



Material Change Inspection Report

Elstree School

June 2024

School's details

School	Elstree School			
DfE number	869/6007			
Registered charity number	309101			
Address	Elstree School Woolhampton Hill Reading Berkshire RG7 5TD			
Telephone number	01189 713302			
Email address	office@elstreeschool.org.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Sid Inglis			
Chair of governors	Mr James Sunley			
Proprietor	Elstree School Charitable Trust			
Age range	3 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	317			
	Day pupils	197	Boarders	120
	Pre-Prep	101	Prep	216
Date of inspection	27 June 2024			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Elstree School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. It is located in a rural setting to the east of Newbury in Berkshire. It has two sections: the pre-prep, which occupies a separate building within the school grounds and caters for children in the early years and pupils in Years 1 and 2; and the prep, which caters for pupils in Years 3 to 8. The school was founded as a boys' school in 1848 and moved to its present location in 1939. The school became fully co-educational in September 2020. Since 1961, it has been administered as a charitable trust, overseen by a board of governors. Boarding is available on a flexible basis, from one-night to weekly boarding, for pupils aged 8 and over. The school has identified 78 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil has an education, health and care plan. There are 29 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The school's previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in November 2022.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 280 to 322. An increase in the number of boarders was not part of the proposal and this aspect was not inspected. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	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, paragraphs 18-21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors)	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23-29 (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 The governing body provides effective oversight to ensure that the school's safeguarding policy is implemented effectively and that the school provides appropriate support for pupils' needs. The school's safeguarding leaders provide a termly report to the governing body and liaise regularly with the designated safeguarding governor. All members of the safeguarding team have the necessary seniority and an appropriate level of training to deal with safeguarding matters.
- 2.5 Staff receive a suitably thorough induction when they join the school. This includes a requirement to familiarise themselves with the school's safeguarding policy and the staff code of conduct as well as other safeguarding-related policies. All staff have read *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (September 2023) and those involved in discussions demonstrated a good understanding of safeguarding requirements. Training at the start of the school year acquaints staff with any changes to statutory guidance. Training takes into account local procedures effectively. Staff and pupils are provided with advice with regard to online safety, and there are suitable filtering arrangements to ensure pupils do not have access to harmful content from the internet. The school has suitable arrangements for checking the suitability of staff and governors.
- 2.6 Staff are familiar with what they should do if a pupil should disclose any matters of a safeguarding nature. Staff record all such incidents electronically. These records are reviewed daily by a member of the safeguarding team who is then able to identify any overarching issues. Incidents of child-on-child abuse are rare but are dealt with effectively. Trained support staff and a school counsellor are available to help pupils where there are any concerns about their mental health. The school liaises effectively with external agencies and seeks their advice whenever required.
- 2.7 Staff know what to do if they have concerns about another member of staff. Any allegations against staff are handled appropriately, and the school refers any serious incidents to external agencies as required. Staff are familiar with the school's whistleblowing policy and stated that they would not hesitate to use it if the need arose. They understand, and follow, the staff code of conduct.
- 2.8 The knowledge of the safeguarding team and the training which is provided for all staff and governors indicate that the standard is likely to continue to be met should the material change be approved.

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

- 2.9 The school meets the standard.
- 2.10 Procedures to ensure the health and safety of the pupils are effective. The school's maintenance staff respond quickly and effectively to any matters which might pose a risk to pupils' health and safety. All electrical equipment is tested annually. Hazardous cleaning chemicals are kept in locked cupboards. Water in the swimming pool is tested regularly by suitably trained personnel. Science laboratories and

the design and technology workshop have suitably located cut-offs to isolate gas and electricity supplies.

- 2.11 Evidence indicates that the standard is likely to continue to be met should the material change be approved.

