



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Material Change Inspection Report

The Purcell School

February 2023

School's details

School name	The Purcell School		
DfE number	919/6239		
Registered charity number	312855		
Address	The Purcell School Aldenham Road Bushey Herts WD23 2TS		
Telephone number	01923 331100		
Email address	info@purcell-school.org		
Principal	Mr Paul Bambrough		
Chair of governors	Dr Bernard Trafford		
Proprietor	The Trustees of The Purcell School		
Age Range	11 to 18		
Number of pupils on roll	184		
	Day pupils	44	Boarders 140
	Seniors	88	Sixth Form 96
Date of inspection	27 February 2023		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 The Purcell School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school located in Bushey, Hertfordshire since 1997. It is a company limited by guarantee, governed by its directors who are its trustees. The school is one of four specialist schools in England supported by the Department for Education (DfE) music and dance scheme. There are three boarding houses situated on the school's campus. Two provide co-educational accommodation for pupils in years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 13 respectively, the third is a boarding house for female boarders in Years 10 to 13. The last ISI Inspection was an educational quality with a focused compliance inspection in May 2022.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the DfE to assess the school's proposal to increase its pupil capacity from 192 to 220 from September 2023. 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 5, 6, 7 & 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 18–21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	Met
Part 5, paragraph 23–30 (premises and accommodation); NMS 4	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (Provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (manner of handling complaints); NMS 14	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 5, 6, 7 and 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 standard.
- 2.4 Safeguarding procedures are suitably implemented in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2022*. Scrutiny of records together with discussions with pupils and staff indicate that appropriate safeguards are implemented. Pupils, both day and boarders, stated confidently that they know how to stay safe, including online. They confirmed that they can talk to staff if they are worried or concerned, will receive a response and that action will be taken when they express concerns. They confirmed that they have suitable provision for storing their belongings, that the food provided is sufficient and appropriate, and that they have effective access to medical help.
- 2.5 Those responsible for safeguarding hold senior positions within the school. They are suitably knowledgeable and appropriately trained, including for multi-agency working. Regular meetings indicate that key information is shared regularly between safeguarding, pastoral and healthcare staff, taking into account all individual pupil's physical, emotional, mental health and learning needs. This information is used to agree appropriate action and includes steps to deal with any incidents of inappropriate sexual behaviour, including sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. The team has sufficient capacity to provide cover for the proposed increase in numbers.
- 2.6 Training for all staff, whatever their role, is conducted on induction and regularly updated as required. It is effective and includes frequent newsletters to inform staff of current issues for safeguarding and pastoral considerations. As a result, staff are knowledgeable about changes in recent legislation including the management of children's mental wellbeing, contextual safeguarding and child-on-child abuse. They understand the principles underpinning the code of conduct in the staff handbook and demonstrate confidence in recording safeguarding and behavioural concerns using the digital reporting system. They confirmed the procedures for making a referral, including the importance of low-level reporting and whistleblowing. Suitable arrangements exist for handling allegations against staff or other adults working with pupils. In discussion, staff showed an awareness of what may constitute a low-level concern.
- 2.7 The governors responsible for safeguarding meet regularly with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and members of the extended safeguarding team. The governors have received effective safeguarding training and receive regular updates from the designated safeguarding lead. They maintain appropriate oversight of safeguarding policies and their implementation, including of the use of technology. Reports given regularly to the board ensure that they are well informed. In addition to continuous monitoring, a suitable annual review of safeguarding is undertaken in line with guidance from the local authority.
- 2.8 The arrangements are likely to continue to meet the standards with the proposed increase in numbers.

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

- 2.9 The school meets the standards.
- 2.10 Suitable health and safety measures are implemented appropriately, and responsibilities are clearly defined. All required checks and maintenance are recorded effectively, and records confirm that these are completed regularly and when required. Leaders and governors monitor and review the effectiveness of health and safety arrangements appropriately. Refurbishment of some classrooms and accommodation this year will cater for the proposed increase in numbers and the introduction of some new courses. The arrangements are likely to continue to meet the standards with the proposed increase in numbers.

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

- 2.11 The school meets the standards.
- 2.12 Arrangements to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards are effective. Emergency evacuations are held termly both in the day, and during boarding hours, and recorded efficiently. The school checks and maintains fire alarms, firefighting equipment and fire safety equipment appropriately. Current fire safety arrangements are likely to remain suitable with the proposed increase in numbers.

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

- 2.13 The school meets the standards.
- 2.14 The school ensures that all pupils, whether day pupils or boarders, are appropriately supervised. All staff receive suitable training about their responsibilities as part of the induction process, including boarding staff. Pupils who spoke to the inspector confirmed that there is always a member of staff available should they require support or an adult to talk to, including at night. The school will be likely to continue to support and supervise pupils appropriately at all times with the proposed increase in numbers.

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

- 2.15 The school meets the standards.
- 2.16 The school implements a suitable written risk assessment policy effectively. Risk assessments seen confirm that the school identifies potential risks and takes appropriate action to minimise these. Suitable steps are taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils when engaging in out of school activities, educational visits and music tours. Appropriate assessments of risk are made for vulnerable pupils. The current risk assessment arrangements are likely to remain suitable once the proposed material change takes place.

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

- 2.17 The school meets the standards.
- 2.18 The school implements a suitable recruitment policy which has due regard to the procedures outlined in KCSIE. The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff and governors, and a register is kept as required. The information on the register reflects the documentation seen in staff files.

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

- 2.19 The school meets the standards.
- 2.20 Existing classrooms have capacity for additional pupils in each area of the school. In some areas, utilisation of existing areas is currently low and there are plans to repurpose a number of internal spaces to create more teaching rooms and music practice rooms. The premises and facilities, including boarding accommodation and medical facilities for boarders are sufficient. They are kept clean, appropriately lit, heated and well maintained. The site is maintained in a suitable state of repair and regularly monitored for safety, with maintenance issues being promptly addressed. There are sufficient toilets and wash facilities for the proposed increase in numbers. Water supply is suitably maintained. Appropriate accommodation for all pupils' medical and therapy needs is provided. The dining arrangements have been appropriately considered, including for boarders. There is sufficient space for outdoor activities and recreation. The provision, including the planned repurposing of a previously redundant wing of the main building is likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the proposed increase in numbers.

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

- 2.21 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]

- 2.22 The school meets the standard.
- 2.23 The school has an appropriate complaints policy which provides suitable detail and time scales for responding to any complaints. It provides for complaints to be made at both informal and formal stages. The school maintains a suitable written log of formal complaints and how they are resolved. Documentation of any complaints is detailed and indicates whether the complaint concerns boarding. Boarders raise concerns through the school council, student surveys and pupil leadership teams. These arrangements are likely to remain suitable with the proposed increase in number.

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

- 2.24 The school meets the standards.
- 2.25 Senior leaders and governors demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that all standards are met and the wellbeing of pupils is ensured, including that of boarders. Governors and senior leaders have considered effectively what measures are necessary for the proposed increase in total pupil numbers and planning for the increase is suitable.
- 2.26 The school is likely to continue to meet the requirements with the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

3.1 It is recommended that the school's request to increase its numbers from 192 to 220 be approved.

4. Summary of evidence

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

Inspectors

Mrs Daphne Cawthorne

Reporting inspector