



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Additional Inspection Report**

**ACS Cobham International School**

**April 2023**

## School's details

<b>School name</b>	ACS International School, Cobham			
<b>DfE number</b>	936/6529			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1179820			
<b>Address</b>	ACS International School Portsmouth Road Cobham Surrey KT11 1BL			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01932 867251			
<b>Email address</b>	cobhamadmissions@acs-schools.com			
<b>Head</b>	Mr Barnaby Sandow			
<b>Chair of trustees</b>	Mr Bob McNaughton			
<b>Proprietor</b>	ACS International Schools Limited			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	1315			
	<b>Day pupils</b>	1128	<b>Boarders</b>	187
	<b>Early Childhood</b>	104	<b>Lower School</b>	225
	<b>Middle School</b>	377	<b>High School</b>	609
<b>Date of inspection</b>	18 April 2023			

## 1. Introduction

### Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 ACS International School, Cobham, is an independent co-educational day and boarding school which provides education for both the children of local and internationally mobile families. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of trustees. It is a member of a group of four international schools. The school's four sections include Early Childhood, which contains an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting. Boarding is available from the age of 12. The school has 243 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Five pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 504 pupils, many of whom are bi- or multilingual. This visit was focused mainly in the senior school. The school's previous inspection in March 2022 was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection.

### Purpose of the inspection

- 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 2022 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development); NMS 3	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8 and 13	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraphs 9 (behaviour) and 10 (bullying); NMS 15, 16 and 17	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraphs 11 (health and safety), 12 (fire) and 16(risk assessment); NMS 9, 10 and 18	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 13 (first aid); NMS 7	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision); NMS 20	<b>Met</b>
Part 3 paragraph 15 (admission and attendance registers)	<b>Met</b>
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	<b>Met</b>
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints); NMS 14	<b>Met</b>
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	<b>Met</b>

## 2. Inspection findings

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5; NMS 3]**

- 2.1 The school meets the standards.
- 2.2 The school actively promotes fundamental British values which include respect for those of other cultural backgrounds and faiths, the rule of law, democracy and individual liberty. Leaders recognise that pupils do not necessarily come from countries with similar values to the UK and acknowledges that there are occasional instances of disrespect between pupils. The school's response is to address issues around tolerance with the pupils continually. They sometimes engage visiting speakers as well as promoting such respect within the school curriculum. Appropriate values are promoted through consistent teaching such as in the advisory programme, assemblies, the personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes. This is supported by the school's pastoral work. As part of this, staff encourage pupils to complete a short online wellbeing check each week. This enables them to track both individual pupils' wellbeing and any emerging patterns across pupil cohorts. For example, the school has held workshops around misogyny as a result of such tracking. Both staff and older pupils spoken to, including boarders, opine that the school has an inclusive and respectful culture.
- 2.3 The school gives priority to the development of pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. They are supported in valuing themselves through celebration assemblies which reward a wide range of effort and achievement. Staff ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND have the opportunity to be acknowledged. Pupils are aware of their different characteristics and needs and show tolerance and empathy towards others such as those with protected characteristics, including those with SEND. Pupils are encouraged to develop their sense of morality and to take responsibility for their behaviour. Older pupils stated that they now make decisions about their behaviour through their intrinsic sense of what is right rather than from the need for reward or fear of sanctions. Through working and living in a multi-cultural community, pupils are enabled to develop a strong awareness and understanding of different cultural traditions which they report is significant in their respect for one another and enriches their world view. Boarders from around the world confirm that they feel part of the boarding family and are happy. Boarding staff are committed to the school's *Thousand Hours* project which provides each boarder with opportunities for individual conversations with staff.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding and safeguarding of boarders [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 8 and 13]**

#### **Safeguarding policy**

- 2.4 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.5 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**

- 2.6 The school meets the standards.
- 2.7 The school's implementation of its safeguarding policy and associated procedures provides suitable and effective support for pupils' needs. All staff and trustees, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies, are trained at a level commensurate with their responsibilities and demonstrate an appropriate understanding of their training. Staff refer any concern promptly to the

DSL and are aware of the need to provide early support to pupils in all sections of the school. Confidential records of safeguarding concerns are maintained securely and confirm that the DSL acts promptly to refer, seek advice appropriately from local services or deal with concerns internally. The recording system enables incidents of bullying to be readily identified for consideration as potentially child against child abuse. Pastoral and safeguarding staff are aware of the particular vulnerabilities of pupils with protected characteristics, especially those with SEND. Staff effectively assess risk and produce detailed individual care plans which are summarised for academic and boarding staff where appropriate. Further support for pupils is available from the staff team of trained counsellors and an external counselling service. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. Boarders reported that there are staff in the house whom they trust sufficiently to consult should they have a serious concern. Boarders also have suitable access to external child support agencies.

