Additional Inspection Report

Ellesmere College

October 2022

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	office@ellesmere.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr B J Wignall
Proprietor	Woodard Corporation
Age range	7 to 19
Number of pupils on roll	593

	Day pupils	350	**Boarders**	243
	Lower School	65	**Middle School**	331
	Sixth Form	197		

Date of inspection	19 October 2022

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

1.1 Ellesmere College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school situated in a rural setting in Shropshire. The school is a Church of England foundation and part of the Woodard Corporation group of Anglican schools, who appoint a board of trustees to act as governors of the school. Boarding provision is available from Year 8 and there are seven boarding houses, all situated on the main school site. The school has 165 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 4 have an education, health and care plan. There are 69 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The previous inspection was a progress monitoring visit which took place on 16 February 2022.

Purpose of the inspection

1.2 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), and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2022.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8	**Not Met**
Part 3, paragraphs 9 (behaviour) and 10 (bullying); NMS 15 and 16	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 9	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision); NMS 20	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9	**Not Met**
Part 6, paragraph 32 (provision of information)	**Not Met**
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints); NMS 14	**Not Met**
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	**Not Met**

2. Inspection findings

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

Safeguarding policy

2.1 The school meets the requirements.

2.2 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

2.3 The school does not meet the standards.

2.4 The school's safeguarding policy is not implemented effectively in all areas.

2.5 The policy includes details of the Prevent duty and is further supported by other appropriate policies which include the staff code of conduct, safe recruitment policy and whistleblowing arrangements. These are understood and implemented effectively by staff. Staff recognise the potential for child-on-child abuse. They report incidents to senior staff. Where allegations are made against adults working in the school, the school responds appropriately. It makes prompt referral to external agencies and to statutory bodies where relevant, including the Disclosure and Barring Service and Teaching Regulation Agency. Pupils confirmed that they can express concerns and are listened to. They receive appropriate support in most cases, including early help. There is due regard for pupils' mental health. Pupils confirmed they feel safe at school.

2.6 However, the assessment of risk to vulnerable pupils in cases of inappropriate sexual behaviour is insufficiently effective. This impairs the monitoring and support provided.

2.7 Staff training in safeguarding, including for the designated safeguarding lead, deputies and for governors is comprehensive. It includes appropriate attention to the school's e-safety policy, handling allegations and online safety, but this training has not been put into practice consistently.

2.8 There is a lack of suitable expertise within the senior leadership team in operating the electronic system that collects and records information, including that relating to safeguarding incidents. Those responsible for handling safeguarding information and relevant data were unable to retrieve data competently or effectively during the inspection. This inhibits the effective and systematic review of safeguarding casework and the identification of any trends or patterns in safeguarding issues. It obscures any view of how safeguarding incidents are managed and monitored, and the effectiveness of the actions of those staff responsible for safeguarding. Some information held about safeguarding casework is inconsistently recorded and senior leaders were unaware of this.

2.9 The use of technology by pupils is suitably controlled in most areas. However, some incidents of potential child-on-child abuse and the sharing of online nude images have not been dealt with by senior leaders in line with statutory guidance. Leaders were not familiar with the requirements of key guidance relating to online safety.

2.10 The safeguarding arrangements are reviewed annually by the governors but their review has not identified these weaknesses in safeguarding practice, including the inadequacies in recording casework. This has resulted in ineffective oversight of safeguarding.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour and bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 9 and 10; NMS 15 and 16]

2.11   The school meets the standards.

2.12   The school has ensured that suitable policies have been drawn up to promote good behaviour and guard against bullying. These are implemented effectively so that pupils are enabled to address any behavioural issues positively. Rewards for good behaviour and sanctions for misbehaviour are made clear. Pupils interviewed expressed confidence in the school's arrangements to promote good behaviour and in the effectiveness of its anti-bullying strategy. During the visit, pupils were observed behaving well in lessons and at other times, displaying mutual respect.

