



Material Change Inspection Report

Thorpe House School

March 2024

School's details

School	Thorpe House School			
DfE number	825/6026			
Registered charity number	292683			
Address	Thorpe House School 29 Oval Way Chalfont St Peter Gerrards Cross Buckinghamshire SL9 8QA			
Telephone number	01753 882474			
Email address	office@thorpehouse.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Jake Burnett			
Chair of governors	Mr Richard Tufft			
Proprietor	Thorpe House School Trust			
Age range	4 to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	270			
	EYFS	6	Juniors	64
	Seniors	200		
Date of inspection	25 to 26 March 2024			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Thorpe House School is an independent day school for male pupils. The school is a charitable educational trust with a board of trustees, all of whom act as governors. It has two sections: a lower school, which incorporates an early years setting and educates pupils up to the end of Year 6; and a senior school which educates pupils up to Year 11. The school has 88 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom three have an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for one pupil. The school's previous inspections were a regulatory compliance inspection in May 2021 followed by a progress monitoring inspection in December 2021.

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 its total number of pupils to 370; to change the age range of male pupils to become 4 to 18; and to introduce female pupils from the ages of 16 to 18. 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. The inspection considered additional concerns at the request of the DfE.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraphs 2 (curriculum), 2A (relationships and sex education), 3 (teaching) and 4 (framework for pupils' performance)	Met
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 9 and 10 (behaviour and bullying)	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 7, paragraph 33 (complaints procedure)	Met

Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met
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2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – curriculum, relationships and sex education (RSE), teaching, and framework for pupils’ performance [ISSR Part 1, paragraphs 2, 2A, 3 and 4]

- 2.1 The school meets the standards.
- 2.2 The school implements a suitable curriculum, supported by comprehensive schemes of work which provide pupils with experience in all required areas of learning. The curriculum is suitably adapted, and teaching is planned to take account of the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. Staff understand the particular demands of teaching to A level or equivalent. This makes it likely that teaching will be of suitable quality to ensure progress for sixth-form pupils. Senior leaders have planned a curriculum which is likely to provide a suitable programme of activities to meet the needs of sixth-form pupils. The school has an appropriate relationships curriculum for primary-aged pupils and follows a suitable RSE programme for secondary-aged pupils. It intends to extend this to meet the needs of pupils up to the age of 18 and current plans to do so are suitable. It has effective plans for providing careers advice to sixth-form pupils. The school ensures teaching which enables good progress and the school has suitable plans to ensure that teaching does not discriminate against any pupils. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils’ performance is implemented and similar benchmark systems are planned for the sixth form. Senior leaders have effective plans to appoint suitably experienced teachers, and have appropriate curriculum plans in place, for the envisaged change in age range.
- 2.3 The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers, change in age range and acceptance of female pupils into the sixth form.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5]

- 2.4 The school meets the standard.
- 2.5 The school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It ensures that principles are actively promoted which encourage pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. These are promoted effectively through lessons, assemblies and the attitudes demonstrated by staff. In discussions, pupils demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the importance of showing respect for others, including those with protected characteristics. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged change in age range and acceptance of female pupils into the sixth form.

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

Safeguarding policy

- 2.6 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.7 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

- 2.8 The school meets the standard.
- 2.9 Implementation of all aspects of the school’s safeguarding procedures is effective in providing appropriate support for the needs of pupils, including for children in early years. The arrangements

are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers, change in age range and acceptance of female pupils into the sixth form.

- 2.10 Safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively to safeguard children at risk and those in particular need. Suitable consideration has been given to the needs of female pupils in the sixth form. Staff show effective understanding of their responsibilities, including with regard to child-on-child abuse and the needs of pupils with SEND. All behavioural issues and allegations of sexualised behaviour, racism or bullying, are treated as potential safeguarding concerns and addressed appropriately.
- 2.11 Staff, including senior leaders, listen to the concerns of pupils effectively. Pupils confirmed this to be the case and say that the school responds to any issues they raise promptly and takes action when necessary. Records, which are suitably thorough, confirm this. The school communicates and refers concerns swiftly and appropriately to pertinent external agencies when appropriate and seeks advice when necessary. The school liaises appropriately with parents about any safeguarding concerns. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and the school has appropriate controls of the use of technology.
- 2.12 The safeguarding policy gives contact details as required for local safeguarding partners. The training for those with specific safeguarding responsibilities is in line with local requirements and statutory advice and is up to date. Staff confirmed that they are trained regularly. There are comprehensive records of face to face and online training which confirm suitable courses have been completed. Staff demonstrate effective knowledge of safeguarding procedures, including most recent changes to statutory guidance. They are aware of how to listen to children and report any concerns that they have.
- 2.13 Leaders and staff demonstrate appropriate awareness of the staff code of conduct. Staff have a suitable understanding of the low-level concerns policy and safeguarding procedures, including the thresholds for reporting issues or incidents, and are confident to use these. Staff confirmed that any reported incidents are followed up by leaders.
- 2.14 Safeguarding procedures include suitable arrangements for handling allegations against staff or senior leaders, and potential misconduct. These cover seeking immediate advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officer (LADO) and they are implemented effectively. The school understands its role in reporting any person to relevant statutory bodies if circumstances require it.
- 2.15 Governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding. A governor with appropriate expertise maintains a close working contact with staff with specific safeguarding responsibilities. Governors are suitably pro-active in the school with regards to monitoring safeguarding policies and procedures, including through arrangements for an annual review. This is sufficient to ensure that all statutory requirements are met.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour and bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 9 and 10]

