

## **GEMS SHERFIELD**

Reading Road, Sherfield-on-Loddon, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 0HU

**19 SEPTEMBER 2017**

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

GEMS Sherfield is a co-educational school for pupils between the ages of three months and eighteen years of age. It has four sections: Sherfield Nursery for children from three months to three years of age; pre-prep for pupils in pre-Reception to Year 2; prep which comprises Year 3 to 8; and the senior school for those in Years 9 to 13. Boarding is available for pupils from Year 5 upwards. The school is part of Global Education Management Systems (GEMS) who manage a number of schools in Europe and the United Kingdom. The school is overseen by the GEMS governance board, which also has oversight of the other GEMS schools in the UK.

There are 416 pupils on roll, 225 boys and 191 girls, of which 81 are in the EYFS, 43 children in the nursery, 77 in the pre-prep, 149 in the prep and 147 in the senior section of the school. There are 41 boarders of which 33 board on a full-time basis. The school has identified 63 pupils as requiring support for special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are no pupils with a statement or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 40 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), five of whom are at an early stage of language acquisition. The previous ISI inspection was in January 2017.

### **PURPOSE OF THE VISIT**

This was an unannounced additional visit at the request of the Department for Education which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2015 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, particularly those concerned with safeguarding and the provision of this information to parents; the suitability of boarding accommodation; the arrangements for activities and free time for boarders; fire precautions and drills within boarding; the management and development of boarding and the suitability of staffing and supervision for boarders.

### **INSPECTION FINDINGS**

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b) and 8 (a) and (b); NMS 11; EYFS 3.4 – 3.7]; Provision of information to parents [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32 (1) (c)]**

The school does not meet all of the regulations, requirements and standard.

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. The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

The school's safeguarding arrangements reflect the requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) September 2016* and offer appropriate support for pupils' needs. A suitable recruitment policy, staff code of conduct and whistleblowing procedures are understood by staff. Safeguarding is correctly managed and any records are stored confidentially. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and, where appropriate, the deputy DSL, gather information from staff, liaise appropriately with parents and local agencies, including advice from the LSCB and take prompt action if concerns are expressed about a child. Pupils feel that they are listened to by the school and they feel confident in approaching staff should they have any concerns or worries. Governors review the school's safeguarding policy and procedures annually and ensure they reflect the current requirements; safeguarding is an item on the agenda of every meeting of the governing body and there is a nominated governor for safeguarding. Pupils confirmed during interview that they receive appropriate support in areas such as e-safety and staying safe on-line.

All staff, including the DSLs, are appropriately trained. Training records are maintained. New staff receive an appropriate induction. All staff have received suitable update training. Staff understand how to respond to a disclosure and the importance of reporting concerns promptly. They know who they should report to and are aware that anyone can make a referral to children's services. Definitions of safeguarding in the policy are understood by staff.

The school has suitable procedures for reporting a disclosure of abuse or allegation against an adult working in the school. The school is aware of the requirement to report to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) when appropriate.

However, the school's safeguarding arrangements do not pay sufficient regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, notably those relating to fire precautions and drills. The school has not carried out fire drills outside the normal school day. Consequently, fire drills are not appropriately logged. Boarders and staff confirm that drills are not undertaken with sufficient regularity.

### **Boarding Accommodation [NMS 5.1]**

The school meets the standard.

The boarding accommodation is housed in a single purpose-built facility. Separate floors are assigned to boys and girls. There is an interlinking staircase between each floor which is alarmed every night to protect the privacy of boarders on each floor. Should boarders leave their rooms for any purpose, including seeking help from the staff, then an alarm rings in the staff accommodation.

The sleeping accommodation is well organised and managed with risk assessments undertaken and findings acted upon to reduce risk for all boarders. There are private study areas in every bedroom and there are spacious common rooms for boarders to meet and relax. The school has responded to the recommendation from the previous inspection by providing additional opportunities for all boarders to mix. Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for boarders, which are located in each room and provide appropriate levels of privacy.

The boarding house is appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained. On each floor, there is suitable accommodation to provide accessible accommodation for any boarders with restricted mobility. Accommodation is suitably furnished and of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders

accommodated, with appropriate protection and separation between genders, age groups and accommodation for adults. Each floor has a resident staff member and there is additional tutor accommodation on the top storey of the boarding house. Boarding accommodation is reserved for boarders' use and is protected from access by unauthorised persons.

**Safety of boarders [NMS 6.1, 6.2, 6.3]**

The school meets the standard.

The school ensures compliance with relevant health and safety laws by adoption of a suitable policy which is effectively implemented. The boarding premises, accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard that, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensures the health, safety and welfare of boarders. The school ensures that the welfare of boarders at the school is safeguarded and promoted through a detailed risk assessment policy that is implemented effectively. Appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified, including for off-site visits. The boarding house is locked each night and records kept by the duty member of staff.

