



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Report for a Progress Monitoring Visit
and for a Material Change Visit**

Polwhele House School

April 2021



School's details

School	Polwhele House School			
DfE number	908/6076			
Address	Polwhele House School Polwhele House Truro Cornwall TR4 9AE			
Telephone number	01872 273011			
Email address	info@polwhelehouse.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Hilary Mann			
Proprietors	Canon Richard White and Mrs Rosemary White			
Age range	3 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	89			
	Day pupils	89	Boarders	0
	EYFS	19	Pre-Prep	10
	Prep	60		
Date of visit	22 April 2021			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Polwhele House School is an independent co-educational boarding and day school for pupils between the ages of three and thirteen years. It is situated close to Truro in Cornwall. Boarding provision is available from Year 3 in a flexible system but no boarding is taking place currently during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1976, and moved to its present site in 1981. It is owned and overseen by two proprietors, who are assisted by a managing council of advisers. The school has 11 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), none of whom has an education, health and care plan. One pupil speaks English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a progress monitoring visit in March 2020.

Purpose of the visit

- 1.3 This was an unannounced progress monitoring visit at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the progress monitoring visit on 11 March 2020.
- 1.4 The visit also assessed the school's material change request to increase the upper age range of pupils from 14 to 16.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
ISSR Part 1, paragraphs 2 (curriculum) and 2A (relationships and sex education)	Not met
ISSR Part 1, paragraph 3 (teaching)	Met
ISSR Part 1, paragraph 4 (framework for pupils' performance)	Met
ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral and social development of pupils); NMS 17 and 19	Met
ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8 (safeguarding); NMS 11	Met
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 6	Met
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 6	Met
ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18-21 (suitability of staff and supply staff); NMS 14	Met
ISSR Part 5 paragraphs 23 to 30 (premises and accommodation); NMS 5	Met
ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34 (quality of leadership and management); NMS 13	Not Met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – curriculum, relationships and sex education, teaching and framework for assessment [ISSR Part 1, paragraphs 2 to 4]

- 2.1 The school does not meet all of the standards.
- 2.2 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers a suitable breadth of material for current pupils, with the exception of required provision for relationships and sex education (RSE).
- 2.3 The school is in the early stages of planning how to extend its schemes of work to cover the required breadth of material for pupils up to Year 11. The school has not yet consulted parents or published an accurate written statement of its policy on relationships and sex education which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance. Current pupils are not receiving teaching in relationships education or relationships and sex education as appropriate to their age as required by the guidance.
- 2.4 Teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. The school is planning how it can develop the expertise available to support the teaching of pupils up to Year 11.
- 2.5 A suitable framework operates to assess current pupils' performance. The school is currently planning how to extend this programme for pupils in Years 9 to 11.
- 2.6 Current arrangements suggest that the school is likely to meet the standards for the curriculum, assessment and teaching if the age range of pupils is extended, once this issue has been addressed.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education – [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5; NMS 17 and 19]

- 2.7 The school meets the standards.
- 2.8 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of current pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. The school is planning how to extend this provision to pupils up to Year 11. Current arrangements suggest that the school is likely to meet the standards when the age range of pupils is extended. The school had no boarders at the time of the inspection.

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

Safeguarding policy

- 2.9 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.10 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

- 2.11 The school meets the standards.
- 2.12 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance. The safeguarding policy is implemented effectively to ensure a culture of listening to pupils. The school ensures that pupils receive a response when they express concerns and that appropriate action is taken where necessary. This was confirmed in interviews with pupils and staff. Pupils are given suitable guidance on staying safe online. The staff recruitment policy is fully

implemented to ensure that at least two references are sought prior to staff starting work at the school. There is an appropriate staff code of conduct and suitable arrangements for whistleblowing.

