



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Advice Note for an Additional Inspection

Bablake School

December 2021

School's details

School	Bablake School			
DfE number	331/6017			
Registered charity number	528961			
Address	Bablake School Coundon Road Bablake Coventry CV1 4AU			
Telephone number	02476 271200			
Email address	headsPA.bablake@bkhs.org.uk			
Headmaster	Dr Deneal Smith			
Proprietor	Coventry School Foundation			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	743			
	Seniors	545	Sixth Form	198
Date of visit	14 to 15 December 2021			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Bablake School is an independent co-educational day school located near the centre of Coventry. The school was originally founded in 1344 and became part of the Coventry School Foundation in 1975. The foundation's trustees oversee the running of the school and other schools in Coventry, including King Henry VIII School. It shares a site with the separately registered Bablake Junior School.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, the school has announced its intention to amalgamate with other schools in the foundation to become one school under the name Bablake King Henry VIII. Each school currently has its own headmaster, but the schools are applying to merge under a single principal with shared functions such as human resources.
- 1.3 The school has 153 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), five of whom have an education, health and care plan. Sixty-seven pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL). The current interim headmaster took up his post in September 2021. A new chair of governors was appointed in October 2021.
- 1.4 The previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection, which took place on 14 to 15 February 2018.

Purpose of the visit

- 1.5 This was an unannounced additional inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs).
- 1.6 Additionally, a material change visit relating to the proposed merger of the component schools of the foundation was undertaken in conjunction with a visit to Bablake Junior School. This is the subject of a separate report.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 2A (relationships and sex education)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 13 (first aid)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 15 (admission and attendance registers)	Met

Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 – 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors)	Not met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Not met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – relationships and sex education [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A]

- 2.1 The school meets the standard.
- 2.2 The school's relationships and sex education (RSE) is delivered through its 'Life Choices' programme by appropriately trained staff. The relevant policy contains suitable content and is published on the school website, along with details about the content of RSE teaching. Scrutiny of the RSE schemes of work confirms that they include appropriate coverage of suitable topics. The school consults parents effectively about the RSE policy and provision. It consults with pupils about the effectiveness of RSE and about the themes that they would like to learn more about. Several pupils who responded to the questionnaire and spoke with inspectors conveyed negative views about the teaching of RSE. However, a scrutiny of pupils' RSE work shows that they are given many opportunities to explore and reflect on significant topics such as sexuality, healthy and toxic relationships, sexual safety and consent. Evidence shows that current leadership of RSE has recently developed the consistency and effectiveness of the teaching and assessment of RSE and given it appropriate status within the school.

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

Safeguarding policy

- 2.3 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.4 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

- 2.5 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.6 The school's safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively in some areas. However, the school does not always act in the best interests of the child, nor in keeping with locally agreed inter-agency procedures or follow the required statutory guidance.
- 2.7 The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSLs offer sufficient cover for their role across the school. They and all other staff are suitably trained. Staff implement the staff behaviour policy effectively. They understand the definitions of different types of abuse, including peer-on-peer abuse, and show awareness of SEND pupils' potential vulnerabilities to these. Staff understand the procedures to follow should a safeguarding concern be raised, including any such concerns about staff and other persons in contact with the pupils. These include an understanding of the need to refer to the local authority designated officer (LADO) and other agencies, such as the Disclosure and Barring Service and the Teaching Regulation Agency, when appropriate. Arrangements for listening to and supporting pupils who have been affected by safeguarding issues are effective. Pupils confirm that they can raise concerns and receive a response from staff. The school teaches pupils how to remain safe, including when online, and provides suitably filtered and monitored internet access. It passes safeguarding information on to the receiving schools when pupils leave to go elsewhere.
- 2.8 However, on one occasion, the school did not liaise with and, as appropriate, make a referral to relevant external agencies when a concern about sexual harassment of pupils arose.
- 2.9 In addition, the merging of information between the school and others in the foundation has not ensured that safeguarding information is kept confidential and stored securely.

