



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Advice Note for a Material Change Visit

Windermere School

January 2022

School's details

School	Windermere School			
DfE number	909/6008			
Registered charity number	526973			
Address	Windermere School Browhead Patterdale Road Windermere Cumbria LA23 1NW			
Telephone number	01539 446164			
Email address	pthistlewood@windermereschool.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Tom Hill			
Chair of governors	Mr Andrew P. Chamberlain			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	309			
	Day pupils	227	Boarders	82
	EYFS	10	Juniors	79
	Seniors	158	Sixth Form	62
Date of visit	10 January 2022			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Windermere School is an independent day and boarding school, overseen by the Windermere Educational Trust. It is located on three campuses near Windermere, in the Lake District: the main site for pupils aged from 11 to 18 years; a junior section, for pupils aged from 3 to 11 years, which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); and an accredited water sports centre on Lake Windermere. There are three boarding houses on the main site, which accommodate pupils from the age of eight. The school has identified 87 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 40 receive additional support, relevant to their need. Two pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 65 pupils. The school's previous inspection was an additional inspection on 16 March 2020.

Purpose of the visit

- 1.2 This was an announced material change visit at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to change its age range from 3–18 years to 3–20 years. The visit 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.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A (relationships and sex education); NMS 10	Met
ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils); NMS 17 and 19	Met
ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 2 and 11	Met
ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 14	Met
ISSR Part 5, paragraph 30 (boarding accommodation); NMS 5	Met
ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 13	Met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – relationships and sex education (RSE) [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A; NMS 10]

- 2.1 The school meets the standards.
- 2.2 A programme for the provision of RSE is implemented by the school, including for pupils in the sixth form. The programme is taught through specialist teaching and by tutors and includes a range of topics which is appropriate for both older and younger pupils. Boarders have access to information about events in the world outside the school and to local facilities appropriate to their age. Safe recreational spaces are available for older pupils as well as areas where they can be alone if they wish.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5; NMS 17 and 19]

- 2.3 The school meets the standards.
- 2.4 The school actively promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, and suitable provision is planned for those in the proposed extended age range. The school has responded appropriately to the presence of older pupils in ensuring that no additional responsibilities are required of them. Boarders are encouraged to contribute their views regarding boarding provision through surveys and informal discussion with staff. Their views are taken into account when decisions are made about the school, and pupils interviewed were confident that they would not be penalised for raising their concerns. Any arrangements for pupils to act as prefects are appropriate.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 2 and 11]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.5 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.6 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

- 2.7 The school meets the standards.
- 2.8 Staff and those in positions of responsibility are appropriately trained, and the school records and manages concerns at all levels appropriately, including liaison with external agencies and parents. Staff have received training in how to manage a report of peer-on-peer abuse, and the school has responded appropriately to such cases. Records indicate that the school manages concerns relating to pupils' mental health appropriately. In response to historical safeguarding concerns, the school has ensured that leaders and other members of staff are trained in mental health first aid. Pupils, including boarders, were able to identify a choice of adults in school in whom they could confide their concerns or personal problems. They confirmed that they receive a response and records confirm that appropriate action is taken where needed. The school has appointed an independent listener, and boarders are aware of how to contact this figure or external helplines if required. An appropriate process of induction and guidance for new boarders is in place, including personalised guidance for older boarders.

- 2.9 Suitable arrangements exist to handle allegations against staff, including for low-level concerns. These are understood by staff and senior leaders. Staff understand the importance of adhering to the code of conduct and of the whistleblowing policy. A suitable strategy is in place for the prevention of radicalisation, including training and policies designed to promote internet safety. Oversight by the governing body is exercised through a suitable annual review and regular meetings for the designated safeguarding governor and school safeguarding leads. The outcomes of these are reported regularly to the board. The school is in the process of transferring its provision of guardians to external providers, which will be arranged by parents; evidence indicates that appropriate arrangements are in place and the relevant checks have been made with regard to any remaining guardians.
- 2.10 Evidence indicates that the safeguarding of the older pupils will be managed effectively by the school and suitable measures will be implemented to guard against any adverse impact on younger pupils should the material change be approved.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 14]

- 2.11 The school meets the standards.
- 2.12 Relevant checks are carried out on staff, volunteers, and governors in a timely manner and are recorded accurately on the single central record. Staff files contain both appropriate and the required records. Checks on adults who are not employed by the school but who live on boarding premises are carried out, and appropriate written agreements and arrangements for visitors to boarding are implemented.

Premises and accommodation – boarding accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 30; NMS 5]

- 2.13 The school meets the standards.
- 2.14 Appropriate accommodation is provided for older pupils within the designated sixth-form boarding house. Pupils are accommodated within flats which house up to five pupils; the school has ensured that those within the older age range envisaged in the material change application are housed separately from younger pupils and has made single rooms available to each pupil in this age group. Security arrangements ensure the privacy of the pupils.
- 2.15 Evidence indicates that the presence of the older pupils will be managed effectively by the school and that suitable measures will be taken to guard against any adverse impact on younger pupils should the material change be approved.

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

- 2.16 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 13]

- 2.17 The school meets the standards.
- 2.18 The leadership of the school has ensured that suitable provision is implemented for the oldest pupils envisaged in the material change request, including in boarding. Provision regarding the other standards has been adapted and extended so as to ensure that the well-being of the older pupils will be maintained and to guard against any negative impact on younger pupils. School leaders and managers, including those with boarding responsibilities, have ensured that the arrangements for the

proposed material change enable the school to continue to meet the independent school standards and they continue to actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change request

- 3.1 It is recommended that the material change be approved. The school has adapted and extended its curricular and pastoral provision so as to ensure that the needs of the older age group of pupils identified in the request are met. Boarders' views are sought and listened to, and the boarding accommodation provides appropriately for the needs of the oldest pupils and their younger peers. Suitable arrangements are in place to promote the safeguarding of pupils of all ages, including boarders, and appropriate checks are carried out on adults working in the school.

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 the boarding accommodation for older pupils and talked with groups of pupils. She scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.