junior school and those in Years 7 to 10 make up the senior school. The school has 201 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom one has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 21 pupils. The school's previous inspection was of its regulatory compliance in May 2018. A remote review to assess the school's likely readiness to extend its age range took place in September 2020.

Purpose of the visit

- 1.2 This was an announced material change visit at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase its numbers from 580 to 680 and extend the upper age limit to 16. The visit focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs).

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Met
Part 4, paragraph 18 – 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and the proprietor)	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 29 (premises and accommodation)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school meets the standard.
- 2.4 Implementation of all aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures is effective in providing appropriate support for the needs of pupils. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers and the extended age range.
- 2.5 Safeguarding procedures are implemented suitably to safeguard children at risk and those in need. Staff show effective understanding of their responsibilities, including with regard to child-on-child abuse and any such abuse linked to respect for those with protected characteristics. Staff show appropriate awareness of the staff code of conduct, whistleblowing policy and safeguarding procedures. They have a suitable knowledge of the thresholds for reporting potential issues and allegations of sexual harassment. Staff are aware of who to go to if they have a concern or receive a disclosure and also that they can make a direct referral to children's services if necessary. They take appropriate action when necessary.
- 2.6 Suitable definitions of abuse are given in the safeguarding policy and these are understood by staff. The definitions have been reviewed in line with updated statutory guidance within a policy which uses a template provided by the proprietorial group, suitably contextualised for the school. These include appropriate guidance regarding possible abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil, including linking such abuse to bullying. Discussion with the designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) for the junior and senior schools and inspection of records confirmed that pupils receive help to address risks and prevent issues escalating. The DSLs act on and refer the early signs of risk or need, monitor any potential for radicalisation, and ensure the school listens to the views of individual pupils as required by *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. Effective and timely communication is maintained with parents. Pupils receive guidance on staying safe and show understanding of what they have been taught, including in relation to e-safety. Monitoring and filtering of technology is effective. Pupils confirm that the school listens and takes prompt action when they express concerns. The physical and mental health of all pupils involved in any incident are given a high priority.
- 2.7 The safeguarding policy gives contact details for required local agencies. Suitable recruitment procedures for staff are outlined within the safeguarding policy and detailed in a separate recruitment policy. These are implemented effectively. The training for those with specific safeguarding responsibilities is in line with local requirements and statutory advice and up to date. Training in safeguarding for teaching and non-teaching staff is of sufficient quality and frequency. Central records of staff attendance at training are kept systematically.
- 2.8 Suitable arrangements for handling allegations against staff, senior leaders or the governors, and potential misconduct, are included in safeguarding procedures; they include seeking immediate advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officer (LADO). Records show that procedures are followed effectively, and the school follows up actions promptly. The school understands its role in reporting any person to relevant regulatory bodies if circumstances require it.

- 2.9 A person employed by the proprietorial group with appropriate expertise maintains a close working contact with the DSLs, and provides regular, including annual, oversight and review of the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11]

- 2.10 The school meets the standard.
- 2.11 The proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy. Records show that testing of electrical, water and other utilities is regularly undertaken. Staff are effectively trained in health and safety and deal promptly and appropriately with accidents if they occur, including through the reporting of serious accidents. Systematic records ensure trends are identified and steps taken to mitigate recurrence of any health and safety issues. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12]

- 2.12 The school meets the standard.
- 2.13 The school has a fire risk (prevention) policy which includes the elimination or reduction of risks from dangerous substances. A fire risk assessment of all buildings has been undertaken by a suitably qualified person. Fire procedures are understood by, and training provided for, staff. Termly fire drills are carried out and recorded. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14]

- 2.14 The school meets the standard.
- 2.15 Pupils are properly supervised by qualified and trained staff. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16]

- 2.16 The school meets the standard.
- 2.17 The risk assessment policy clearly describes the lines of responsibility and the approaches to be taken to identify and mitigate risk. There are appropriate assessments of risk for in-school activities, school visits, and for the needs of individual pupils both while in school and in the surrounding area. Appropriate action is taken to mitigate risks identified. These include risk to pupils of high levels of traffic at drop-off and pick-up times. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21]

- 2.18 The school meets the standards.
- 2.19 All the required checks on staff and governors are carried out and completed before they take up their posts. The school does not employ supply staff. Contractors send the school up-to-date information on checks they have undertaken on their employees, and the school makes appropriate further checks on arrival. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

- 2.20 The school maintains correctly an accurate single central register of appointments which includes the dates on which all checks have been completed.

Premises and accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23–29]

- 2.21 The school meets the standards.
- 2.22 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; and water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. The provision, including a creative arts building and re-purposed accommodation to provide additional teaching spaces, is likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

- 2.23 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.]

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]

- 2.24 The school meets the standard.
- 2.25 Appropriate procedures are implemented which allow the senior leaders and the proprietorial group to manage safeguarding and welfare arrangements and monitor compliance with standards and other statutory advice, including those concerned with safeguarding, staff recruitment and pupil behaviour. In this way the leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently. The strategic and operational planning for the proposed increase in numbers actively promotes the well-being of pupils.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change request

3.1 It is recommended that the material change be approved.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the proprietor. He visited different areas of the school, observed lessons and talked with groups of pupils. He scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.