



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Material Change Inspection Report

Thorpe Hall School

July 2023

School's details

School	Thorpe Hall School			
DfE number	882/6001			
Registered charity number	298155			
Address	Thorpe Hall School Wakering Road Southend-on-Sea Essex SS1 3RD			
Telephone number	01702 582340			
Email address	sec@thorpehall.southend.sch.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Duckitt			
Chair of governors	Mr Jonathan Gorridge			
Proprietor	Thorpe Hall School Trust			
Age range	2 to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	470			
	EYFS	89	Juniors	98
	Seniors	283		
Date of inspection	6 July 2023			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Thorpe Hall School is an independent co-educational day school. Founded in 1925, it is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. The school has 77 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or difficulties (SEND), of whom six have an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for 17 pupils. The school's previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in April 2022.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase its total number of pupils from 470 to 650. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework. The inspection considered additional concerns at the request of the DfE.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraphs 9 (behaviour) and 10 (bullying)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18-21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors)	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23–29 (premises and accommodation)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints procedure)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5]

- 2.1 The school meets the standard.
- 2.2 The school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. It ensures that principles are actively promoted which encourage pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. These are promoted effectively through lessons, assemblies and the attitudes demonstrated by staff. In discussions, pupils demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the importance of showing respect for others, including those with protected characteristics. Records show that staff challenge, record and report any discriminatory language which they may encounter. Full, effective reviews by leaders and governors take place after any significant event involving discrimination and any necessary improvements are instigated.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.3 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.4 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

- 2.5 The school meets the standard.
- 2.6 Implementation of all aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures is effective in providing appropriate support for the needs of pupils, including for children in the EYFS. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.7 Safeguarding procedures are implemented effectively to safeguard children at risk and those in particular need. Staff show effective understanding of their responsibilities, including with regard to child-on-child abuse. All behavioural issues and allegations of sexualised behaviour, racism or bullying, are treated as potential safeguarding concerns and addressed effectively.
- 2.8 Child protection records are held securely and with suitable confidentiality. This enables welfare considerations for individual pupils to be identified consistently and acted upon, and the school to be able to identify patterns of concern. In discussions, staff confirmed that they recognise the vulnerabilities of pupils with SEND. Pupils' wellbeing is further supported by effective personal, social and health education, which includes appropriate focus on mental health. Care for pupils' mental health is enhanced by the availability of suitably trained staff to provide counselling. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and the school has appropriate controls of the use of technology.
- 2.9 Records show that the school communicates and refers concerns effectively, including to pertinent external agencies when appropriate. The safeguarding team seeks advice when necessary. Pupils reported in discussion that they feel safe in school. They said that if any concerns arise, they can report them and felt confident they would receive a response and action would be taken where needed. Records of safeguarding, which are suitably thorough, confirm that any concerns are dealt with swiftly and appropriately. The school liaises appropriately with parents about any safeguarding concerns.
- 2.10 The safeguarding policy gives contact details as required for local safeguarding partners. Suitable recruitment procedures for staff are outlined in the safeguarding policy. The training for those with

specific safeguarding responsibilities is in line with local requirements and statutory advice and is up to date. Staff confirmed that they are trained regularly. There are comprehensive records of face to face and online training which confirm suitable courses have been completed. Staff demonstrate effective knowledge of safeguarding procedures, including most recent changes to statutory guidance. They are aware of how to listen to children and report any concerns that they have.

- 2.11 Leaders and staff demonstrate appropriate awareness of the staff code of conduct, including the low-level concerns policy and safeguarding procedures, and are confident to use them. They have a suitable knowledge of the thresholds for reporting issues or incidents.
- 2.12 Suitable arrangements for handling allegations against staff or senior leaders, and potential misconduct, are included in safeguarding procedures; they include seeking immediate advice from the local authority designated safeguarding officer (LADO). The school understands its role in reporting any person to relevant regulatory bodies if circumstances require it.
- 2.13 Governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding. A governor with appropriate expertise maintains a close working contact with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). Governors are suitably pro-active in the school with regards to monitoring safeguarding policies and procedures, including through arrangements for an annual review.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour and bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 9 and 10]

