



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Report for a Material Change Visit

Wrekin College

November 2021

School's details

School	Wrekin College		
DfE number	894/6001		
Registered charity number	528417		
Address	Wrekin College Sutherland Road Wellington Telford Shropshire TF1 3BH		
Telephone number	01952 265600		
Email address	HeadMastersPA@wrekincollege.com		
Headmaster	Mr Tim Firth		
Chair of governors	Mr Richard Pearson		
Age range	11 to 19		
Number of pupils on roll	541		
	Day pupils	438	Boarders 103
	Seniors	383	Sixth Form 158
Date of visit	24 November 2021		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Wrekin College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. Founded in 1880 by Sir John Bayley, the school is a registered charity overseen by a board of governors who also have responsibility for Old Hall School, a preparatory school on the same site. The school comprises a senior school and a sixth form. Around a fifth of pupils board in one of three all-age boarding houses, two for male pupils, and one for female pupils. The school has 108 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 4 have an education, health and care plan. There are 58 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in October 2019.

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 increase pupil numbers to a maximum of 650 pupils. The increase relates to an increase in day pupil numbers across the year groups in the senior school. The visit focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2015.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 11	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 6	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety); NMS 7	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils including boarders); NMS 15	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 6	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 14	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 30 (premises and accommodation); NMS 5	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 13	Met

2. Inspection findings

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

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 Safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively to ensure the welfare of pupils, including boarders and those with SEND. Staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding receive training at the appropriate level, including in working with other safeguarding agencies. All other staff, including boarding staff, receive regular training in safeguarding and their responsibility in promoting the welfare of pupils, both those at risk and those in need. Such training is in line with the requirements of the local safeguarding partnership (LSP) and includes appropriate training in promoting the pupils' online safety and the prevention of extremism. Discussions with pupils confirmed that the school listens to children, gives a response and acts on their concerns. Staff new to the school receive appropriate induction training, including those staff who start work at times other than the start of term. All staff are required to read *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* Part 1 and Annexe B; their understanding of what they have read is checked via online question-and-answer sessions, managed by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). Training records confirm that all staff have undertaken the necessary training.
- 2.5 The school liaises closely with the LSP and is guided by the advice it receives. Suitable records are kept of child protection concerns and these are stored appropriately. Should concerns or allegations arise, the school is quick to seek advice from the local authority's designated officer (LADO) and, when appropriate, make a referral. Boarders in discussions confirmed they are aware of the appropriate helplines, including that of the independent listener with whom they could make contact should they have any worries or concerns. The school is aware of the need to liaise appropriately with parents about safeguarding concerns that arise but also ensures that parental wishes do not override the best interests of the child's welfare.
- 2.6 Staff are clear as to the actions they should take should they have concerns about a child, including peer-on-peer related and mental health concerns, or be in receipt of an allegation about a member of staff. Staff know where to find further guidance should they need it and how to use the summary procedure flow charts in the safeguarding guidance. They know that anyone can make a referral to the local authority or, in the case of a child being in immediate danger, to the police. They say they are confident to do so should the need arise.
- 2.7 Staff have a clear understanding of the school's staff conduct policy, including with regard to the use of mobile phones, guidance on taking images of children involved in school activities, and use of social media. Filters protect pupils from accessing unsuitable websites, and appropriate arrangements are made to monitor the use of the electronic devices used by day and boarding pupils. The school's safeguarding arrangements are overseen appropriately by the governors. The designated governor for safeguarding meets regularly with the DSL to review arrangements and any child protection concerns. In addition, together they carry out an annual review of the school's safeguarding policy

which is then reviewed by the full governing body. The current arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the increased number of pupils envisaged in the material change request.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11; NMS 6]

