

LUCTON SCHOOL

Lucton, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 9PN

05 MARCH 2018

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lucton School is a co-educational day and boarding school situated in rural Herefordshire just outside Leominster. The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of governors. It educates pupils from the ages of 0 to 18 years. At the time of the visit there were 354 pupils on roll, 180 boys and 174 girls, of whom 87 were boarders. The school has identified 71 pupils as having special educational needs and /or disabilities (SEND), of whom 29 receive specific additional support. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Forty pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), the large majority of whom receive specialist support from the school.

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

This was an unannounced visit carried out at the request of the DfE to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the Additional Inspection on 3 October 2017. The focus of the visit was on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and specific National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2015, and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, particularly those concerned with safeguarding and child protection; the handling of parents' complaints; and the quality of leadership and management.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b) & 8 (a) and (b); NMS 11]; Provision of information to parents [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32 (1) (c)]

The school meets the regulations and standard.

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. The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

It has regard to the most recent statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (September 2016). The policy identifies a governor with responsibility for the oversight of safeguarding and is further supported by suitable guidance covering the safe recruitment of staff, whistleblowing, a staff code of conduct and information on how pupils are educated about online safety.

This policy is implemented effectively. Safeguarding procedures are well managed in line with the local authority guidance, ensuring the welfare of both day and boarding pupils. Appropriate procedures are in place to support pupils in need. There are suitable arrangements for listening to pupils. Detailed child protection records are held securely with the required confidentiality. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL have recent safeguarding training, including inter-agency training, provided by the local authority.

All other staff receive regular safeguarding training, which includes the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. They understand their responsibilities and are aware of how to refer concerns. They understand that anyone can make a referral to the children's services. New staff have undergone suitable induction training in line with guidance, including knowing the identity of the DSL and deputy DSLs, knowing and understanding the school's safeguarding policy, reading and understanding KCSIE part one (all staff), KCSIE Annex A (leaders and those who work directly with children), knowing the staff code of conduct, including whistleblowing and acceptable use of IT, staff/pupil relationships and communications, including use of social media. All staff have received a copy of KCSIE Part 1, which includes Annex A. They sign to say that they have read and understood this. Staff report that they receive informal updates from the DSL and additional on-line training to confirm their understanding of procedures. Appropriate records of staff training are maintained. The school understands the need to report any allegations against staff to the Disqualification and Barring Service (DBS) and/or National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL).

The safeguarding governor visits regularly, conducts a safeguarding audit, and with the DSL reports back to the main board. Governors formally review the school's policy and arrangements annually.

Interviews with staff indicated that they fully understand whistleblowing procedures and are committed to using them if it should become necessary. Staff are confident that the school would regard seriously any concerns raised by these procedures and that there would be no prejudicial response to the person(s) using the procedures. They feel assured that any concerns they might raise would be investigated thoroughly and acted on appropriately. They report that they have received training regarding whistleblowing from the DSL, who also regularly checks their understanding at safeguarding update meetings. Recently appointed staff have been trained regarding whistleblowing during their induction programme. Safeguarding training records show that whistleblowing is routinely explained and emphasised.

Discussions with the head and the DSL demonstrated that the school's leadership actively promotes staff understanding of whistleblowing procedures and is ensuring a school culture in which the procedures would be used if necessary. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding affirmed that she is closely involved in monitoring the implementation of safeguarding procedures, including whistleblowing, and is satisfied that staff feel able to use these procedures with confidence.

When interviewed, all adults demonstrated that they understand they have a role and responsibility to contribute to strategies to safeguard pupils and are encouraged to identify any concerns freely. They described a recent substantial improvement in this aspect of their work and their ability to play a full and effective part in keeping pupils safe. They attributed this improvement to clearer and more consultative leadership within school regarding safeguarding which is being actively supported by the closer involvement of the governing body in the life of the school.

Scrutiny of staff training records in child protection showed that they enable clear identification of who has been trained and when, the content of training and when training is due for renewal. The DSL is taking an effective lead in facilitating safeguarding training and maintaining suitable records. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding attends training events and monitors the training records during her regular visits to the school.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33 (j) (i) and (ii); NMS 18]

The school meets the regulation and standard.

Scrutiny of the log of formal complaints demonstrated that it allows for all required details to be entered fully when necessary, including the actions taken by the school as a result of any complaints regardless of whether they are upheld. At the time of the visit, there was only one formal complaint, which was historic and on-going from before the previous inspection, which was being dealt with and documented appropriately.

Discussion with the head indicated that the manner in which complaints are to be handled is underpinned by an open and suitably concerned attitude by the school's leadership and governors. The complaints procedure is readily available, being published on the school's website and is written with the clearly expressed intention to encourage parents to raise concerns knowing that they will be taken seriously, and straightforwardly setting out a three-stage process.

Quality of Leadership and Management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 13.1-5]

The school meets the regulation and standard.

Interviews with staff indicated that they believe there has been a significant improvement since the last inspection in communication between governors, senior managers and all staff to ensure the knowledge and skills of all staff are focused without inhibition on safeguarding pupils' welfare. In particular, they have welcomed the closer involvement of the governing body in gaining a fuller appreciation of daily life in school and of any staff concerns. Staff note there is a more open exchange of information between all sections of the school community and are pleased that this means that they can more easily identify and share issues regarding pupils' welfare and safety.

The head, chair of governors and governor with responsibility for safeguarding each reported their belief that communication within school has been strengthened, with due emphasis on safeguarding pupils. The school's senior leadership and governors have expressed a full commitment to promoting effective communication, as evidenced in minutes of meetings and other documentation.

Discussion with governors, scrutiny of their minutes in relation to implementing their action plan, and other documentation regarding influencing senior management practice, all indicate that the governing body has acted with sufficient rigour to achieve effective oversight and to ensure that leadership and management demonstrate the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the regulatory requirements consistently. Governors have been suitably robust in their evaluation of issues which needed addressing and have acted swiftly and decisively to improve matters. They have implemented the action plan very well.

REGULATORY ACTION POINTS

The school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.