ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

Progress Monitoring Inspection Report

Ellesmere College

October 2023

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	hmsecretary@ellesmere.com
Headteacher	Mr Brendan Wignall
Chair of governors	Mr Charles Lillis
Proprietor	Woodard Corporation
Age range	7 to 19
Number of pupils on roll	561

Day pupils	334	**Boarders**	227
Lower school	135	**Middle school**	234
Sixth Form	192		

Date of inspection	17 to 18 October 2023

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 174 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom five have an education, health and care plan. There are 121 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The previous inspection was an additional inspection on 19 October 2022.

Purpose of the inspection

1.2   This was an unannounced progress monitoring inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the additional inspection on 19 October 2022. The inspection 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 and 8 (safeguarding)	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour)	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying)	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils)	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	**Met**
Part 4, paragraph 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors)	**Met**
Part 5, paragraph 23 (toilet, washing and changing facilities)	**Met**
Part 5, paragraph 25 (maintenance of premises and accommodation)	**Met**
Part 5, paragraph 28 (drinking water and water supply)	**Met**
Part 5, paragraph 30 (boarding accommodation)	**Met**
Part 6, paragraph 32 (provision of information)	**Met**
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints procedure)	**Met**
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	**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 meets the standards.

2.4   The school's safeguarding policy is implemented effectively, including for boarders. Suitable training arrangements are in place for all staff and governors, including those who have specific safeguarding responsibilities and for those working with boarders. This training is in line with locally agreed arrangements. In discussions, staff demonstrated a competent understanding of their training and spoke of how the safeguarding leads prepared them well for their roles within the school. They understand, and apply effectively, associated policies and procedures including the staff code of conduct and behaviour, bullying and whistleblowing arrangements. Recent training has focused on, amongst other things, the reporting and recording of low-level concerns about staff members. Staff state that they feel comfortable and confident in reporting any such concerns. There has also been a focus in training on the recording of any safeguarding concerns using the school's electronic management system. This has significantly strengthened recording procedures since the previous inspection. Staff understand the importance of recording any concern and know how to categorise any logged concern depending on the nature of the incident. This includes concerns around sexualised behaviours and the misuse of technologies. These strengthened arrangements also allow school leaders and managers to monitor all concerns more closely. They are now using the data provided by the electronic management system to monitor patterns or trends effectively. The school understands its responsibilities in relation to any safeguarding concerns that might happen out of school hours and away from the school premises. They liaise effectively with local safeguarding partners as required, including the police. The recruitment procedures are thorough and ensure that all pre-appointment checks are carried out appropriately before a person commences work at the school.

2.5   There is effective oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements by governors. They also use the data provided by the school to gain a clear oversight of any safeguarding concerns. This enables them to appropriately question and challenge those with safeguarding responsibilities. Governors carry out regular reviews of the school's policy and arrangements. The designated safeguarding governor liaises effectively with the school leads. They meet regularly and discuss arrangements with both staff and pupils ensuring that they can make effective challenges when required.

2.6   There are effective systems in place to monitor the appropriate use of technologies, including the filtering of access to the internet. Pupils feel that the school teaches them effectively in this regard with there being regular reminders about e-safety in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and computing lessons as well as in assemblies.

2.7   In discussions, pupils, including boarders, state they feel safe at school and know there is always someone to whom they can talk should they have any worries or concerns. They feel that any concerns expressed are acted upon swiftly by staff.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9; NMS 15]

2.8   The school meets the standards.

2.9   The school has a suitable behaviour management policy that is implemented effectively. Pastoral leads have effective oversight of all behavioural incidents. All incidents, including those related to boarding, are recorded on the school's electronic management system. As with safeguarding logs, all entries onto the system are categorised according to a range of criteria. These include any relating to areas such as homophobia, misogyny, racist comments or misuse of technology. Effective entries by all staff enable leaders to readily spot any patterns or trends. The staff understand when certain behaviours may be a criminal offence, and leaders liaise effectively at such times with the police. Pupils feel that the PSHE programme supports their wellbeing in areas such as sexual harassment and misuse of technology. Pupils cite the school's tutor system as being an important aspect of the school's behaviour and anti-bullying strategies. They feel supported and well cared for.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10; NMS 16]

2.10   The school meets the standards.

2.11   The school's anti-bullying arrangements are implemented effectively. As with behavioural matters, all cases of bullying are suitably recorded on the school's electronic management system. Pupils feel that bullying incidents are not common and that the school deals with any reported in a robust and thorough manner. When incidents are reported, the school ensures that there are appropriate measures in place to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of all those concerned. An increased focus on e-safety has meant that the misuse of mobile technologies has reduced.

