



## **Material Change Inspection Report**

**Stonar School**

**March 2024**

## School's details

<b>School</b>	Stonar School			
<b>DfE number</b>	865/6001			
<b>Address</b>	Stonar School Cottles Park Atworth Melksham Wiltshire SN12 8NT			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01225 701740			
<b>Email address</b>	office@stonarschool.com			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Matthew Way			
<b>Chair of Directors</b>	Mr Daniel Jones			
<b>Proprietor</b>	NACE Educational Services Ltd			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 19			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	437			
	<b>Day pupils</b>	307	<b>Boarders</b>	130
	<b>EYFS</b>	40	<b>Prep</b>	81
	<b>Seniors</b>	249	<b>Sixth Form</b>	67
<b>Date of inspection</b>	22 March 2024			

## 1. Introduction

### Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Stonar School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated in a rural location close to Melksham in Wiltshire. The school is administered by the board of directors of NACE Education Services Limited, supported by a local advisory board. It consists of three sections: an early years setting for children aged 2 to 4; the preparatory school for pupils aged 4 to 11; and the senior school, including a sixth form, for pupils aged 11 to 19 years.
- 1.2 There are three boarding houses on site. One is for female pupils aged 10 to 16; a second is for male pupils aged 10 to 19; and a third house accommodates female pupils in the sixth form.
- 1.3 The school has identified 84 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of whom four have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 71 pupils. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in February 2023.

### Purpose of the inspection

- 1.4 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase its capacity from 440 to 470 pupils. The proposed increase in capacity does not include an increase in boarding numbers or in the number of children in the early years setting. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2022 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 5, 6, 7 and 8	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 9	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety); NMS 10	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision); NMS 20	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9	<b>Met</b>
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	<b>Met</b>
Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 30 (premises and accommodation); NMS 4	<b>Met</b>
Part 6, paragraph 32 (1) (c) (provision of information)	<b>Met</b>
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	<b>Met</b>

## 2. Inspection findings

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding and safeguarding of boarders; boarders' possessions; provision and preparation of food and drink; boarders' health and wellbeing [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 5, 6, 7 and 8]**

#### **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 standards.
- 2.4 The school implements its safeguarding policy effectively. It provides appropriate support for the needs of all its pupils. This includes boarders, incorporating the needs of those with EAL, and children in the early years setting. Current arrangements are sufficient to provide effectively for the proposed increase in numbers.
- 2.5 Pupils are confident to report any concerns which they have because staff and senior leaders listen to them carefully and act diligently and promptly in response. This is confirmed in the suitably careful and confidential records kept of any safeguarding concerns including those relating to incidents of child- on-child abuse. Management of any poor behaviour is appropriate. Senior leaders maintain appropriate contact with external agencies such as the local authority and the police, seek advice and make referrals appropriately and in a timely fashion. They respond appropriately to any advice from the local authority about safeguarding arrangements. Pupils are well educated about the risks associated with online behaviour and the school's provision of technology is effectively filtered and monitored. The school educates pupils appropriately about mental health, liaises with external agencies effectively where necessary and assesses the risks around vulnerable pupils with suitable care. They keep parents appropriately informed about any issues regarding their child's wellbeing.
- 2.6 Those with leadership responsibilities in safeguarding are suitably trained at the advanced level. They train the staff effectively at induction and at the beginning of each school year, including in the dangers of extremism; they provide regular updates as and when necessary. Staff demonstrate effective understanding of safeguarding procedures and feel well supported by senior safeguarding leaders in promoting the pupils' wellbeing. Staff understand the importance of their code of conduct which emphasizes professional behaviour appropriately. They say that they would not hesitate to use the whistleblowing procedure, if necessary. They have an effective understanding of low-level concerns and use the system appropriately. A suitable log of these concerns is kept.
- 2.7 The proprietor and the advisory board provide effective oversight of safeguarding. They undertake regular visits to the school, support and challenge the safeguarding team effectively and discuss any concerns. They review the policy annually at a full board meeting. All board members are trained in safeguarding.
- 2.8 Effective systems are implemented to ensure that boarders are suitably safeguarded. Those with leadership responsibilities in boarding are well qualified and experienced. Pupils confirm that their personal needs are well met. There are effective laundry procedures, suitable meals, snacks and drinking water are provided, and arrangements to care for unwell pupils are suitable. There is an appropriate health and wellbeing centre on site which is staffed by qualified nurses. It includes provision for pupils to stay overnight when necessary.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety; fire safety; safety of boarders; fire precautions and drills in boarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 11 and 12; NMS 9 and 10]**

