

LUCTON SCHOOL

Lucton, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 9PN

03 OCTOBER 2017

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lucton School is a co-educational day and boarding school situated in rural Herefordshire just outside Leominster. It is based in an eighteenth-century house, with adjoining buildings, which dates from the initial founding of the school in 1708 as an institution to educate local children. The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of governors. It educates pupils from the ages of 0 to 18. Currently the school educates 341 pupils, including those in the nursery, of whom around a third are boarders, mostly from overseas. There are 174 pupils in Years 7 to 13, of whom 52 are in the sixth form. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or statement of special educational needs. There are 50 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and 47 have English as an additional language (EAL) of whom 44 require and receive support. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2016.

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

This was an unannounced Additional Inspection at the request of the Department for Education which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and specific National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2015, particularly those concerned with safeguarding; the provision of information; the suitability of staff; health and safety, in particular risk assessment; the quality of education; handling of parents' complaints; and the quality of leadership and management. The visit was focused on the senior school.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b)], 8(a) and (b), and NMS 11]

The school does not meet the regulation.

The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. Implementation of the school's safeguarding procedures is not wholly effective and therefore does not provide appropriate support for pupils' needs.

Safeguarding procedures are implemented to safeguard children at risk and those in need. Staff show effective understanding of their responsibilities, including in those areas which are the focus of most recent changes in safeguarding guidance, in particular the vulnerability of pupils with SEND and those from overseas. Suitable recruitment procedures for staff are included within the safeguarding policy. Staff show suitable awareness of the staff code of conduct, safeguarding procedures and most other advice. Reference is made in the safeguarding

policy to a whistleblowing policy but in interviews it was apparent that these provisions had not been made clear to staff in training, including on induction, or they had not understood them, and the school had not checked their understanding sufficiently. Staff lack confidence that concerns can be expressed to senior staff or governors without prejudice to their own position, or that these will be acted upon.

The safeguarding policy includes suitable definitions of abuse, although does not make specific reference to their position in Annex A of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2016 (KCSIE). It provides appropriate guidance regarding possible abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil, including linking such abuse to bullying. Records of serious behavioural incidents show effective action is taken and recorded, with records monitored to identify any potential trends. The school has an effective understanding of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) guidance on reporting pupil-on-pupil abuse. Discussion with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) confirmed that pupils receive help to address risks and prevent issues escalating. Some staff expressed the view that they would be able to support new pupils from overseas more effectively if the school obtained more detail about potential concerns, for example about eating. Effective liaison with local agencies where concerns are identified is confirmed in written evidence from records. The current DSL, newly appointed, acts on and refers the early signs of abuse and neglect, monitors any potential for radicalisation, keeps clear records, ensures the school listens to the views of individual pupils and shares information promptly, as required by KCSIE. Some staff expressed concern that, previously, their anxieties about behaviour which might suggest potential radicalisation had not been taken seriously. Some staff also appeared unaware that they could take action independently to pass on concerns to external agencies; others stated that they felt inhibited from doing so. Staff with particular responsibilities monitor children in need effectively. Effective communication is maintained with parents where appropriate. Pupils receive guidance on staying safe and show understanding of what they have been taught, including in relation to safety, and monitoring and filtering of technology is effective.

The safeguarding policy gives contact details for required local agencies. Arrangements for handling allegations against staff are included in safeguarding procedures; they include seeking immediate advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officers (LADO). The school understands its role in reporting any person whose services are no longer used where referral criteria are met to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and/or the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL). Alternative persons of appropriate status are provided in the absence of the DSL.

Annual review of safeguarding is appropriate with the most recent review of policy undertaken in June 2017. There is regular contact between those with safeguarding responsibilities and a nominated governor to liaise regarding safeguarding. When incidents linked to safeguarding occur, they are communicated to governors through a standing item on the agenda for full governors' meetings.

The training for the DSL and deputies is appropriate. Training is held in the school for teaching and non-teaching staff, including at the beginning of the current term. Uncertainties in staff understanding of areas required for training such as whistleblowing, including at induction, indicate that previous training has not been of sufficient quality or scope, and that staff understanding has not been appropriately checked. Records of staff attendance at training shown to inspectors consisted only of signatures from staff attending. This prevents immediate identification of any staff who may have been absent and need to be updated or the precise nature of training received. It fails to identify when the next scheduled training, or follow-up training is needed for individual staff.

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

The school meets the regulation.

The welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up of a written risk assessment policy. This is implemented effectively through the drawing up of risk assessments for specific areas of the school, including, for example, risks of injury to pupils when crossing the road to the stables and sports facilities. Appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified, such as through clear instructions for crossing and restrictions on who may cross unescorted.

