



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Regulatory Compliance Inspection Report
For Schools with Residential Provision**

Ellesmere College

May/June 2021

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School's Details

School	Ellesmere College			
DfE number	893/6001			
Registered charity number	1103049			
Address	Ellesmere College Ellesmere Shropshire SY12 9AB			
Telephone number	01691 622321			
Email address	reception@ellesmere.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Brendan Wignall			
Chair of governors	Mr Charles Lillis			
Age range	7 to 19			
Number of pupils on roll	501			
	Day pupils	314	Boarders	187
	Lower School	130	Middle School	202
	Sixth Form	169		
Inspection dates	19 to 21 May and 30 June 2021			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Ellesmere College is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged from seven to nineteen years. Situated on the outskirts of Ellesmere, Shropshire, it comprises a lower school for pupils aged from seven to thirteen, and an upper school with sixth form provision for pupils aged between thirteen and nineteen.
- 1.2 There are seven boarding houses, four for male and three for female pupils from age eleven upwards. Founded in 1884, the school is part of the Woodard group of Anglican schools. A board of trustees is responsible for the governance and oversight of the school. Since the previous inspection, a second sixth form boarding house for female pupils has been added, following the closure of the lower school boarding house.
- 1.3 During the period March to August 2020, the school remained open only for children of key workers. No boarders remained on site. During this period of closure the school provided online lessons and resources for all pupils.
- 1.4 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.5 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.6 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children of key workers or vulnerable pupils received remote learning provision at home, or with guardians in the case of overseas boarders.
- 1.7 In 2020 public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades were awarded.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.8 The school aims to enable each pupil to flourish, grow and be successful both academically and personally as they move through the school and beyond. The school challenges pupils to be the best they can be, developing the individual, supporting their skills development for life and enabling them to learn through a range of opportunities.

About the pupils

- 1.9 Pupils come from a range of professional and farming families living within a 20-mile radius of the school. Boarders come from across the world, with 16 nationalities currently represented. Most overseas boarders remained at home during the period between January and March 2021. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils in the lower school is average; in the upper school up to Year 11 it is broadly average. In Years 12 and 13, the pupils' ability profile is average for pupils taking A-level courses. The school has identified 150 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, which include dyslexia and dyspraxia. All of these pupils receive additional specialist help. There are eight pupils who have an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for 76 pupils, whose needs are supported in specialist classes and by their classroom teachers. Data used by the school have identified 60 pupils as being the more able in

the school's population and the curriculum is modified for them. The school provides a range of programmes for pupils with special talents in sport.

- 1.10 This regulatory compliance inspection included two onsite visits. One inspection team visited the school between 19 and 21 May 2021. A second inspection team visited the school on 30 June 2021 to gather additional information about safeguarding.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the National Minimum Standards for Boarding ('boarding NMS'), where applicable. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated and the school is required to take the actions specified. This visit took place in May 2021.

A second, additional inspection, again reporting only on compliance with the standards, took place in June 2021.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#).

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

Key findings

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

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2018 to 2020, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2018 to 2020 have confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.5 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.6 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.7 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.8 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.9 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.10 Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; and admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.11 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.12 Arrangements are made in most areas to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance but the school does not always act in the best interests of children. The school fails to ensure that it provides a safe environment in which children can learn while they are taking part in the activities of the swimming club which the school permits to use its facilities and which it enables pupils to join. The annual review of safeguarding does not include adequate consideration of the safeguarding of pupils while they are taking part in the swimming club.

The school does not make effective assessment of the potential risks relating to pupils' participation in the swimming club including those relating to staff involvement in the club.

- 2.13 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 9 to 15], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 2–4, 7–10, 12, 15 and 16 are met but those in paragraph 7 [safeguarding], 8 [safeguarding of boarders] and 16 [risk assessment], and NMS 11 and 6 are not met.**

Action point 1

The school must ensure that those pupils who the school enables to participate in the swimming club's activities do so within a safe environment [paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 11].

Action point 2

The school must ensure that the annual review of safeguarding gives adequate consideration to the safeguarding of pupils while they are taking part in the swimming club [paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 11].

Action point 3

The school must ensure effective assessment of the potential risks relating to pupils' participation in the swimming club and of any involvement of school staff in the club, and take appropriate action to reduce any risk identified [paragraph 16(a) and (b); NMS 6.3].

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.14 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.15 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.16 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.17 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.18 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for

parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.

2.19 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.20 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.

2.21 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.22 The proprietor and school leaders do not demonstrate the good skills and knowledge required to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met. In particular, they do not actively promote the well-being of pupils when they participate in the swimming club based on the school site and have not made a reasonable assessment of the risks involved in enabling such participation.

2.23 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are not met.

Action point 4

The school must ensure that the proprietor and school leaders 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, particularly those whom the school enables to participate in the swimming club, including boarders [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); NMS 13.1, 13.3 to 13.5 and 13.8].

3. Inspection Evidence

3.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with governors and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the learning support areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Stephen Fox	Reporting inspector
Mr Steven Popper	Reporting inspector
Mrs Sue Duff	Assistant reporting inspector
Mr Ian Sterling	Compliance team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Dr Antony Johns	Team inspector for boarding (Head of department, HMC school)
Mrs Raj Samra	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, SofH school)