



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance Inspection Report

Thorpe House School

May 2021

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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			
Headmaster	Mr Nicholas Pietrek			
Chair of governors	Mr David Stanning			
Age range	3 to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	269			
	EYFS	8	Juniors	91
	Seniors	170		
Inspection dates	19 to 21 May 2021			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Thorpe House School is an independent day school for male pupils aged from four to sixteen years. The school is a charitable educational trust with a board of trustees, all of whom act as governors. Since the previous inspection in February 2019, the school has a new sports hall and changing rooms, three new classrooms and improved science, technology, dining and library facilities. A new headmaster was appointed in September 2019.
- 1.2 Founded as a proprietorial boarding preparatory school in 1923, the school is situated in a residential area of Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire. In 2006, it extended its provision from 13 years to 16 years of age. In 2012, it acquired Kingscote Preparatory School which adjoined the school. In 2020, the nursery was closed and the school was reconfigured into the lower school, incorporating the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and comprising Reception to Year 5; middle school comprising Years 6 to 8; and the upper school comprising Years 9 to 11.
- 1.3 During the period March to August 2020, the whole school remained open only for children of key workers.
- 1.4 During this period of closure the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils.
- 1.5 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.6 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.7 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children of key workers or vulnerable pupils, received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.8 In 2020 public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades for GCSE were awarded.
- 1.9 Since 2020, EYFS profiles have not been externally moderated.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.10 The school aims to provide a nurturing environment and offer the support, care and learning experiences for each pupil to reach their academic, sporting and creative potential and be ready for tomorrow's world. It seeks to inspire curiosity and fulfil potential by instilling in pupils the belief that they can be: 'better today than yesterday, better tomorrow than today.'

About the pupils

- 1.11 Pupils come from families with a variety of backgrounds living in the surrounding area. Standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the pupils are of mixed ability. The school has identified 72 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, 43 of whom receive additional support. Two pupils have an educational health care plan. English is an additional language for seven pupils, whose needs are supported by their teachers. The curriculum is modified for pupils identified as the most able or as having a particular talent.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school does not meet all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the lower and middle schools, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2018 to 2020, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 Health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. However, it is not always fully implemented. A referral to the local safeguarding services was not made promptly and within the timescale set by the school's safeguarding policy.
- 2.11 Measures to prevent poor behaviour are not always effective. The school has a suitable policy to promote good behaviour and set out sanctions for any poor behaviour. The majority of pupils in the school display good behaviour. For a small minority of pupils who exhibit poor behaviour, the sanctions policy is not implemented effectively to ensure that behaviour improves. The sanctions are not applied consistently by all staff and their application does not always reflect the seriousness of any misbehaviour. The school has recently implemented a new programme for recording and monitoring specific behavioural incidents, but this is not fully embedded.
- 2.12 Measures to prevent bullying are not effective because the school has not drawn up and implemented an effective anti-bullying policy. The policy does not adequately reflect the guidance given by *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) with regard to peer-on-peer abuse, its consequences and potential safeguarding implications. The sanctions in the policy are not always applied and they do not reflect the seriousness of any bullying behaviour so that others can see that bullying is unacceptable. Serious

cases of bullying are rare but records show that they have not always been resolved satisfactorily. The anti-bullying strategies employed by the school are not fully effective, in that pupils and staff demonstrated in interviews that they are not all clear in their understanding of the nature of bullying or when to report it. Both staff and pupils sometimes dismiss bullying incidents as just ‘banter’ or ‘horseplay’. In the upper school, pupils do not understand the importance of reporting bullying incidents or the part they can play to prevent bullying happening in the future. In response to questionnaires, older pupils commented on the lack of an effective response to bullying when it occurs. During the inspection, the school was able to provide a suitable and updated anti-bullying strategy to reflect the guidance given by KCSIE. This has yet to be implemented.

2.13 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 11-16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met, but those in paragraphs 7, 9 and 10 are not met.

Action point 1

- The school must ensure that there is sufficiently effective and prompt liaison between the DSL and the relevant local authorities and children’s services when making a referral of a safeguarding concern [Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].

Action point 2

- The school must ensure that sanctions for poor behaviour, including bullying, are applied consistently by all staff and reflect the degree of misbehaviour [Part 3, paragraphs 9(b) and 10; EYFS 3.52].

Action point 3

- The school must ensure that it employs effective behaviour management strategies to improve pupil behaviour [Part 3, paragraph 9(b) and 10; EYFS 3.52].

Action point 4

- The school must ensure that the revised anti-bullying strategy drawn up during the inspection is fully and effectively implemented in order to:
- train staff suitably on the guidance in KCSIE on bullying in schools;
- give appropriate guidance to pupils so that they understand the importance of reporting bullying behaviour and are reassured that they will be listened to and can report any incidents without fear of further bullying or intimidation [Part 3, paragraph 10; 3.52].

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

2.14 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.

2.15 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

2.16 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; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.17 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.18 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.19 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.20 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.21 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.22 The proprietor must ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the Independent School Standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.23 The leadership and management do not fully promote the well-being of pupils with regards to the statutory guidance for safeguarding, or through the school's set procedures for behaviour management and bullying.

2.24 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 is not met.

Action point 5

- **The school must ensure that leadership and management demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge so that required procedures in safeguarding, behaviour and bullying are followed to enable the standards to be met consistently and pupils' well-being actively promoted [Part 8, paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].**

3. Inspection Evidence

- 3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors and two other governors. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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