- 2.10 The school was unable to demonstrate that it carries out required recruitment checks because of the absence of a suitable single central register of appointments, or suitable staff records, as required by current statutory guidance.
- 2.11 The school does not always take effective steps to manage potential safeguarding risks relating to adults connected with the school.
- 2.12 Whilst an annual review of safeguarding takes place, governors do not maintain a suitable oversight of safeguarding that enables them to identify potential issues with the school's safeguarding arrangements.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9]

- 2.13 The school meets the standard.
- 2.14 The school takes effective measures to promote positive behaviour and pupils' respect for others. Leaders take careful steps to monitor the different types of poor behaviour that may be exhibited by pupils and respond appropriately. The school adopts an approach of trying to understand the causes of any poor behaviour, so that its responses to that behaviour can be as effective as possible. The school's records of behaviour and serious sanctions show that the school has acted appropriately in response to any negative behaviour. Several pupils who responded to the questionnaire and spoke to the inspectors voiced doubt about the consistency of sanctions from different members of staff. Behavioural records show that sanctions, including any exclusions, are awarded fairly and proportionately.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10]

- 2.15 The school meets the standard.
- 2.16 The school implements a suitable anti-bullying policy effectively. It educates pupils about different types of bullying, including cyber- and prejudice-based bullying, and how to protect themselves from these. It gives appropriate training to staff in similar areas. Bullying records show that the school responds swiftly and appropriately to any incidents of bullying. This includes providing suitable support for victims and perpetrators.

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

- 2.17 The school meets the standard.
- 2.18 The school implements a suitable health and safety policy. Leaders with specific health and safety responsibilities ensure that all required maintenance, checks and servicing are carried out when required. Suitable logs are kept of such checks and maintenance, as well as of accidents and near misses. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure suitable storage of potentially hazardous materials. The school takes effective steps to ensure the health and safety of pupils, including with regard to potential risks posed by COVID-19.

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

- 2.19 The school meets the standard.
- 2.20 The school implements a suitable fire safety policy. It keeps fire risk assessments up to date and acts on their recommendations. Staff, including fire marshals, receive appropriate fire safety training. Fire evacuation drills take place at least termly, and leaders review them for their effectiveness. Firefighting and fire detection equipment is maintained and serviced appropriately.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – first aid [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 13]

- 2.21 The school meets the standard.
- 2.22 The school implements an appropriate first aid policy. There are sufficient staff trained in first aid to meet pupils' needs. The school stores and administers medication appropriately and with parents' permission. It also administers first aid effectively. Medical rooms are suitable and adequately staffed. The school supports pupils with particular medical needs effectively.

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

- 2.23 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.24 The school ensures appropriate supervision of pupils on the school site and in other locations, both in and outside of lessons.
- 2.25 However, it makes periodic use of unchaperoned school transport. As a result, the school does not ensure that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff on all school transport.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – admission and attendance registers [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15]

- 2.26 The school meets the standard.
- 2.27 The school maintains admission and attendance registers, as required. The school's information system enables senior leaders to monitor attendance effectively.

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

- 2.28 The school meets the standard.
- 2.29 The school implements a written risk assessment policy effectively. Risk assessments seen contain clear identification of possible risks and suitable control measures to mitigate against these. Staff receive risk assessment training, including at induction. Leaders check risk assessments, including those for trips and potentially hazardous activities, for their suitability.

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

- 2.30 The school does not meet the standards.
- 2.31 During the course of preparation for merger of the schools within the foundation, considerable administrative issues were encountered. As a result, a complete single central register of appointments did not exist at the time of the inspection. Nor was this supported by suitable evidence in staff files. Consequently, the school was unable to demonstrate that the required recruitment checks for staff, supply staff, and governors are carried out consistently.

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

- 2.32 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]

- 2.33 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.34 Governors have not ensured that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.
- 2.35 A recently commissioned review of governance, commenced under the new arrangements, is effectively designed to help governors take decisions likely to promote the well-being of the pupils and has the potential to remedy current shortcomings, but it was not fully implemented at the time of the inspection.

3. Regulatory action points

3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7

- The school must liaise with and, when appropriate, make referrals to relevant external agencies when concerns relating to peer-on-peer sexual harassment arise [paragraph 7(a) and (b)].

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7

- The school must ensure that safeguarding information is kept confidential and stored securely, as required by current statutory guidance [paragraph 7(a) and (b)].

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7

- The school must carry out, and be able to evidence, all required recruitment checks required by current statutory guidance [paragraph 7(a) and (b)].

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7

- The school must take effective steps to manage potential safeguarding risks relating to individuals who have access to children [paragraph 7(a) and (b)].

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7

- The school must ensure that governors maintain a suitable and effective oversight of safeguarding [paragraph 7(a) and (b)].

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 14

- The school must ensure that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff on all school transport [paragraph 14].

ISSR Part 4, Suitability of staff, paragraph 18–21

- The school must ensure that it maintains a complete and accurate single central register that records details of all relevant required recruitment checks of staff, supply staff, and governors, supported by suitable evidence in staff files [paragraphs 18, 19, 20 and 21].

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

- Leaders and governors must ensure that the recommendations of the recent review of governance are implemented effectively so that all decisions taken promote the well-being of the pupils and all actions are suitably monitored and reviewed [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the headmaster, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with a group of governors. They visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.