



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Report for an Additional Inspection

Cothill House School

April 2022

School's details

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------------|-----|
| School | Cothill House School | | | |
| DfE number | 931/6075 | | | |
| Registered charity number | 309639 | | | |
| Address | Cothill House School Abingdon Oxfordshire OX13 6JL | | | |
| Telephone number | 01865 390800 | | | |
| Email address | jane@cothillpst.org | | | |
| Headmaster | Mr Duncan Bailey | | | |
| Proprietor | Prep Schools Trust | | | |
| Age range | 8 to 13 | | | |
| Number of pupils on roll | 184 | | | |
| | Day pupils | 0 | Boarders | 184 |
| | Juniors | 52 | Seniors | 132 |
| Date of visit | 27 April 2022 | | | |

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Cothill House School is an independent boarding school for male pupils situated in Abingdon. It is overseen by the Prep Schools Trust, supported by a local advisory group. All pupils board full time. There are three boarding houses, situated on the main school site, one for pupils in Years 4 and 5, one for pupils in Years 6 and 7 and one for pupils in Year 8. There are 16 pupils at the school who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 69 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection on 5 to 6 December 2018.

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), and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2015.

| Regulations which were the focus of the visit | Team judgements |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils); NMS 17 | Met |
| Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 11 | Met |
| Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour); NMS 12 | Met |
| Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying); NMS 12 | Met |
| Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 6 | Met |
| Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils); NMS 15 | Met |
| Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 6 | 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 7, paragraph 33 (manner in which complaints are handled); NMS 18 | Met |
| Part 8, paragraph 34 (quality of leadership and management); NMS 13 | Met |

2. Inspection findings

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5; NMS 17]

- 2.1 The school meets the standards.
- 2.2 The school effectively promotes the fundamental British values of the rule of law, individual liberty, democracy and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme promotes appreciation of democracy, the civil and criminal law of England and public institutions and services. It also promotes appropriately an understanding of the dangers of racism, sexism and other forms of prejudice. Staff work effectively to develop pupils' self-esteem and sense of responsibility for their own actions. Pupils are encouraged effectively to respect others, including those with protected characteristics. They learn about toxic masculinity and are prepared effectively to behave positively in single-sex and mixed-sex environments. The school council enables pupils, including boarders, to participate in the democratic process and suitable additional mechanisms exist for them to express their views. Staff model and promote positive values and behaviour effectively. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors described the culture of the school as respectful and inclusive and inspection evidence supports this view.

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

Safeguarding policy

- 2.3 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.4 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

- 2.5 The school meets the standards.
- 2.6 The school acts in the best interests of the pupils and ensures effective implementation of its safeguarding arrangements. Leaders and staff listen to pupils and respond swiftly and effectively to any issues or worries that they raise. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and her deputies provide sufficient coverage for their role, including in boarding. Leaders and staff, including the safeguarding team, are suitably trained. They understand and implement their safeguarding responsibilities. Scrutiny of safeguarding records shows that staff report safeguarding concerns, including any relating to child-on-child abuse, when they arise. Records also confirm that any such concerns are responded to appropriately, including through support provided to all pupils involved and referrals to external agencies when relevant thresholds are reached. The school educates pupils how to raise any concerns and how to keep themselves safe, including when online.
- 2.7 Appropriate procedures are in place to respond to any allegations about staff or others working at the school. Staff who spoke to the inspectors said that they would feel confident to use whistleblowing procedures and that they would be taken seriously should they need to do so. Leaders enable staff to share concerns, including any about school practice or other staff. They and trustees respond appropriately to these. This, includes through working with pertinent external agencies to investigate concerns and determining accurately the extent to which any such concerns are founded or substantiated. Leaders and staff also understand and implement the expectations of the staff code of conduct. The school implements a suitable recruitment policy. Trustees maintain a suitable and effective oversight of safeguarding, including through a suitable annual review and additional reviews of any serious incidents or should any potential issues arise.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9; NMS 12]

- 2.8 The school meets the standards.
- 2.9 The school implements a suitable behaviour policy efficiently. It promotes good behaviour effectively, including in boarding. Scrutiny of behavioural records confirms that the school responds to any incidents of negative pupil behaviour appropriately, including any involving the possession of a potential weapon. Leaders and staff successfully promote a positive culture of behaviour, including in boarding. This includes through the use of appropriate sanctions, commensurate with any misdemeanour and avoidance of any idiosyncratic punishments. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors, including those at the top of the school, described behaviour as good. They said that incidents of poor behaviour are minor and few. Records of behaviour support this view. Staff who spoke to the inspectors explained how they guard against 'laddish behaviour' and promote positive values and behaviour.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10; NMS 12]

- 2.10 The school meets the standards.
- 2.11 The school applies an appropriate anti-bullying policy effectively. It educates pupils about the dangers of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying, and about the importance of raising concerns. Staff are trained effectively about handling bullying. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that incidents of bullying were rare and that staff dealt with them swiftly and effectively, including any showing prejudice against those with protected characteristics. Behaviour logs show that leaders identify and respond to the few incidents of bullying which occur suitably and effectively, including in boarding.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11; NMS 6]

- 2.12 The school meets the standards.
- 2.13 The school implements an appropriate health and safety policy effectively. Health and safety responsibilities are clearly delineated. Leaders and trustees monitor health and safety effectively and ensure that all required checks and maintenance are carried out. The school takes effective measures to ensure appropriate security is in place. Access to school buildings, including boarding houses, is controlled effectively.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; NMS 15]

- 2.14 The school meets the standards.
- 2.15 The school ensures that pupils are supervised appropriately. Discussions with staff and scrutiny of duty rotas confirm that sufficient staff are always in place to supervise pupils effectively during breaks, lunchtimes and after school. They also confirm that a suitable number of boarding staff are available overnight to boarders. Boarders confirmed that they are always able to contact a member of staff at night if necessary. The school implements appropriate arrangements for supervising pupils when they use the woods adjacent to the school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 6]

- 2.16 The school meets the standards.

- 2.17 The school implements an appropriate risk assessment policy effectively. Risk assessments seen demonstrate that systematic and effective risk assessment is in place, including for the school site.

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

- 2.18 The school meets the standards.
- 2.19 The school carries out all required pre-employment checks before staff, supply staff and proprietors commence working at the school. These checks are recorded appropriately in a single central register of appointments. Any persons over the age of 16 years who are not staff but live on the school site are appropriately checked and sign an appropriate written agreement.

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

- 2.20 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; NMS 18]

- 2.21 The school meets the standards.
- 2.22 The school implements a suitable three-stage complaints procedure. Scrutiny of the record of complaints confirms that the school responds appropriately to complainants within published timescales. The log is comprehensive and indicates where complaints relate to boarding.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 13]

- 2.23 The school meets the standards.
- 2.24 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. In particular, the proprietor responds effectively when any concerns are raised, including by investigating carefully the veracity of these and determining whether any changes are needed to school procedures as a result.

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 no further action is required as a result of this visit.

4. Summary of evidence

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