



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Report for an Additional and Progress Monitoring Inspection

The Purcell School

November 2020



School's details

School	The Purcell School			
DfE number	919/6239			
Registered charity number	312855			
Address	The Purcell School Aldenham Road Bushey Hertfordshire WD23 2TS			
Telephone number	01923 331100			
Email address	info@purcell-school.org			
Principal	Mr Paul Bambrough			
Chair of governors	Sir Roger Jackling			
Age range	10 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	192			
	Day pupils	46	Boarders	146
	Juniors	10	Seniors	95
	Sixth Form	87		
Date of visit	2 November 2020			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 The Purcell School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 10 to 18 years. It is a specialist music school and most pupils are eligible for support under the government Music and Dance Scheme. Boarders are accommodated in three boarding houses within the school grounds; one each for boarders in Years 6 to 9, and Years 10 to 13; and one for female boarders in Years 10 to 12. The school is overseen by a board of governors. Also, 48 pupils in the school require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities, one of whom has an education, health and care plan. Additionally, 26 pupils speak English as an additional language. The school's previous regulatory compliance inspection took place on 7 to 8 February 2018. The current principal took up his position on 1 September 2018.

Purpose of the visit

- 1.2 This was an unannounced additional and progress monitoring 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, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 11	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (recruitment of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 14	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints); NMS 18	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 13	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [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 The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that the school has successfully completed the action required as a result of the previous regulatory compliance inspection. All staff receive suitable safeguarding training, including update training, and the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) keeps systematic records of all safeguarding training undertaken. The DSL and deputy DSLs, including the principal, are trained to the appropriate level. Staff who spoke to the inspectors demonstrated a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities, including an understanding of types of abuse, and their responsibilities relating to whistleblowing and the appropriate use of the internet and social media. Records show that the staff are swift to report any safeguarding concerns to the DSL and any allegations against school personnel to the principal. Any such notifications are referred onto appropriate external agencies promptly. The school follows the instructions and advice of external agencies, including about whether any further referrals are appropriate. Records also show that the school follows local inter-agency procedures and acts appropriately to support children in need and children at risk. Leaders have recently introduced an electronic system of recording concerns and trained staff in its usage. Staff who spoke to the inspectors demonstrated an understanding of how to use this system and expressed how it helps to build up an holistic picture of a pupil's situation, so that their needs can be understood and met. Senior and sixth-form pupils, including boarders, who spoke to the inspectors said that they feel safe in the school and that they know who they can go to should they have any concerns. Records show that pupils are confident to bring concerns to the safeguarding team's attention, and that the school acts in response to these. Pupils are confident in their understanding of how to stay safe online.
- 2.5 Governors review the school's safeguarding policy and procedures annually and have supported senior leaders' initiation of specific and effective steps to promote and ensure a suitable safeguarding culture in the school, including in boarding. These include the commissioning of an in-depth review of safeguarding and the effective implementation of its findings. Measures taken by senior leaders also include the effective enforcement of a staff code of conduct and associated policies, such as the staff information and communication technology (ICT) acceptable use policy. Staff sign a declaration that they have read and understood these policies. Staff who spoke to the inspectors demonstrated understanding of expectations of their behaviour towards pupils. The school's safeguarding policy provides for effective recruitment of staff.

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

- 2.6 The school meets the standards.
- 2.7 The school carries out all required pre-employment checks on staff and proprietors, including enhanced criminal record checks, prohibition checks, and, for staff, the obtaining of at least two suitable references. The school does not make use of supply staff at present. The school records pre-employment checks on a single central register of appointments as required. Arrangements for checks in boarding are suitably implemented, including for those over 16 living in boarding accommodation who are not employed by the school.

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

- 2.8 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]

- 2.9 The school meets the standards.
- 2.10 The school implements a suitable complaints policy effectively. The complaints log shows that informal and formal complaints submitted to the school are responded to in line with the school's complaints procedure, including within appropriate timescales. No complaints are recorded to have reached a stage three panel hearing.

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

- 2.11 The school meets the standards.
- 2.12 Proprietors and senior leaders have successfully implemented the action plan put in place as a result of the previous regulatory compliance inspection. Leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards and related boarding standards are met consistently. Leaders and managers respond appropriately to any safeguarding concerns and allegations and implement a suitable safeguarding culture, demonstrating that they actively promote the 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 and 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 held discussions with the principal, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors. They talked with groups of pupils and scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.