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

2.12   The school meets the standards.

2.13   Pupils, including boarders, are supervised appropriately at all times. Rotas for the school day and for each boarding house show that suitable arrangements are in place. Pupils, including boarders, state that there is always a member of staff that they contact should the need arise. For boarders, this also includes during the night.

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

2.14   The school meets the standards.

2.15   The school's risk assessment policy is implemented effectively. The school has developed a comprehensive approach to assessing risk, including for safeguarding. These include assessments set up following specific incidents and which reflect the needs of all those involved. For example, risk assessments include support for both the victim and alleged perpetrator following incidents of inappropriate sexual behaviour. The assessments focus on how to support all parties and what measures need to be put in place to mitigate against any identified risk. Safeguarding leads, including governors, have effective oversight of any associated risk assessments.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 19]

2.16   The school meets the standards.

2.17   The school's safer recruitment procedures are implemented effectively. All pre-employment checks are carried out appropriately and reflect current statutory guidance. All pre-employment checks are correctly entered on to the school's register of appointments, and all required associated documentation is properly stored in staff files.

Premises and accommodation – toilet, washing and changing facilities [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23; NMS 4]

2.18   The school meets the standards.

2.19   There are suitable toilet, washing and changing facilities located around the school, including in the boarding houses. All allow suitable privacy. Changing facilities for physical education, swimming and games are appropriately supervised to minimise the risk of inappropriate behaviours.

Premises and accommodation – maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25; NMS 9]

2.20   The school meets the standards.

2.21   The school has a rolling programme of maintenance for all buildings, including boarding houses. All buildings are well maintained and do not pose any risk to the health and safety of members of the school community.

Premises and accommodation – drinking and water supply [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 28]

2.22   The school meets the standards.

2.23   Suitable drinking water is available at key points around the school, including in each boarding house. The drinking water is clearly labelled as such. There is suitable hot and cold water for washing hands and for showering and the hot water does not pose any risk of scalding.

Premises and accommodation – boarding accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 30; NMS 4]

2.24   The school meets the standards.

2.25   The school provides suitable boarding accommodation for both male and female pupils. The rooms for sleeping are spacious, well maintained and furnished, and have appropriate heating, lighting and ventilation. The rooms allow adequate privacy for the boarders, and they can personalise their own areas. Each boarding house has spaces where boarders can study as well as social areas for relaxation. The toilet and washing facilities are well positioned and are easily accessible. In discussions, boarders spoke positively about their boarding accommodation. There are CCTV cameras in place at strategic areas; these do not intrude on the privacy of boarders.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32]

2.26   The school meets the standard.

2.27   The school ensures that all required information for parents of both current and prospective pupils is made available on the school website. This includes copies of all inspection reports.

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

2.28 The school meets the standards.

2.29 The school has a suitable complaints policy that is implemented effectively. Any complaints are recorded in sufficient detail on a spreadsheet showing the nature of the complaint, any actions taken and any follow up that may be required. Any complaints relating to boarding are also identified on the records. Each complaint is supported by the relevant documentation, such as notes from meetings and any email trails. The school has strengthened the recording of complaints since the previous inspection to ensure that the requirements are fully met.

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

2.30 The school meets the standards.

2.31 School leaders and the proprietors have implemented in full the action plan required by the previous inspection. They demonstrate appropriate knowledge and skills, which they implement effectively to ensure that the standards are met consistently and that they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. In particular, they have strengthened record keeping in relation to safeguarding, behaviour and bullying, risk assessments and complaints as required by Appendix B of the NMS. There has also been a strengthening of the oversight of pupils' use of technology.

3. Regulatory action points

3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Summary of evidence

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