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

- 2.12 The school meets the standard.
- 2.13 The school makes appropriate arrangements to comply with fire-safety requirements. Fire drills are held regularly, both during the school day and at night. Teachers and pupils know what to do and where to assemble when the fire alarm is sounded. Exit routes are clearly marked, and escape routes are kept free from obstruction. Fire alarms and fire extinguishers are serviced regularly and are appropriately situated.
- 2.14 Evidence indicates that the standard is likely to continue to be met should the material change be approved.

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

- 2.15 The school meets the standard.
- 2.16 There is a comprehensive rota which details staff supervision duties. Pupils comment that there are always staff around, which gives them reassurance. Staff undertake their supervision duties effectively. Even when they are not on duty, staff are expected to be vigilant.
- 2.17 Evidence indicates that the standard is likely to continue to be met should the material change be approved.

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

- 2.18 The school meets the standard.
- 2.19 The school has an appropriate risk-assessment policy. Risk assessments have been completed for different activities and all areas of the school, as well as for off-site activities and educational visits. The assessments identify foreseeable risks and the actions to be taken to mitigate and manage these risks.
- 2.20 A detailed risk assessment has been carried out in relation to the school's request to increase the total number of pupils who can be admitted. This shows that the school has sufficient capacity to absorb an increase in the number of pupils without the need for additional accommodation or the appointment of new staff. It also identifies that boarding provision will not be affected in any way by this change.
- 2.21 Evidence indicates that the standard is likely to continue to be met should the material change be approved.

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

- 2.22 The school meets the standards.
- 2.23 The school's procedures for checking the suitability of new staff and governors are robust. There is an appropriate recruitment policy, and staff involved in recruiting new staff have undertaken safer recruitment training. All necessary checks are undertaken, and the dates on which the checks have

been made are recorded on a checklist at the front of personnel files and in a single central record of appointments (SCR). Copies of documentation to support these entries are available in staff files. All checks undertaken on staff appointed since the previous inspection have been carried out before staff have started work at the school.

- 2.24 The school does not need to appoint additional staff to cater for the increase in the number of pupils. Evidence indicates, therefore, that the standard is likely to continue to be met should the material change be approved.

Premises and accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23-29]

- 2.25 The school meets the standards.
- 2.26 Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided in ample number for male and female pupils. These are separate from those provided for the use of staff and visitors. Suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided in different areas for different year groups. There is an adequate supply of cold water for toilets, and of hot and cold water for showers and washing facilities. The temperature of hot water is regulated so as not to pose a risk of scalding. There are many suitably labelled areas around the school where pupils can access drinking water. The school has a dedicated sick bay which is used for the medical examination and treatment of pupils and as accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils. The room has a wash basin, an adjacent toilet facility and secure storage for medicines. Separate accommodation is provided for any boarder who is ill and needs to be kept in isolation. The school's accommodation and facilities are maintained to a standard which ensures the health, safety and welfare of pupils and staff. Throughout the school, acoustics and lighting, both internal and external, are appropriate for the activities which normally take place. The school grounds offer more than ample space for physical education, games and recreation.
- 2.27 The school requires no further accommodation or facilities to cater for the proposed increase in the number of pupils. Evidence indicates, therefore, that it is likely that the standards will continue to be met should the material change be approved.

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

- 2.28 The school meets the requirement 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]

- 2.29 The school meets the standard.
- 2.30 Governors maintain effective oversight of the school. They ensure that leaders and managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are met consistently, and that they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.
- 2.31 Evidence indicates that the standard is likely to continue to be met should the material change be approved.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Summary of findings

- 3.1 The school has requested an increase in the number of pupils on roll from 280 to 322. This increase will be achieved by absorbing pupils into existing classes and structures and will not necessitate the building of new facilities or the employment of additional teachers. At its previous inspection in November 2022, the school was deemed to meet all of the Independent School Standards Regulations. Nothing observed on this visit indicates any change in quality or provision.

Recommendation

- 3.2 It is recommended that the school's request to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 280 to 322 is granted.

4. Summary of evidence

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