- 2.8 The school has strong filters on its network which are monitored effectively to identify any unsafe online activity. Staff are aware of the need for vigilance in relation to pupils' inappropriate use of social media and messaging. Pupils receive frequent appropriate talks and workshops to build their awareness of misuse of technology and how to keep themselves safe. Recruitment procedures for staff comply with the safeguarding requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) 2022. Arrangements for handling allegations against staff, including low level concerns, ensure that the DSL seeks advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officer (LADO) prior to any investigation.
- 2.9 The school's safeguarding team meets frequently and the DSLs from the group's four schools meet regularly to share best practice. They monitor use of technology in the school effectively. The trustee with oversight for boarding meets regularly with the head of boarding and with boarders to inform proprietorial oversight of boarders' wellbeing. Trustees receive and discuss detailed reports and data analysis from the safeguarding team, which informs future training and resource allocation. The safeguarding trustee has regular meetings with the DSL to identify areas for focus which are then closely monitored.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour and bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 9 and 10; NMS 15, 16 and 17]**

- 2.10 The school meets the standards.
- 2.11 The school has suitable behaviour and anti-bullying policies. These policies are centred around suitable values and promote respect for all members of the school community, including between different genders and those with protected characteristics. The policies and sanctions for poor behaviour are known and understood by staff and pupils. Instances of misbehaviour and bullying are recorded in appropriate detail to enable senior staff to identify trends and patterns and take suitable action. Pupils, however, report that bullying is rare and they say it is effectively addressed. Records show that bullying as compared with single acts of unkindness is infrequent. Staff consider the context of poor behaviour and bullying, such as protected characteristics including SEND, when deciding how best to address it. Whilst there is a suitable range of escalating sanctions, the school's priority is to work with pupils to help them understand their behaviour and its consequences rather than instigating punitive action in most cases. Links with safeguarding are clearly discerned and both alleged victims and alleged perpetrators given appropriate support. The trustees gain an informed view of behavioural issues, through scrutiny of policies and data analysis.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety, fire and risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 11, 12 and 16; NMS 9, 10 and 18]**

- 2.12 The school meets the standards.
- 2.13 The school has an appropriate health and safety policy which includes fire and risk assessment, written in accordance with health and safety legislation and guidance. The leadership ensures that practical arrangements comply with policy and that training is provided, as appropriate, for all members of the school community. Health and safety training is part of induction for new staff. The school implements effective measures to ensure the safeguarding status of all persons on site is readily identifiable. Staff are therefore able to identify any unchecked visitors easily. The school assesses risk appropriately, in relation to the site, pupils' activities and off-site visits and also for vulnerable pupils with specific individual needs. The proprietor oversees these measures effectively so that the premises are maintained in a safe condition, as observed during tours of the teaching and boarding areas.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – first aid [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 13; NMS 7]**

- 2.14 The school meets the standards.
- 2.15 The school has suitable procedures for first aid, pupils who become unwell and those with ongoing medical conditions or disabilities. Parents must complete a medical questionnaire before their child joins the school. A clear policy provides suitable guidance to staff on first aid and the administration of medication where required. Staff receive regularly updated first aid training, including paediatric training for the Early Years department. Boarding staff are all trained appropriately in first aid. Records of treatment and medication are systematic and undertaken by qualified nurses in the medical centre. Staff are made aware of specific pupils' ongoing medical conditions. Boarders all have access to a landline phone in their rooms to contact house staff should they fall ill during the night. Medical care at night is appropriate and sensitive to individual pupils' needs.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; NMS 20]**

- 2.16 The school meets the standards.
- 2.17 The school provides suitable guidance for staff to ensure the necessary supervision of pupils during the school day. In boarding there are appropriate numbers of staff on duty to ensure appropriate supervision and support during the night, particularly should a boarder feel unwell. Boarders receive an informative handbook to ensure they are familiar with boarding protocols.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – admission and attendance registers [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15]**

- 2.18 The school meets the standard.
- 2.19 The school maintains appropriate records of admission and registration. Should a pupil be unable to attend school for a prolonged duration, staff maintain regular pastoral and academic contact and remote working is offered.

**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 14]**

- 2.21 The school meets the standards.
- 2.22 The school has an appropriate complaints policy that is readily available to parents on the school's website. It is suitably detailed and provides timescales for response to complaints at both the informal and formal stages, including the required timescales in the EYFS. The school records the stage at which complaints are resolved in a suitable log. This indicates that all complaints are addressed openly and investigated appropriately. The school has followed its timescales for handling complaints overall. The log shows that in a few cases considerable time has been allowed to elapse before the complainant has indicated they wish to proceed to the next stage, thus prolonging the complaints process. Findings from panel hearings have suggested a tightening up of these timescales to be appropriate. Inspection evidence supports this view. The complaint log shows that the school has taken suitable action in response to any investigation.

**Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 2]**

- 2.23 The school meets the standards.
- 2.24 The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are consistently met. The proprietor has established robust procedures to ensure that the school's policies are implemented effectively and actively promote the wellbeing of pupils, including boarders.

### **3. Regulatory action points**

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.



## 4. Summary of evidence

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

### Inspectors

Mrs Jan Preece

Reporting inspector

Mr Patrick Wenham

Assistant reporting inspector