



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Report for an Additional Inspection

Dean Close School

April 2021

School's details

School name	Dean Close School		
DfE number	916/6035		
Registered charity number	1086829		
Address	Dean Close School Shelburne Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL51 6HE		
Telephone number	01242 258000		
Email address	office@deanclose.org.uk		
Headmaster	Mr Bradley Salisbury		
Chair of governors	Mrs Kathryn Carden		
Age range	13 to 19		
Number of pupils on roll	474		
	Day pupils	246	Boarders 228
	Seniors	286	Sixth form 188
Date of visit	27 April 2021		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Dean Close School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 13 to 19 years. The school is located in Cheltenham and is part of the Dean Close Foundation. The warden oversees the foundation and reports to a board of trustees who are responsible for governance. Boarders are accommodated in six boarding houses, three for male pupils and three for female pupils. The school has 101 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities, none of whom has an education, health and care plan. There are 68 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a progress monitoring visit in October 2019.

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 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding); NMS 2, 8, 9 and 11	Met
Part 3, paragraph 8 (safeguarding of boarders)	Not met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 13	Not met
NMS 3 (boarders' health and well-being)	Met
NMS 5 (boarding accommodation)	Met
NMS 6 (safety of boarders)	Not met
NMS 15 (staffing and supervision of boarding)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 2, 8, 9 and 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 does not meet all of the standards.
- 2.4 Safeguarding is suitably managed to ensure effective implementation of the school's policy, including in boarding. Suitable procedures are in place to listen to pupils, who confirm that they feel safe and have sufficient opportunities and channels to express concerns. They are confident that they will be supported appropriately, and suitable action is taken when they express a concern. The school liaises promptly and effectively with the local safeguarding children partnership, and with external agencies involved in the support of pupils' mental health. Discussion with staff confirmed that they understand their responsibilities to safeguard children. They readily share and record concerns and know that they can make a direct referral to children's services if necessary. They understand the measures the school has put in place to prevent and respond to instances of peer-on-peer abuse. There are appropriate staff conduct and whistleblowing procedures and suitable arrangements to handle any allegations against adults working with children.
- 2.5 Records show that, on joining the school, new members of staff, including those with responsibility for boarders, receive appropriate induction. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that all staff receive regular formal training and informal updates on safeguarding practice and issues. Records of this training are systematically kept and show that the training for all staff is current and appropriate. Trustees provide effective support for and oversight of the safeguarding team, ensure appropriate arrangements for staff recruitment and conduct an annual review of the school's safeguarding policy and practice.
- 2.6 The school provides appropriate induction for boarders. There is specific guidance for those boarders required to isolate or to enter quarantine with regard to COVID-19, including those who arrive from or travel through 'red list' countries. This ensures that they understand what is expected and acceptable, as well as the practicalities of being in quarantine and how they will be safeguarded. They continue to have access to a choice of staff to whom they can turn for guidance or for help with a personal problem, as well as access to an independent listener. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure that the provision of food, drinks and snacks at suitable times and that boarders' laundry is managed appropriately.
- 2.7 The school's arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders in most aspects have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.
- 2.8 However, it does not meet NMS 6 for the reasons set out below and therefore its arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders have not had sufficient regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

Boarders' health and well-being [NMS 3]

- 2.9 The school meets the standard.

- 2.10 The school has, and implements effectively, appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell. It promotes the physical and mental health and emotional well-being of boarders, including those who are required to isolate or enter quarantine. This provides appropriately for those who arrive from or travel through 'red list' countries, for whom provision has been suitably adapted in line with government regulations. These arrangements include the provision of suitable accommodation for boarders who are unwell and the storage of medication. Appropriate protocols are in place for the administration of first aid and for medical emergencies.

Boarding accommodation [NMS 5]

- 2.11 The school meets the standard.
- 2.12 Suitable sleeping accommodation, appropriately furnished, is provided for boarders. It is suitably lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained. Accommodation allocated to boarders who are required to isolate or enter quarantine, including those who arrive from or travel through 'red list' countries, is protected from access by unauthorised persons and is separate from other members of the school community, as required by government guidelines. Arrangements for the delivery of meals and other essential items to this accommodation, and for cleaning, laundry and the handling of waste, are appropriate and in line with the relevant guidance.

Safety of boarders [NMS 6]

- 2.13 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.14 The school ensures compliance with most aspects of relevant health and safety laws by drawing up and implementing effectively its health and safety policy in almost all areas. This includes appropriate arrangements to ensure the health and safety of pupils who need to quarantine or isolate whilst in boarding accommodation.
- 2.15 However, it has not implemented effectively its COVID-19 risk assessment policy for boarders returning from 'red list' countries in all aspects, as it has not ensured that in all cases no interim stop in a public place is made between the port of entry and school, as stipulated in DfE requirements.
- 2.16 The accommodation allocated to pupils, including those required to quarantine or isolate, is well-maintained so as to ensure their health, safety and welfare.

Staffing and supervision [NMS 15]

- 2.17 The school meets the standard.
- 2.18 Boarders are at all times under the responsibility of identified members of staff who are suitably qualified and experienced. There is always at least one adult member of staff in each boarding house at night and boarders have a satisfactory means of contacting them. Staff accommodation is appropriately separated from accommodation and facilities provided for boarding pupils. Arrangements have been appropriately adapted to accommodate DfE requirements in respect of boarders in isolation or quarantine. This includes those who arrive from or travel through 'red list' countries, and supervision of their behaviour.

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; NMS 13]

2.20 The school does not meet the standards.

2.21 The trustees do not always ensure that leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role; that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively, and that they actively promote the well-being of pupils, so that the school meets the independent school standards and National Minimum Standards consistently. The school does not implement consistently its COVID-19 risk assessment relating to travel arrangements for pupils returning from a 'red list' country, thereby failing to comply with all relevant regulatory requirements.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

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

- Ensure that leaders and managers monitor the effective implementation of the risk assessment relating to travel arrangements for pupils returning from a 'red list' country in order to comply with the relevant regulatory requirements [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); NMS 13.3 to 13.5].

NMS 6, Safety of boarders [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 8]

- Ensure that the risk assessment relating to travel arrangements for pupils returning from a 'red list' country is implemented consistently, thus meeting the relevant regulatory requirements [NMS 6.1 and 6.3; and, for the same reason, paragraph 8(b)].

4. Summary of evidence

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