



ISI

Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Reports for an Additional Inspection

Ashford School

September 2021

School's details

School	Ashford School			
DfE number	886/6000			
Early Years registration number	EY344143			
Registered charity number	1016538			
Address	Ashford School East Hill Ashford Kent TN24 8PB			
Telephone number	01233 625171			
Email address	reception@ashfordschool.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Michael Hall			
Chair of governors	Ms Deborah Geering			
Age range	0 to 19			
Number of pupils on roll	917			
	Day pupils	822	Boarders	95
	EYFS	226	Years 1-6	231
	Years 7-11	334	6th Form	126
Date of visit	28 September 2021			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Ashford School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between three months and 18 years. In 1998 the school joined the United Church School Trust, known as United Learning, whose trustees have responsibility for governance, supported by a local governing body. The school comprises a nursery, pre-school and prep school situated about three miles from the senior school site, which is in central Ashford. The senior site includes the four boarding houses and Bridge Nursery. The school has 196 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 3 have an education, health and care plan. There are 119 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was an educational quality and focused compliance inspection in March 2020.

Purpose of the visit.

- 1.2 This was an unannounced additional inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2015 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 11	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 14	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (quality of leadership and management); NMS 13	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding and safeguarding of boarders [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 11]

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 Arrangements are implemented to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including children in the EYFS, by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance. The safeguarding policy is implemented effectively to ensure a culture of listening to pupils. Pupils confirm that they have a wide variety of people to whom they can turn to for support and many different ways of requesting support. The school ensures that pupils receive a response when they express concerns and that appropriate action is taken where necessary. This was confirmed during interviews with pupils and staff and by records of safeguarding which are suitably detailed. Pupils are given suitable guidance on staying safe online and the school has sufficient filtering and monitoring procedures in place to ensure appropriate use at all times.
- 2.5 The school liaises with local agencies, where necessary, and takes prompt action where concerns are raised. All staff, including those in positions of responsibility, are suitably trained in line with locally agreed procedures, and safeguarding is effectively managed. Staff understand the different types of peer-on-peer abuse, including in relation to pupils with SEND, with a clear understanding of matters relating to sexual harassment. There is an appropriate staff code of conduct and suitable arrangements for whistleblowing. Interviews with staff confirmed suitable understanding of these and willingness to act appropriately should the need arise. Arrangements to handle allegations against any adult working in the school are suitably and understood by staff. Records show that the staff recruitment policy is fully implemented to ensure that all adults, including those with boarding responsibilities are checked in line with statutory requirements.
- 2.6 The school has ensured suitable arrangements are in place during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain all safeguarding requirements. The proprietor ensures suitable oversight of safeguarding arrangements through the regular review of procedures and policies at advisory governor meetings.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 14]

- 2.7 The school meets the standards
- 2.8 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. The register suitably records when the DSB certificate was checked for any person working in regulated activity and that all the required checks were completed prior to employment or appointment as a proprietor.

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

- 2.9 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]

2.10 The school meets standards

2.11 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that all the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the educational well-being of the pupils.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this visit, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, and no further action is required as a result of this visit.

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 talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.