



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Material Change Inspection Report

Leighton Park School

March 2023

School's details

School	Leighton Park School		
DfE number	870/6001		
Registered charity number	309144		
Address	Leighton Park School Shinfield Road Reading Berkshire RG2 7ED		
Telephone number	0118 9879600		
Email address	info@leightonpark.com		
Head	Mr Matthew Judd		
Chair of governors	Mrs Jan Digby		
Proprietor	Leighton Park Trust		
Age range	11 to 18		
Number of pupils on roll	538		
	Day pupils	408	Boarders 130
	Seniors	371	Sixth Form 167
Date of inspection	3 March 2023		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Leighton Park School is an independent, co-educational day and boarding school. It was founded in 1890 by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and is owned by Leighton Park Trust whose trustees are directors of the company and governors of the school. The school comprises two sections: seniors for pupils aged 11 to 16 years and sixth form for those aged 16 to 18 years. An existing building is currently under redesign and refurbishment to become the new sixth form centre.
- 1.2 The school has three boarding houses. One house is for male and one house for female pupils aged 13 and above. There is a co-educational junior boarding house for pupils aged 11 to 13. The school has identified 107 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 132 pupils. The school's previous inspection was an educational quality and focused compliance inspection which took place in November 2021.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.3 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase pupil capacity from 550 to 600. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2022.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 9	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety); NMS 10	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils); NMS 20	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 30 (premises of and accommodation at schools); NMS 4	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	Met

2. Inspection findings

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

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 Scrutiny of records, observation and discussions with pupils and staff indicate that appropriate safeguards are implemented effectively. Those responsible for safeguarding hold senior positions within the school. They are suitably knowledgeable and appropriately trained, including for multi-agency working. Safeguarding, pastoral, healthcare and boarding staff share key information regularly and effectively. They take into account each individual pupil's physical and psychological needs and wishes. This information is used to agree appropriate action including the drawing-up and implementation of individual support plans. There is effective liaison with external agencies including referral to child and adolescent health services (CAMHS) and the local authority designated officer (LADO) for safeguarding. Training for other staff and for governors is conducted regularly as required. It is effective and includes informal updates. Staff are knowledgeable about changes in recent legislation including the management of children's mental wellbeing, contextual safeguarding, child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence. They understand the principles underpinning the staff code of conduct and the procedures for making a referral, including the importance of low-level reporting. They are confident about using whistleblowing procedures. Interviews with staff confirmed that training is thorough and safeguarding effectively managed. Senior leaders take appropriate action if any perceived breach of the staff code of conduct occurs. They understand their responsibility to make referrals to the relevant statutory bodies once investigations by external agencies are completed. They fulfil this effectively.
- 2.5 The governor responsible for safeguarding meets regularly with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies. This maintains effective oversight of safeguarding policies and their implementation in the main school and the boarding houses. Reports are given regularly to the governing board by the safeguarding governor and the DSL. These highlight appropriate details of any safeguarding incidents which occur, including during trips and outside of school. This ensures that governors have an appropriate level of understanding, scrutiny and oversight. In addition to continuous monitoring, a suitable annual review of safeguarding is undertaken in line with guidance from the local authority (LA).
- 2.6 Pupils stated confidently that they receive a detailed induction when they start school including how to stay safe and who to talk to; how to contact helplines including Childline and the Children's Commissioner; online safety; and behavioural expectations. They can name a number of staff to whom they can turn if they are worried or concerned. Pupils know how to contact the school's independent listeners, and they appreciate the option to share concerns through the school's anonymised online system. Any such concerns are monitored and acted upon by the DSL. Records confirm that when pupils raise a concern they receive a timely response and action is taken where needed.
- 2.7 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11; NMS 9]

- 2.8 The school meets the standards.
- 2.9 The school has an appropriate policy in place for health and safety which is reviewed and updated regularly and implemented consistently. Senior leaders and governors monitor all aspects of health and safety regularly. Those responsible for day-to-day operations provide detailed reports including through completion of required maintenance logs and records of work carried out by internal maintenance staff and contractors. The roles and responsibilities of staff and governors for health and safety are stated clearly and there is appropriate delegation of duties and training. Maintenance staff know the site well and are aware of potential risks and hazards. Appropriate checks of school vehicles and drivers are undertaken which include the issue of annual driving permits. The school has a comprehensive asbestos management plan and appropriate measures are taken to ensure safe control and storage of hazardous substances (COSHH). Well-maintained electronic logs are used effectively by maintenance staff in order to prioritise work schedules and respond to emergencies without delay.
- 2.10 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12; NMS 10]