- 2.14 The school meets the standards.
- 2.15 A suitable behaviour policy and arrangements to guard against bullying are in place. Both are implemented effectively.
- 2.16 There is a clear code of conduct for pupils. Arrangements to promote good behaviour make appropriate adjustments for those pupils with particular needs, including those with SEND. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on any poor behaviour and sanctions are applied appropriately and proportionately. Records of behavioural incidents are recorded and monitored effectively to allow any trends to be identified. The school promotes respect for others through its behaviour policy and has suitably defined behavioural expectations. These guide decisions taken when individual incidents of poor behaviour occur, including those involving inappropriate comments related to protected characteristics.
- 2.17 Pupils reported that there is very little bullying in the school. Records support this view. They show that if bullying does occur, the school provides suitable support for the alleged victim and perpetrator. This takes into account any additional needs pupils may have. The effectiveness of any action taken is monitored, with further education provided for all pupils where necessary.
- 2.18 Detailed recording enables all pastoral concerns to be logged for each pupil. All incidents of misbehaviour between pupils are considered as potential bullying and/or safeguarding issues, and trends analysed.

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

- 2.19 The school meets the standard.
- 2.20 There is an appropriate health and safety policy that is implemented effectively to ensure the safety of pupils, staff and visitors. Records show that testing of all utilities is carried out regularly and systematically. Training is comprehensive and staff confirm that they understand the importance of referring any concerns. Senior leaders and governors monitor any trends and steps are taken to

mitigate any recurrence of any health and safety issues. Daily checks of the EYFS setting are carried out to identify any problems. Health and safety considerations have been integrated effectively into the planning of the repurposing of the current premises. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.21 The school meets the standard.
- 2.22 The school has a fire risk and safety policy which includes the elimination or reduction of risks from dangerous substances. A fire risk assessment of all buildings has been undertaken by a suitably qualified person. Fire procedures are understood by, and training provided for, staff. Termly fire drills are carried out and recorded and pupils are suitably informed about evacuation procedures. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.23 The school meets the standard.
- 2.24 Pupils are properly supervised by qualified and trained staff, including at break times and in outside play. There are suitable ratios of staff to pupils in the EYFS. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.25 The school meets the standard.
- 2.26 The school's risk assessment policy clearly describes the appropriate lines of responsibility for risk assessment and suitable approaches to be taken to identify and mitigate risk. The policy is implemented effectively. There are appropriate assessments of risk for buildings, including those with specialist uses such as the design and technology workshop, science laboratories and the sports hall. Similarly effective assessments are made for trips out of school and for the needs of individual pupils. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.27 The school meets the standards.
- 2.28 All the required checks on staff, supply staff and governors are carried out and completed before they take up their posts. Contractors send the school up-to-date information on checks they have undertaken on their employees, and the school makes appropriate further checks on arrival. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.29 The school maintains correctly an accurate single central register of appointments which includes the dates on which all checks have been completed.

Premises and accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 29]

- 2.30 The school meets the standards.
- 2.31 Suitable toilet and changing facilities and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety;

acoustics and lighting are appropriate; and water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. The provision, including re-purposed accommodation to provide additional teaching spaces, is likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.32 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]

- 2.33 The school meets the standard.
- 2.34 The school's complaints procedure is available on the school website. It provides for complaints and concerns to be considered on an informal basis; for the establishment of a formal procedure for a complaint to be made in writing; for a hearing before a panel which includes an independent member and allows for a parent to be accompanied; for the panel to make findings and recommendations; and for a confidential record to be kept of findings. Records of complaints show that the school follows its own policy appropriately. Formal complaints are handled by senior leaders in line with the school's procedures. If they concern the head, then an appropriate alternative figure of suitable seniority handles the complaint. Whether or not a complaint has been upheld, the school undertakes a detailed review to identify any lessons to be learned from it and implements any consequent recommendations effectively.

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

- 2.35 The school meets the standard.
- 2.36 Senior leaders and governors monitor safeguarding and welfare arrangements appropriately and carry out effective oversight of compliance with the regulatory standards. They fulfil their responsibilities so that independent school standards are met consistently. The strategic and operational planning for the proposed increase in numbers includes provision of extra safeguarding and other roles, and hence actively promotes the wellbeing of pupils.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

3.1 It is recommended the school's request to increase its numbers to 650 be approved.

4. Summary of evidence

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

Inspectors

Mrs Sue Clarke

Reporting inspector