- 2.8 The school meets the standards.
- 2.9 The school has a suitably structured health and safety organisation. The school health and safety committee meets on at least a termly basis and is attended by governors who undertake regular auditing of policy and procedures. All staff have health and safety induction training, with regular updates on a termly basis, supplemented by online training as required. All injuries are recorded appropriately with those requiring medical attention being referred to suitably qualified first aiders in the welfare facility. There is clear and appropriate guidance for staff leading trips and excursions. Security arrangements are appropriate, including visitor passes, restricted access to buildings and boarding houses and the appropriate use of CCTV monitoring systems. The school employs a full-time security officer and there are security patrols for out of hours monitoring of all buildings, including boarding houses, overnight. Access to the site is controlled in so far as is reasonably practical given the nature of the school site. Site tours and discussions with school leaders confirmed that the current arrangements, including those for regular servicing and checking of utilities and safe handling of hazardous substances are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the increased number of pupils envisaged in the material change request.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12; NMS 7]

- 2.10 The school meets the standards.
- 2.11 The school meets the compliance requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 by ensuring that the fire safety policy and all fire risk assessments are reviewed appropriately and implemented. Fire evacuation procedures are regularly rehearsed by staff and pupils at least on a termly basis, including in boarding time. All school buildings, including boarding houses are fitted with an addressable fire alarm system and are serviced annually by external fire engineers, ensuring effective fire prevention arrangements. Scrutiny of records of fire risk assessments, fire evacuation procedures and logs of the maintenance of alarms, detectors and servicing arrangements confirm that fire safety is suitably promoted. During site tours and in discussions with the school leaders, there was no indication that an increase in pupil numbers would have an adverse impact on fire safety arrangements.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; NMS 15]

- 2.12 The school meets the standards.
- 2.13 Appropriate arrangements ensure that pupils of all age groups are suitably supervised and individual needs, such as for those with SEND, taken into account. Duty rotas demonstrate that staff-to-pupil ratios are appropriate for both day and boarding pupils and there is sufficient staffing in place to accommodate the proposed gradual increase in pupil numbers. Guidance for staff involved in supervision duties is clear and risk assessments are used to ensure that supervision levels are appropriate. At all times pupils are supervised by qualified and experienced staff who know and understand their needs. Where prefects or senior pupils assist with younger pupils, the school ensures that they are directed and supervised in their duties. Satisfactory staffing ensure appropriate supervision of pupils during all break and lunch times and after-school periods.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 6]

- 2.14 The school meets the standards.
- 2.15 An efficient and effective approach is taken to managing risk to ensure the welfare of all pupils in the school. An appropriate risk assessment policy is in place for different areas of the school and for organising school outings. Staff are suitably trained to implement it. Scrutiny of risk assessment documents shows that appropriate evaluations are undertaken across all age groups, which include consideration towards the needs of boarding pupils and vulnerable pupils. All risk assessments are reviewed and signed off by senior leaders, and a senior member of staff has oversight of school trips both in the UK and overseas. Governance, through the health and safety committee, provides suitable oversight of the risk assessment process and its implementation. The current arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the increased number of pupils envisaged in the material change request.

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

- 2.16 The school meets the standards.
- 2.17 The school ensures that it carries out the appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff prior to a person beginning work in the school. Part-time staff, boarding staff, volunteers and governors are all subject to the appropriate checking procedures, and senior management and governors undertake routine spot checks of the single central register and associated staff files. All staff files contain a useful summary sheet of checks carried out, and these correspond to the details held on the single central register. The current arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the increased number of pupils envisaged in the material change request.

Premises and accommodation – toilet, washing and changing facilities [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23; NMS 5]

- 2.18 The school meets the standards.
- 2.19 Tours of the school's accommodation confirmed that adequate toilet, washing and changing facilities are available to all pupils, including boarders. Separate and appropriately labelled toilet facilities are provided for pupils, and suitable changing and showering facilities are provided for all pupils who take part in physical education. Separate facilities are available for disabled pupils, staff and visitors to the school. All the above facilities are suitable to meet the needs of the projected increase in the pupil population.

