



Material Change Inspection Report

Red Balloon Learner Centre, Cambridge

July 2024

School's details

School	Red Balloon Learner Centre, Cambridge		
DfE number	873/6024		
Registered charity number	1175826		
Address	Herbert House 57 Warkworth Terrace Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB1 1EE		
Telephone number	01223 357714		
Email address	admin@cambridge.rblc.org.uk		
Co-ordinator	Ms Jessica Lechner		
Chair of governors	Mr Ian Bryan Swain		
Proprietor	Red Balloon Cambridge trustees		
Age range	11 to 19		
Number of pupils on roll	35		
	Seniors	29	Sixth Form 6
Date of inspection	02 July 2024		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 The Red Balloon Learner Centre Cambridge is an independent co-educational special school for day pupils. The school is a registered charity and is governed by a proprietor supported by a group of trustees. It is currently located in the centre of Cambridge in two terraced properties. The school has thirty-five pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Thirty-four pupils have an education, health and care plan. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in March 2023.

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 registered total capacity to 50 and to move in to new premises in Milton, Cambridge in September 2024. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs).

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)	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 and is likely to do so with the move to new premises and the proposed increase in registered capacity.
- 2.4 Safeguarding procedures are suitably implemented in line with statutory requirements including *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023*. The safeguarding team works effectively to promote the wellbeing of pupils, all of whom have special needs and vulnerabilities. In discussions, pupils confirmed that they can raise concerns with any member of staff and are confident that they will receive an appropriate response. The high ratio of staff to pupils and the use of shared social spaces assists in creating a culture where any concerns are quickly identified and acted upon swiftly by the safeguarding team. Safeguarding records confirm this, and that the school liaises appropriately with local agencies. Information is shared with staff, parents and pupils when required. Staff understand that safeguarding partners and the police should be contacted promptly if pupils are victims or potential victims of harmful sexual behaviour. Pupils receive suitable advice about online safety and the use of social media. The school has effective systems in place to monitor and filter internet use, including at the new premises.
- 2.5 Staff, including those with leadership and governance responsibilities are trained appropriately and in line with local safeguarding requirements. Records are systematically kept and show that training for all staff is current, appropriate and reflects the context of the school and the needs of the pupils. A suitable induction programme is provided for new staff and any absentees from training have their training rescheduled. All staff complete training in the risks posed by extremism, radicalisation and county lines. In discussion, staff demonstrated a clear understanding about how to report any concerns that they may have about adults in the school. They confirmed that they would not hesitate to do so. There is a suitable approach to reporting low-level concerns about adults working with children including self-declaration. A log is kept as required. Staff know that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility. They are aware of the procedures necessary to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse and recognise that such abuse may be taking place without being reported. Staff are alert to concerns about mental health and are particularly aware of the vulnerabilities of the pupils, all of whom have been identified as having SEND.
- 2.6 The safeguarding team and trustees work closely together to produce a suitable annual review of policies and procedures. Scrutiny of the minutes of trustees' meetings confirm an appropriate depth of oversight that includes regular meetings of the nominated trustee and the safeguarding team. Suitable consideration and forward planning have been given to the move to new premises and the potential impact of an increase in pupil numbers on safeguarding arrangements.

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

- 2.7 The school meets the standard and is likely to do so with the move to new premises and proposed increase in registered capacity.

- 2.8 The school has a suitable health and safety policy that is implemented appropriately. Systematic procedures, including checks of equipment are implemented effectively. Similar arrangements are in place for the new premises. The checks for the new buildings, refurbished classrooms and social spaces have been reviewed effectively by proprietors and accredited external providers. The increased size of the accommodation available is suitable for the proposed increase in registered capacity.

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

- 2.9 The school meets the standard and is likely to do so with the move to new premises and proposed increase in registered capacity.
- 2.10 An appropriate fire safety policy is implemented effectively. The proprietors have engaged accredited external agencies to review arrangements and assess fire risk for the new site. The school has acted promptly to address the recommendations from this external audit of fire arrangements and the required works have been undertaken. Current procedures for emergency evacuation are implemented effectively and are suitably recorded, including fire drills at least once a term. The required fire signage, alarm systems and equipment are in place. Training to manage any emergency evacuation in the new building is scheduled for all staff before the commencement of the Autumn term 2024. Training for pupils is also scheduled for their induction on the first day of term.

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

- 2.11 The school meets the standard and is likely to do so with the proposed increase in registered capacity.
- 2.12 The school ensures that pupils are always under appropriate supervision while attending school and on trips and visits. The arrangements have been reviewed effectively for the potential increase in pupil numbers at the new premises. Leaders have made suitable arrangements for the location of leaders' offices and a shared staff and pupil social space to ensure close supervision in the new building. Leaders have revised duty rotas appropriately for the period before and after school as well as at breaks and lunch time.

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

- 2.13 The school meets the standard and is likely to do so with the move to new premises and proposed increase in registered capacity.
- 2.14 The school has an appropriate risk-assessment policy which sets out a systematic approach to the management of risk including the identification of actions to be taken to reduce any risks. Risk assessments are in place for all areas of the new school premises including for the management of the off-road car park and pupil drop-off area. Risk assessments for trips and visits have been revised to take account of the new location as well as the impacts of the proposed increase in pupil numbers. Senior leaders have ensured full staff involvement in the development of risk assessments for the new premises to ensure appropriate understanding of the required actions to ensure the safety and welfare of pupils and staff.

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

- 2.15 The school meets the standards and is likely to do so with the proposed increase in registered capacity.
- 2.16 A suitable recruitment policy is in place which is implemented effectively. All staff, trustees and persons engaged in regulated activity are checked and recorded appropriately on the single central register of appointments (SCR). Those with responsibility for carrying out the required recruitment

checks ensure that they are undertaken before the member of staff or volunteer commences work in the school. Personnel files are maintained appropriately and suitable procedures are in place for regulating and managing contractors or visitors to the school. Senior leaders have appropriate safer recruitment training.

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

- 2.17 The school meets the standards and is likely to do so with the move to new premises and proposed increase in registered capacity.
- 2.18 Adequate toilet facilities and suitable changing and showering facilities are provided at the new premises. These meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils. The new premises are refurbished to a standard commensurate with health and safety and a schedule of maintenance checks is in place. Suitable disabled facilities are available for pupils, staff and visitors. Appropriate accommodation for the medical and therapy needs of pupils is in place and there is provision for easy access to drinking water. Acoustics and lighting are appropriate throughout the new premises and there is sufficient outdoor space to provide an area for pupils to relax. The new site is suitably secure, including the external doors. A separate entrance and reception area has been provided for visitors. Classroom space has been expanded, including in specialist rooms for music, science and technology, to meet the needs of a potential increase in registered capacity.

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

- 2.19 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]

- 2.20 The school meets the standard and is likely to do so with the move to new premises and proposed increase in registered capacity.
- 2.21 The trustees and senior leaders, including those with specific responsibilities for safeguarding and welfare, exercise effective oversight of compliance with the regulatory standards to ensure that they are met consistently. They demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Measures planned and implemented for the move to new premises and proposed increase in pupil numbers are likely to ensure the continued active promotion of pupils' safety and wellbeing.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the school's request to move to new premises in September 2024, and to increase its registered capacity to 50, be approved.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the co-ordinator, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with a trustee. He visited different areas of the school including the new premises and talked with a group of pupils. He scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.