- 2.16 The school meets the standards.
- 2.17 A suitable behaviour policy and arrangements to guard against bullying are in place. Both are implemented effectively.
- 2.18 Arrangements to promote good behaviour are effective. There is a suitable system of rewards, and the sanctions to be adopted in the event of misbehaviour. Records of behavioural incidents are recorded and monitored effectively to allow any trends to be identified.
- 2.19 Pupils reported that there is very little bullying in the school. Records support this view. Staff receive effective training about bullying and pupils are given suitable guidance. In discussions, pupils agreed

that any bullying that does occur is dealt with effectively by pastoral staff. Records show that the school provides suitable support for the alleged victim and perpetrator and takes into account the needs of pupils with SEND. The effectiveness of any action taken is monitored, with further education provided for all pupils where necessary.

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

2.20 The school meets the standard.

2.21 There is an appropriate health and safety policy which is implemented effectively to ensure the safety of pupils, staff and visitors. Records show that testing of all utilities is carried out regularly and systematically. Training is comprehensive and staff confirmed that they understand the importance of referring any concerns. Senior leaders and governors monitor any trends in implementing health and safety requirements and appropriate steps are taken to mitigate any recurrence of any health and safety issues. Health and safety considerations have been integrated effectively into the planning of the repurposing of an area of the current premises, the intended sixth form building, and the development of the new science laboratories. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers and wider age range.

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

2.22 The school meets the standard.

2.23 The school has a fire safety policy which includes the elimination or reduction of risks from dangerous substances. A fire risk assessment of all current buildings has been undertaken by a suitably qualified person and any recommendations attended to. Fire procedures are understood by, and training provided for, staff. Termly fire drills are carried out and recorded and pupils are suitably informed about evacuation procedures. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers and change in age range.

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

2.24 The school meets the standard.

2.25 Pupils are properly supervised by qualified and trained staff, including at break times and in outside play. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase of pupil numbers and change in age range.

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

2.26 The school meets the standard.

2.27 The school has a suitable risk assessment policy which is implemented effectively. Staff conduct appropriate risk assessments for each area of the school, for trips out of school and for the wellbeing of pupils with particular needs. Appropriate risk assessments are put in place to reduce risks following any safeguarding incidents. Suitable risk assessment has been undertaken for the introduction of female pupils and the proposed extension of the age range and increase in pupil numbers. The proposed arrangements made are likely to be sufficient.

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

2.28 The school meets the standards.

- 2.29 All the required checks on staff, supply staff, and governors are carried out and completed before they take up their posts. 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.
- 2.30 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, paragraphs 23 to 29]

- 2.31 The school meets the standards.
- 2.32 Adequate toilet facilities, suitable changing and showering facilities 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 the newly acquired sixth form building, re-purposed accommodation, and refurbished and additional toilet facilities, is likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers, change in age range and acceptance of female pupils into the sixth form.

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

- 2.33 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.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33]

- 2.34 The school meets the standard.
- 2.35 The school's complaints procedure is available on the school website. It provides for complaints and concerns to be considered on an informal basis; for the establishment of a formal procedure for a complaint to be made in writing; for an additional hearing before a panel which includes an independent member and allows for a parent to be accompanied; for the panel to make findings and recommendations; and for a confidential record to be kept of findings. Some records of historic complaints lacked sufficient detail. However, suitable records are now kept and these show that the school follows its own policy appropriately. Formal complaints are now handled by senior leaders in line with the school's procedures. Whether or not a complaint has been upheld, the school undertakes a detailed review to identify any lessons to be learned from it and implements any consequent recommendations effectively.

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

- 2.36 The school meets the standard.
- 2.37 Senior leaders and governors monitor safeguarding and welfare arrangements appropriately and carry out effective oversight of compliance with the regulatory standards. They fulfil their responsibilities so that independent school standards are met consistently. The strategic and operational planning for the proposed changes in the age range and increased number of pupils, including female pupils in the sixth form, includes suitable provision of extra safeguarding and other roles, and actively promotes the wellbeing of pupils.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended the school's request to increase its numbers to 370, to change the age range of male pupils to become 4 to 18, and to introduce female pupils from the ages of 16 to 18, be approved.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with a group of governors. They visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.