- 2.9 The school meets the standards.
- 2.10 There is an appropriate health and safety policy which is effectively implemented across all aspects of school life, including in boarding and in the early years setting. This creates an environment in which the safety of pupils, staff and visitors is always prioritised. All health and safety, and fire checks have been carried out appropriately for a recently completed building containing a design and technology (DT) classroom, other classrooms and a library. Staff are vigilant in reporting any concerns they have about health and safety matters.
- 2.11 Suitable fire infrastructure is in place across all areas of the school site, including in the boarding houses. Fire drills are regularly undertaken during the day, and at night in boarding houses, and suitable records are kept. The school has responded appropriately to any recommendations in the external fire risk assessment.
- 2.12 Systems currently implemented provide effectively for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils; risk assessment; safety of boarders; staffing and supervision in boarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 14 and 16; NMS 20 and 9]**

- 2.13 The school meets the standards.
- 2.14 Pupils are appropriately supervised during the school day through the vigilant implementation of age-appropriate staff rotas. Appropriate signage around the school notifies pupils of risky areas and areas which are out of bounds. Supervision in boarding houses is effective including in the evenings and at weekends. Boarders know who is on duty and are able to contact them easily, including at night. Boarders confirm that they feel safe and secure in the boarding environment. The school reviews its supervision arrangements appropriately following any incidents.
- 2.15 The school has an effective approach to assessing risk across all aspects of school life. Recent new buildings all have been assessed appropriately with suitable ways to mitigate identified risks provided. There are effective risk assessments such as for the whole site, for science departments and DT, for risks associated with the riding stables, and for trips and visits, all of which are reviewed regularly by senior leaders. The school also maintains dynamic risk assessments for any day pupils and boarders about whom there are concerns. These provide an effective framework to ensure their ongoing welfare needs are met.
- 2.16 Systems currently implemented provide effectively for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

**Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 19;]**

- 2.17 The school meets the standards.
- 2.18 The school implements its recruitment policy effectively so that all required checks on staff and proprietors are completed before appointment. The checks are accurately recorded on the single central record of appointments. Any visitors to boarding are required to sign in and are appropriately supervised. The school does not currently employ any supply staff.
- 2.19 Systems currently implemented provide effectively for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

**Premises and accommodation – toilets and changing accommodation; medical facilities; maintenance; acoustics; lighting; water supply and outdoor space; boarding accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 30; NMS 4]**

- 2.20 The school meets the standards.
- 2.21 The premises and accommodation in the school are suitable and sufficient for the needs of the pupils. Classrooms are spacious and well appointed in both the prep and the senior school. The new teaching block which includes a DT room and library has provided suitable extra space for the increase in pupils which has occurred steadily over the past few years. This will be adequate for the proposed increase. The school is well maintained through a rolling programme of regular refurbishment. Buildings are well lit as are outdoor areas and acoustic arrangements are suitable.
- 2.22 There are sufficient age-appropriate toilets and washing facilities and changing accommodation for pupils of all ages, including boarders. The new classroom block provides further toilet and washing facilities. Pupils have access to drinking water which is clearly labelled. The school occupies a large site, including a riding school and an area of woodland. The site provides suitable facilities for physical education and for recreation.
- 2.23 Boarding accommodation is appropriate and segregated effectively. Houses are well appointed, clean, well maintained and spacious.
- 2.24 Current provision is likely to be effective for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.25 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; NMS 2]**

- 2.26 The school meets the standards.
- 2.27 Senior leaders monitor safeguarding and welfare arrangements appropriately. The proprietors and advisory board provide effective oversight of compliance with the regulatory standards, including those for boarding. School leaders and proprietors implement an effective complaints procedure which is followed appropriately should a concern be raised. Leaders, including those in boarding, demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities; they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. The school has planned carefully for the proposed increase in pupil numbers and current arrangements are effective for the proposed increase in capacity.

### **3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection**

#### **Recommendation**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the school's request to increase its capacity from 440 to 470 be granted. Suitable arrangements are in place to cater for the increased capacity.

## **4. Summary of evidence**

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and with the chair of the advisory board. They visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.