

THE RIVER SCHOOL

Oakfield House, Droitwich Road, Worcester, Worcestershire, WR3 7ST

08 DECEMBER 2017

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The River School is an independent Christian school for boys and girls aged 2 to 16. Established in 1985, it is situated in a Victorian country house in eight acres of parkland on the northern boundary of the city of Worcester. The school is operated by the Worcester Christian Education Trust, a registered charity, and governed by a board of trustees. There are 64 pupils in the school from Year 1 to Year 11, 32 boys and 32 girls, and in addition 13 children attend the nursery for all or part of the week. The school had identified 13 pupils as requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities, including three with education, health and care (EHC) plans. No pupils have English as an additional language. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2017.

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 Regulatory Compliance Inspection on 8 - 9 March 2017. The focus of the visit was on safeguarding, particularly those aspects associated with safer recruitment of staff; the suitability of staff and consequently the quality of leadership and management. Specifically, the visit was to check implementation of recruitment procedures to ensure all staff were checked on the prohibition from teaching and barred list before taking up appointment. Additionally, the visit focused on the provision of information for parents and prospective parents.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

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

The school meets the regulation.

The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. These arrangements have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State, notably by ensuring that the required checks against the barred list and for prohibition orders are carried out on all staff prior to commencement of work. All required staff appointment checks are carried out prior to appointment.

The trustees have undertaken training, including in safer recruitment, to ensure the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their roles effectively, so that standards are met consistently, and the well-being of pupils is actively promoted. The chair of trustees with responsibility for safeguarding closely monitors the decisions and actions taken around safeguarding issues, including the robustness of safer recruitment checks.

The school safeguarding policy provides appropriate support for pupils' needs, and implementation ensures listening to children. In the Early Years, staff hand in their cameras and mobile telephones at the beginning of each day, and appropriate precautions are taken at school events to ensure parents follow published guidelines.

The staff recruitment policy is effectively implemented, and the code of conduct understood by staff. In particular, staff are aware of the extra risk that many have in their dual roles as teachers and leaders in their church community.

In the very few incidents in which pupils are at risk or in need, the designated senior lead (DSL) acts on and refers the early signs of abuse and neglect, keeps clear records, listens to the views of the pupil, liaises with parents when appropriate, reassesses concerns when situations do not improve, shares information quickly and challenges inaction, as required by Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2016) (KCSIE). The school liaises effectively with local agencies and takes appropriately prompt action as required if concerns are expressed about a child.

The DSL is of sufficient status and acts with suitable independence, liaising with the chair of trustees on current cases. The trustees review procedures annually. The training of the DSL and Early Years Safeguarding Lead is up-to-date, and includes interagency training. The intention is that the new head will become deputy DSL when he has been trained to the correct level. Staff understand the training they have received and have read and understood KCSIE Part 1 as updated in September 2016. Systematic records of staff training are kept, and show that all have received appropriate training.

Suitability of staff [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21]

The school meets the regulations.

The recently appointed head is the person responsible for recruitment and understands recruitment procedures, including the requirements for enhanced criminal record checks, barred list checks; prohibition from management and teaching checks and disclosures about disqualification from childcare. All staff, supply staff and volunteers (including trustees), and adults living on site have undergone suitable checks, including those required if staff have worked overseas. All checks, except the enhanced criminal records check by the Disqualification and Barring Service (DBS), been completed before taking up employment. In these cases, a barred list check is undertaken, and the member of staff is supervised.

The single central register accurately records all necessary checks and is an accurate summary of information held in staff files.

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

The school meets the regulation.

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 quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34 (a), (b) and (c)]

The school meets the regulation.

Since the previous inspection, the trustees have invested in training and time to ensure that procedures to check and record the suitability of staff are appropriate. The chair of trustees, who is also the trustee responsible for safeguarding, has received suitable training to give her the skills to monitor the completion of the single central register. The head, DSL and chair report to the board of trustees on their findings and hence ensure that the trustee body promotes the well-being of the pupils.

REGULATORY ACTION POINTS

The school meets all of the relevant requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.