- 2.13 All staff, including those in positions of responsibility, are suitably trained in line with locally agreed procedures, and safeguarding is effectively managed. Staff understand the different types of peer-on-peer abuse, including in relation to pupils with SEND. The school liaises with local agencies, where necessary, and takes prompt action where concerns are raised. The school has ensured suitable arrangements are in place during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain all safeguarding requirements.
- 2.14 There were no pupils boarding at the time of the inspection. There are sufficient numbers of trained designated safeguarding leads and deputy safeguarding leads, such that the proposed change in the age range of pupils could be catered for within the current arrangements.

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

- 2.15 The school meets the standards.
- 2.16 The proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy. The school had no pupils in boarding at the time of the inspection.
- 2.17 Planning for the impact of introducing pupils in Years 9 to 11 into the school or in boarding, and the associated implications for health and safety procedures, is in the early stages of development. Current arrangements suggest that the school is likely to meet the standards when the age range of pupils is extended.

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

- 2.18 The school meets the standards.
- 2.19 The school has a risk assessment policy and ensures appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified for current pupils. These arrangements suggest that the school is likely to meet the standards when the age range of pupils is extended.

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

- 2.20 The school meets the standards.
- 2.21 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Medical fitness checks are now undertaken for all newly appointed staff prior to them starting work at the school. Staff currently employed by the school who have been identified to teach from pupils in Years 9 to 11 have appropriate qualifications to do so.

Premises and accommodation – [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23-30; NMS 5]

- 2.22 The school meets the standards.
- 2.23 For the current pupils, suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities are provided where required, and appropriate accommodation exists for pupils' medical and therapy needs. 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 school is planning how existing toilet facilities could be adapted to accommodate pupils in Years 9 to 11. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of boarders up to Year 8, and safeguards and promotes their welfare, although it was not in use at the time of the

inspection. The school is planning how best to adapt its boarding accommodation when the school increases its age range. Current arrangements suggest that the school is likely to meet the standards if this planning is suitable.

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

- 2.24 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]

- 2.25 The school does not meet the standards.
- 2.26 The proprietors do not ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that all the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the educational well-being of the pupils. Arrangements for relationships and sex education have not yet been introduced as required.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

ISSR Part 1, Quality of education provided, Relationships and sex education, paragraph 2A

- Ensure that every registered pupil who is provided with primary or secondary education at the school is provided with relationships education, except in so far as the pupil is excused [paragraph 2A(1)(a) and (b)]
- Make and keep up to date a separate written statement of the school's policy with regard to the provision of relationships education and ensure that this policy is published on its website or provided free of charge to anyone who asks for a copy [paragraph 2A(1)(e) and (g)]
- Ensure that parents of registered pupils at the school are consulted before writing the school's policy with regard to the provision of relationships and sex education [paragraph 2A(1)(f)].

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

- Ensure that the leadership and management of the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the independent school standards are met consistently and the well-being of the pupils is actively promoted [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); NMS 13.3 to 13.5].

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 It is not possible to recommend approval of the school's plan to extend its age range to include pupils up to the age of 16 because currently it does not meet all of the regulatory requirements. In particular, it has not yet implemented required policies for relationships and sex education for current pupils nor planned for provision in this area for older pupils.
- 4.2 In addition, the school is still in the early stages of planning for the increase in age range for the start of the academic year in 2024, beginning with pupils aged 13. In line with this, the school has made suitable provisional plans for appropriate recruitment of staff necessary to deliver the planned curriculum, depending on natural changes in staffing. Those staff already employed by the school and identified to teach Year 9, have appropriate qualifications to do so. The school has begun to put long term curriculum plans in place for some, though not all, of the subject areas it intends to teach in Year 9.
- 4.3 The school has adequate numbers of staff with responsibility for safeguarding to meet the needs of an extended age range of pupils. The school had only limited plans in place at the time of the inspection which identify the possible changes in building and facilities use by older pupils. These may have implications for health and safety, risk assessment or boarding.

5. Summary of evidence

- 5.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the proprietors. They visited different areas of the school, and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.