2.13   Appropriate records are kept of sanctions imposed on pupils and actions taken for any serious misbehaviour or instances of bullying. All inappropriate behaviour which is reported, however minor, and any bullying, is logged. Interventions to address misbehaviour or bullying and the outcomes of these actions are recorded on the school's electronic system. Senior leaders' inability to retrieve information efficiently hinders the identification of behavioural patterns or trends in order to continually improve practice. However, the supportive relationships that prevail between pupils at the school and the effective guidance and care provided by senior leaders and staff ensure that, in practice, behaviour in school is predominantly good and bullying is rare.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11; NMS 9]

2.14   The school meets the standards.

2.15   The school implements an effective health and safety policy which covers all expected elements. Requirements for the checking of utilities are met, including the monitoring of quality and provision of drinking water.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; NMS 20]

2.16   The school meets the standards.

2.17   Arrangements within school and on school visits ensure pupils are appropriately supervised at all times. This includes in boarding houses and overnight.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 9]

2.18   The school does not meet the standards.

2.19   The school has a suitable risk assessment policy. This is implemented effectively in assessing everyday risks in the school environment and on trips.

2.20   However, risk assessments in the context of safeguarding, including boarders' welfare, are inadequate. In particular, risk assessment and subsequent actions in response to situations involving inappropriate sexual behaviour by pupils. Senior leaders give insufficient attention to potential risks to the victim and the perpetrator. Review of the lessons which could be learned from such situations, and of the potential for repetition of similar behaviour, is not reflected in risk assessments.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32]

2.21 The school does not meet the standard.

2.22 The school provides information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website. Although other required information is provided, the school has not published and maintained a copy of all previous inspection reports on its website.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33; NMS 14]

2.23 The school does not meet the standards.

2.24 The school has appropriate policies for handling parents' complaints and for considering boarders' complaints. It operates its policies effectively, including applying appropriate timescales in handling parents' complaints.

2.25 However, senior leaders fail to maintain sufficiently detailed records of complaint outcomes, including those relating to boarding.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 2]

2.26 The school meets does not meet the standards.

2.27 Senior leaders and governors have not demonstrated the requisite knowledge and skills necessary to ensure the standards are met consistently and promote the wellbeing of pupils, including in boarding. In particular, with regard to safeguarding, including oversight of pupils' use of technology; risk assessment; the provision of information; and record keeping, including records of safeguarding, risk assessments and complaints as required by Appendix B of the NMS.

3. Regulatory action points

3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022 and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 8

- Ensure that senior leaders implement the safeguarding policy effectively so that safeguarding records are maintained appropriately and all safeguarding incidents, including any relating to sexualised behaviour or pupils' misuse of technology, are dealt with in line with statutory guidance [paragraphs 7(a) and (b) and 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1 to 8.4].

- Improve governors' review of safeguarding to ensure that all incidents are dealt with in line with statutory guidance, including through sufficiently rigorous oversight of pupils' safety online [paragraphs 7(a) and (b) and 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1 to 8.3].

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, paragraph 16; NMS 9

- Ensure that risk assessment and subsequent actions by senior leaders in response to inappropriate sexual behaviour by pupils are fully effective. In particular, that they identify the potential risks to the victim and the perpetrator, steps to mitigate such risks, and give sufficient attention to the potential for repetition of similar behaviour [paragraph 16(a) and (b); NMS 9.3 and, for the same reason, paragraph 8(b)].

ISSR Part 6, Provision of information, paragraph 32

- Ensure that all previous inspection reports are published and maintained on the school's website [paragraph 32(1)(d)].

ISSR Part 7, Manner in which complaints are handled, paragraph 33; NMS 14

- Ensure that the school maintains sufficiently detailed records of complaints to show the actions taken as a result of any complaint, including identifying those complaints which relate to boarding [paragraph 33(j)(ii); NMS 14.3].

ISSR Part 8, Quality of leadership and management, paragraph 34; NMS 2

- Ensure that senior leaders and governors show good knowledge and skills so that the standards are met consistently and that they promote the wellbeing of pupils, in particular with regard to oversight of pupils' use of technology; risk assessment; the provision of information; and record keeping, including records of safeguarding, risk assessments and complaints as required by Appendix B of the NMS [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and(c); NMS 2.1, 2.2, 2.4 to 2.6 and 2.8].

4. Summary of evidence

4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors and another member of the governing body. They visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.

Inspectors

Mr Andrew Farren   Reporting inspector

Mr Michael Evans   Assistant reporting inspector