



Material Change Inspection Report

Solefield School

November 2023

School's details

School	Solefield School			
DfE number	886/6038			
Registered charity number	293466			
Address	Solefields Road Sevenoaks Kent TN13 1PH			
Telephone number	01732 452142			
Email address	office@solefieldschool.org			
Headteacher	Mrs Helen McClure			
Chair of governors	Mr Robert Clewley			
Proprietor	Solefield School Trust			
Age range	3 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	136			
	EYFS	16	Pre-Prep	19
	Prep	101		
Date of inspection	28 November 2023			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Solefield School is an independent day school for male pupils aged 4 to 13 years and male and female children aged 3 to 4. Situated in Sevenoaks, Kent and founded in 1948, it became a charitable trust in the 1980s. The school is administered by a governing body. The school comprises three sections and includes an early years setting: pre-school for children aged 3 to 4; pre-prep for pupils aged 3 to 7; and prep for pupils aged 7 to 13.
- 1.2 The school has 46 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and four have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are no pupils who require support for English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a focused compliance and education quality inspection in December 2019, followed by an additional visit for a material change in February 2023 when the school increased its age range to include pupils aged 3 to 4.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.3 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to become co-educational in year groups Reception to Year 3 from January 2024, with an intention to extend this provision to older pupils over time. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 2 (curriculum) and 2A (relationships and sex education)	Met
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 23 (toilet, washing and changing facilities)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32 (1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – curriculum and relationships and sex education (RSE) [ISSR Part 1, paragraphs 2 and 2A]

- 2.1 The school meets the standards.
- 2.2 The school has a suitable curriculum policy which is implemented effectively. The policy has been adapted, where necessary, so that it is appropriate for both male and female pupils up to Year 3. Primary-age pupils currently receive appropriate relationships education and those of secondary age receive suitable relationships and sex education. Detailed schemes of work are in place which now include specific plans to cater for both male and female pupils in an age-appropriate way. The school also has suitable plans in place to ensure that female pupils are given the same opportunities in their physical education and games sessions as male pupils. The curriculum is designed to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to make good progress. It is likely that they will continue to meet the standards after the proposed move to co-education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5]

- 2.3 The school meets the standard.
- 2.4 The school is a community in which all forms of diversity are respected and pupils are encouraged effectively to celebrate their differences and their common humanity. Leaders encourage respect for all and pay particular regard to the protected characteristics as defined in the 2010 Equality Act, including gender and race. It is likely that they will continue to meet the requirements after the proposed move to co-education.

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

Safeguarding policy

- 2.5 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.6 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

- 2.7 The school meets the standard.
- 2.8 The school implements its safeguarding policy effectively and its procedures are based on the most recent statutory guidance. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies form a coherent and effective team which is trusted by staff. Members of the team are all trained at the required advanced level and bring a range of skills to the team as they include staff responsible for pupils with SEND, information and communication technology as well those with safeguarding responsibility for early years. Pupils are given suitable guidance about how to stay safe online and filtering and monitoring of technology is effective.
- 2.9 Staff are trained effectively at induction and receive effective face-to-face training at the beginning of each academic year. Additional updates are provided regularly. Staff understand how to listen to children and how to report any concerns they have. Pupils confirmed that they have a range of adults to whom they could report any concerns. They say that they would do so without hesitation and are confident of receiving a response and that action will be taken if necessary. Records of safeguarding confirm that this happens in practice. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. The school's digital

recording system for concerns is carefully monitored by the DSL so that prompt and appropriate actions can be taken. Records are centrally and confidentially stored. The school has appropriate mechanisms for handling allegations against adults working in the school and these are implemented effectively. Staff understand how to report any concerns about colleagues and use the system for entering low-level concerns with confidence. The school liaises appropriately with relevant local authorities, including children's services, and seeks advice when necessary.

- 2.10 The lead governor for safeguarding completes an annual audit of the safeguarding policy and procedures. The governing body is trained appropriately in safeguarding. It provides effective oversight and conducts a thorough annual review.
- 2.11 It is likely that these arrangements will continue to meet the standard with the proposed introduction of female pupils.

Welfare, health and safety– toilet, washing and changing facilities [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 23]

- 2.12 The school meets the standard.
- 2.13 The school has appropriate plans in place to increase the number of toilet and washing facilities for pupils and to make them suitable for female and male pupils. Many of these facilities are now close to completion. They provide sufficient and appropriate facilities for both male and female pupils which are located near to their classrooms. Plans are also in place for a separate changing room with showers, toilets and wash basins, ready for when the school admits female pupils over the age of 8.

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

- 2.14 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]

- 2.15 The school meets the standard.
- 2.16 Leaders have a clear vision for the future development of the school as it moves towards co-education. They have planned accordingly and carefully for the transition which will initially introduce female pupils in Reception to Year 3 and potentially beyond those year groups. Governors and leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge so that the standards are met consistently and they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the school's application for a material change be approved. Governors and leaders have made suitable plans and arrangements to educate both male and female pupils from Reception to Year 3. The school has sufficient appropriate toilet and washing facilities in place and has carefully considered any amendments to the curriculum, including for relationships and sex education, and physical education. School leaders actively encourage respect for those with protected characteristics and will continue to do so. The school is considering effectively the viability of extending co-education beyond Year 3 in due course and has begun appropriate planning for this change.

4. Summary of evidence

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