**Fire Precautions and drills [NMS 7.1 and 7.2]**

The school does not meet the standard.

The school has a suitable fire risk assessment which is regularly reviewed. The fire risk prevention policy details fire procedures and includes how staff will be trained effectively. The school has appointed a suitably trained fire warden to oversee preventive and protective measures. All fire equipment is suitably maintained and the provision within the boarding house is supported by clear notices, emergency lighting, fire alarm points, fire detectors and extinguishers. Staff working within the boarding house are issued with fire safety information.

However, the school has not carried out sufficient fire drills outside the normal school day. Consequently, fire drills are not appropriately logged. Boarders and staff confirm that drills had not been undertaken with sufficient regularity. Scrutiny of records showed that there was only one fire drill recorded for each of the spring term and summer terms of 2017. There was no indication in the record for the summer term as to the time that this drill was undertaken to ensure drills are carried out in boarding time, including whilst the boarders are asleep. No drill had been undertaken in the first two weeks of the new school year to ensure pupils who were new to boarding fully understood the evacuation procedures. No evidence was available to demonstrate how pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) would receive specific help and guidance on understanding the school's evacuation procedures.

**Activities and free time [NMS 10.1 and 10.2]**

The school meets the standard.

There is an appropriate range and choice of activities for boarders outside teaching time, including sufficient and suitably-timed free time each day. There has been a recent increase in the range of weekend activities available, to which the boarders have responded positively. Suitable risk assessments are in place for any activities which may put boarders at risk of harm. Most activities are compulsory for all boarders. Boarders who do not participate in activities are appropriately supervised by a duty staff member. Boarders make effective use of the school

grounds to walk and use facilities such as the sports hall and art studios. Each section of the boarding house has a suitable social space where pupils can mix and relax. Pupils feel that they have ample opportunities to either mix with other boarders or to be alone, should they so wish. When older boarders are off-site, the school staff check their safety at suitable periods.

#### **Management and development of boarding [NMS 13.1 - 13.9]**

The school does not meet all of the standard.

The school's governing body monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary. Boarding features regularly on the minutes of governors' meetings minutes. There is clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding in the school. A member of the school's senior leadership team is responsible for boarding management. All resident staff are also teaching staff in the school, strengthening the links between academic and boarding staff.

The school's leadership and management generally demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role. The school's leadership and management generally fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the standards are met. The school's leadership and management and governance board generally promote the well-being of pupils. Senior boarding staff are suitably qualified. Records of complaints shows that concerns raised about the management of the boarding house are handled in the line with published procedures.

The school follows and maintains the policies and documents described in Appendix 1. However, records specified in Appendix 2 are not always fully maintained, in particular those relating to fire drills. Such records are not effectively monitored by the school. The issues specified in Appendix 3 are monitored, and action is taken to improve outcomes for children as appropriate.

#### **Staffing and supervision [NMS 15.1, 15.3 - 15.6]**

The school meets the standard.

All members of the boarding team undergo annual performance reviews, which include areas for further professional development and the school provides suitable opportunities. All staff members working in the boarding house have a job description reflecting their duties, and induction training in boarding. The scrutiny of duty rotas demonstrates that there is adequate supervision of boarders outside teaching time. The composition of the duty rotas ensure that staffing is sufficient for the age, number and needs of boarders. The geography of the house ensures that any member of staff on duty can be contacted easily. Boarders are at all times under the responsibility of an identified member of staff who is suitably qualified and experienced. A sign in and out book ensures that staff know the whereabouts of boarders in their charge at all times.

The systems within the school have recently been strengthened after misuse in previous terms. Boarders adhere to the system, which is carefully monitored by boarding staff. There is a suitable policy for pupils going missing and staff understand the procedures. The policy contains all the relevant contact details should the need arise. The school is looking at mechanisms to improve the mobile phone signal within the boarding house. Currently, the staff are reliant on a landline, which cannot always be heard right through the boarding house. Staff understand the procedures and potential need to work with agencies such as the police, should the need arise.

Older pupils are only permitted to attend off-site social occasions with the consent of their parents. The school has a detailed policy on substance and alcohol misuse that is implemented effectively. Any evidence of misuse has been dealt with appropriately by the school. Pupils with EAL are given specific guidance from the school in areas such as asking for directions and the use of any public transport. In the first instance, such pupils are always accompanied by another boarder whose mastery of the English language is strong.

## **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 actions as follows:

### **Welfare, health and safety – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 8]; Fire precautions and drills [NMS 7]**

- Ensure regular fire drills are held outside the normal school day, including when boarders may be asleep, and that such drills are appropriately logged [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 8(b) and NMS 7.2].

### **Management and development of boarding [NMS 13]**

- Proprietors, leaders and managers of boarding must maintain an effective oversight of all NMS requirements, especially those relating to fire precautions and evacuation drills [NMS 13.8].