Boarding Accommodation [NMS 5.8]

The school meets the standard.

Any use of surveillance equipment such as CCTV cameras is used in such a way that it does not intrude unreasonably on boarders' privacy.

Suitability of Staff [ISSR Part 4, paragraph 18 and NMS 14]

The school meets the regulation and standard.

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

Quality of Education [ISSR Part 1, para 2 (1) (a) and (b) (i), (2) (a) (b) (d) (e) & (h); paras 3 and 4]

The school meets the regulations.

The school has an appropriate curriculum policy which provides for the needs of senior age pupils. It provides for all required areas of learning and for the ages, aptitudes and needs of all senior-age pupils, including those with SEND or EAL. Programmes of study for pupils with EAL and SEND are appropriate and are implemented following effective screening procedures to identify pupils' individual educational needs. Suitable personal, social and health education for senior-age pupils is provided and pupils demonstrated awareness and understanding of what they are taught. Suitable careers guidance is given although this is not specifically identified in the curriculum policy. Pupils confirmed they had received effective help in selecting GCSE options and in preparing university applications. The school's arrangements are implemented effectively to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress. Results of public examinations show attainment at levels expected for pupils' abilities, or above these levels. Evidence from observation of lessons, including review of pupils' work seen during the lessons, confirm this for all pupils, including those with SEND and/or EAL. Teaching is effective in the senior school and shows appropriate assessment of pupils' needs and of their progress. The school uses standardised measures of progress effectively to chart pupils' long-term progress. The quality of teaching is monitored by senior leaders through such benchmarks and through some mechanisms for appraisal of teaching although current arrangements have not been implemented for all staff as yet.

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

The school meets the regulation.

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 to be handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33; NMS 18]

The school does not meet the regulation and standard.

The school has an appropriate complaints policy which is made available to parents of current and prospective pupils on application to the school, as stated on the website. The policy is concise and generally clear but it is not implemented effectively with regard to recording complaints. The log of formal complaints is unsystematic, with entries not in date order, with the dates complaints are received and the dates they are resolved missing in some cases, and some names of the complainant absent or unclear. Some issues recorded are minor pupil behavioural issues rather than formal complaints. Formal complaints are identified but no indication is given whether these proceed to a panel hearing. Complaints identified during discussion with governors do not appear on the log. Records of the action taken, whether a complaint is upheld or not, are not sufficient, given the unsystematic recording in the log, to give a clear overview of how the school handles parents' complaints, the nature of complaints handled, and the school's responses. Absence of clear dates in some cases prevents confirmation that the school implements its policy with regard to timescales. Governors do not currently regularly monitor the log of formal complaints.

Quality of Leadership and Management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 13.1-5]

The school does not meet the regulation and standards.

Leadership and management do not consistently show the appropriate skills and knowledge to ensure that the regulatory requirements are met. In particular, communication between senior managers, governors and staff is not sufficiently effective to ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is ensured with regard to all elements of statutory guidance, although the school promotes the well-being of pupils overall. In particular, staff are inhibited in making constructive suggestions regarding potential improvements to the welfare arrangements for the pupil body or individual pupils. Safeguarding training has not been effective enough in ensuring that whistleblowing procedures are understood. Governors maintain oversight of regulations in many areas but have been insufficiently pro-active in monitoring some regulatory areas, particularly with regard to handling parents' complaints. They have identified the need to improve monitoring recently but their action plan has yet to be fully implemented.

REGULATORY ACTION POINTS

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 the following actions:

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

- Ensure that all staff understand whistleblowing procedures, and that their understanding is checked.
- Ensure that all adults in the school understand that all have a role and responsibility to contribute to strategies to safeguard pupils, and are encouraged to identify any concerns freely.
- Improve the recording of staff training in child protection to enable clear identification of who has been trained and when, the content of training and future training needs. [paragraph 7 (a) and (b) and 8 (a) and (b); NMS 11]

Manner in which complaints are to be handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33; NMS 18]

- Keep a comprehensive, clear log of formal complaints which indicates in every case the date the complaint was received, the complainant, the date of resolution, whether the complaint was resolved following a formal procedure, or proceeded to a panel hearing.
- Ensure that the log records the action taken by the school as a result of any complaints regardless of whether they are upheld. [paragraph 33 (c); (j) (i) and (ii)]

Quality of Leadership and Management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 13.1-5]

- Improve communication between governors, senior managers and all staff to ensure the knowledge and skills of all staff are focused without inhibition on safeguarding pupils' welfare.
- Implement the governors' proposed action plan with sufficient rigour to achieve effective oversight and to ensure that leadership and management demonstrate the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the regulatory requirements consistently.