Premises and accommodation – medical facilities [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 24; NMS 5]

- 2.20 The school meets the standards.
- 2.21 A suitable medical centre, staffed by registered nurses, is a shared facility between the preparatory school and the senior school. It comprises of a consultation room, a surgery and four separate one-bedded rooms, suitable for accommodating pupils, including, if required, the overnight supervision of boarding pupils. Separate toilet and wash hand basin facilities are located in the medical centre for pupils' use. Pupils' medical notes and reports are confidentially secured as are any medicines, which are kept in locked cupboards in the welfare room. All the above facilities are suitable to meet the needs of the projected increase in the pupil population.

Premises and accommodation – maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25; NMS 5]

- 2.22 The school meets the standards.
- 2.23 Tours of the school site visiting teaching, recreation areas and boarding houses, indicated that maintenance regimes are of an appropriate standard, suitably managed and documented. The school uses an online system for reporting maintenance requirements which prioritises responses in terms of the health and safety priority of the item logged. Governors provide suitable oversight and management of maintenance and refurbishment with additional input being provided by members of the health and safety committee. The above provision and facilities are suitable to meet the needs of the projected increase in the pupil population.

Premises and accommodation – acoustics, lighting and water supply [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 26 – 28; NMS 5]

- 2.24 The school meets the standards.
- 2.25 Tours of the school's accommodation confirmed that acoustic and lighting arrangements and water supplies are suitable throughout the school. Adequate sound insulation is provided where required, in high volume areas such as music practice rooms and where machinery is being used in design and technology laboratories. All recent refurbishment work includes appropriate acoustic cladding, where recommended by external contractors. Internal and external lighting is adequate for the needs of the pupils and staff, including external lighting for security purposes and to allow evening functions to take place across the school site after dark. Suitable water supplies are available across all areas of the school with hot and cold water as required, including ready access to drinking water. The current facilities are suitable to meet the needs of the projected increase in the pupil population.

Premises and accommodation – outdoor space [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 29; NMS 5]

- 2.26 The school meets the standards.
- 2.27 All age groups across the school site have direct access to suitable and appropriate spaces for physical education and recreation. The sports facilities are extensive, and pupils have access to a sports centre with two sports halls, several multi surface games areas, a swimming pool and there is a large acreage of grass playing fields adjacent to the main school buildings. The size and variety of the current provision means that pupils can be divided up into age-appropriate specific groups as required. The current facilities are suitable to meet the needs of the projected increase in the pupil population.

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

- 2.28 The school meets the standards.
- 2.29 The boarding houses contain suitable sleeping accommodation for boarders and have facilities which are appropriate for the purpose of organised and private study outside school hours and for social purposes. Accommodation is suitably furnished, appropriately lit, heated and ventilated, cleaned and maintained. It is of sufficient size for the number, needs and ages of boarders to be accommodated, with appropriate protection and separation between genders and age groups. The capacity of the boarding houses is sufficient for the current needs of the school and there is spare capacity should an increase in boarding pupil numbers be required as part of the material change.

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

- 2.30 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 and provided to parents on request.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 13]

- 2.31 The school meets the standards.
- 2.32 The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that regulations are met consistently, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Members of the governing board regularly monitor the required standards and ensure that policies and procedures are appropriate and relevant to the school's needs. The inspection visit confirmed that the senior management and governing board have been effectively managing a gradual increase in pupil numbers across all sections of the school, ensuring that they maintain the school's distinctive ethos. Planning is appropriate. Scrutiny of senior management and governing board minutes confirms that careful consideration has been made of the implications of increasing pupil numbers, which will be limited to a maximum pupil population of 650.

3 Recommendation with regard to material change request

- 3.1 Current growth, planned for and monitored appropriately, is likely to see a continued increase in pupil numbers taking the pupil population to over 600 pupils, in the present academic year, and then over time to a maximum school capacity of 650 pupils. It is, therefore recommended that approval be given to allow the number of pupils on roll to increase to the requested maximum number of 650 pupils.

4 Summary of evidence

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