- 2.11 The school meets the standards.
- 2.12 The school has a suitable fire risk policy which is reviewed and updated annually. The school's fire risk assessment is undertaken by a suitably qualified person. It is reviewed regularly, and any recommendations are implemented without delay. Appropriate fire procedures are in place including for boarding houses. Competent persons have been appointed to assist in taking preventative and protective measures, including ensuring that all parts of the buildings are evacuated if there is a fire. Regular and suitable training is in place for staff and for those with responsibilities, including fire wardens.
- 2.13 Staff, pupils and visitors are provided with appropriate fire safety information, including how to evacuate and where the fire assembly points are located. Half-termly fire drills are conducted at different times of the day and night. These are recorded accurately, including the time it takes for evacuation, any concerns, and any improvements that need to be made. Suitable emergency exits, escape routes and signage are in place, including for the newly redesigned and refurbished sixth form centre. Effective monitoring systems ensure that these are maintained consistently to the required standards. Fire equipment including extinguishers and alarms are checked regularly by external contractors. Records of all fire safety checks are maintained appropriately and monitored by governors.
- 2.14 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

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

- 2.15 The school meets the standards.
- 2.16 The school has a suitable policy for supervising pupils which is implemented effectively. Staff receive guidance during induction and on-going revision is provided in the staff handbook and in regular

updates. Staff have clear job descriptions detailing their duties with regard to supervision. Comprehensive duty rotas are in place covering all areas of the school and times of day taking into account the age, number and needs of pupils and the locations and activities involved. Monitoring by senior staff ensures that supervision is effective, and that cover is put in place without delay if it is required.

- 2.17 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 9]

- 2.18 The school meets the standards.

2.19 There is a suitable policy and procedures with regard to risk assessment. Risk assessments are recorded electronically and monitored effectively by the health and safety committee. There are clear lines of responsibility for assessing risk. Departmental heads, including those responsible for boarding houses, oversee risk assessments in their departments effectively. Senior leaders monitor those for off-site trips. Individual care plans include the assessment of risk for vulnerable pupils. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly, and appropriate action taken where required to reduce risk. The school has completed an effective risk assessment to identify how the proposed increase in numbers would affect school facilities. It has put suitable procedures in place as a result that include: increased capacity in existing buildings; addition of a new sixth-form building; and effective management of the existing communal spaces, such as the dining room and hall, to cater suitably for the proposed increase in numbers.

2.20 The policy for offsite visits is detailed and clear with a helpful flow chart identifying risk assessments that are required. Parents are suitably informed of arrangements for school trips including behaviour expectations, safeguarding procedures, activities and travel details. Risk assessments are amended if changes occur. Any changes to arrangements are communicated to parents without delay.

2.21 Staff confirmed that they had received training regarding the completion of risk assessments. They are confident in completing them, including those for boarding, trips and hazardous activities.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 19]

- 2.22 The school meets the standards.

2.23 There is a suitable recruitment policy in place which covers the required recruitment checks and procedures and which is implemented effectively. All staff, governors and persons engaged in regulated activity, including in boarding, are checked and recorded appropriately on the single central register of appointments (SCR). Those responsible for carrying out the required recruitment checks and the maintenance of staff records ensure that checks and evidence are in place prior to commencing work in the school. Appropriate procedures are in place for managing contractors, including ensuring that they are accompanied at all times if not checked by the school. Visits to boarding areas are suitably regulated.

2.24 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

Premises and accommodation – [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23–30; NMS 4]

- 2.25 The school meets the standards.

- 2.26 Suitable policies and procedures are in place which ensure that the school premises and accommodation and facilities are maintained to a standard where the health, safety and welfare of pupils is ensured as far as possible. There are sufficient designated toilet and changing facilities for male and female pupils throughout the school. These will accommodate the proposed increase in pupil numbers. Suitable disabled facilities are available for staff and visitors.
- 2.27 Suitable accommodation is provided for the medical examination and treatment of pupils and for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils both in boarding houses and in the school's suitably equipped health centre. The accommodation includes toilets and bathroom facilities and is adequately staffed. The school site is suitably secure. All visitors are required to sign in to the main office and are accompanied at all times. Use of surveillance equipment does not intrude upon boarders' privacy. Acoustics and water supply are appropriate throughout the school. Lighting to the footpaths has been increased effectively. There is sufficient space for outdoor play. Accommodation for boarders is appropriate.
- 2.28 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

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

- 2.29 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 2]

- 2.30 The school meets the standards.
- 2.31 Senior leaders and governors, including those with specific responsibilities for safeguarding and boarding, demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that all the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils. Measures planned or implemented for the proposed increase in pupil numbers are likely to ensure pupils' continued wellbeing.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

3.1 It is recommended that the request to increase pupil capacity from 550 to 600 is granted.

4. Summary of evidence

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

Inspector

Mr Desmond Dunne

Reporting inspector