

Queen Ethelburga's College and the Faculty of Queen Ethelburga's

Thorpe Underwood Estate, York, YO26 9SS

Date of visit 15th December 2015

Purpose of visit

This was an unannounced visit carried out at the request of the DfE to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the most recent visit in June 2015. The visit was also required to assess the school's compliance with regulations in relation to bullying, the provision of information to parents, and boarding staffing and supervision.

Characteristics of the School

Queen Ethelburga's College was founded in 1912, moving to its current location on the Thorpe Underwood Estate north-west of York in 1991. It became part of Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate Foundation in 2006 when its sister school, the Faculty of Queen Ethelburga's, was established. The two schools in the Foundation are owned by Queen Ethelburga's Formation Ltd, whose directors act as a board of governors with proprietorial responsibility. A new chairman, now the only member of the former family owners represented, took up her position in October 2015. The College educates 1030 pupils between the ages of three months and eighteen years, 532 boys and 498 girls, with 560 pupils in the junior sections up to Year 9, of whom 38 are under three years of age in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The senior section contains 470 pupils. A further 580 are educated in the Faculty, a parallel senior school on the same site. In total, 1179 pupils are boarders, of whom 754 have English as an additional language (EAL). The school has identified 66 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), none of whom have a statement or education, health or care plan (EHC). The previous full ISI inspections of both the College and the Faculty took place in September 2012. Further follow-up one-day inspections took place in March and June 2015.

Inspection findings

Part 3, Paragraphs 7(a) and (b) and 8(a) and (b) and NMS 11 - Safeguarding

The Regulations and Standard are met.

The school carried out further safeguarding training for all staff, teaching and non-teaching, at the start of the current term in September 2015 and over the following week, to ensure that all of its large workforce could attend. Attendance was carefully recorded and the comprehensive training log clearly shows the date on which each staff member attended. The content of the training was examined and found to be in line with local and national guidance and requirements. It included up-to-date issues of the prevention of extremism

and radicalisation. Senior academic and boarding staff have completed additional on-line training in this area. Part of the start of term training included the re-issue of updated policies on safeguarding and whistleblowing, and staff have each signed to confirm that they have read and understand the latest government guidance, *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE). Staff who have joined the school since the start of term have received an appropriate induction briefing containing all required items and have also been issued with KCSIE.

Since the previous visit, the nominated governor for safeguarding has been designated to liaise with the local authority as required, and in particular in the event of an allegation against the principal. She and the school's designated lead person for safeguarding (DSL) have assisted the board to undertake their required annual safeguarding review by preparing a report which governors discussed, and formally approved, and this is recorded in their minutes in suitable detail. Staff interviewed all knew the correct updated reporting arrangements for welfare concerns and allegations against staff or the principal. They were aware of the arrangements for whistleblowing and confirmed that they would act appropriately if the need arose. They were aware that anyone can make a referral to the local authorities.

Improved procedures are now in place to assess risk and provide appropriate supervision arrangements, regularly reviewed, if a staff member is allowed to start work before receipt of the criminal record check. Records show that this has been properly carried out in relation to one member of the non-teaching staff starting work this term.

The school has responded to concerns about the use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) across the campus. The views of staff and parents have been sought, and few have expressed adverse views about the current practice. Several parents in the armed services expressed satisfaction about this aspect of school security. Most staff and pupils spoken to felt that overall the provision was appropriate, and recognised the benefits in the event of security concerns or serious disciplinary incidents. Since the previous visit, the school has commissioned educational specialist lawyers to draw up a revised CCTV policy, and a new code of practice has been drawn up. Those members of staff granted access to retrieve recorded data have signed their acceptance of the code. CCTV cameras have been removed from the EYFS classrooms and the medical centre, as have viewing monitors from all areas except the site security office.

Part 3, Paragraph 10 and NMS 12 - Bullying

The Regulation and Standard are met.

Pupils are clear that the school adopts a robust approach to mis-behaviour and bullying or harassment, and know what to do in the event that it occurs. They confirm that staff are supportive and approachable and are confident that they will take prompt and effective action if bullying is detected or reported. The school has a thorough policy that provides suitable guidance for pupils and staff about the school's preventative strategies and in responding to concerns about behaviour. This is effectively implemented in practice. In the current term, four incidents have been identified. These have been suitably recorded and appropriate action taken. One of these incidents was more serious than the others and its resolution is being carefully monitored by the school.

Part 4 Paragraphs 18 and 21 and NMS 14.1 – Staff recruitment

The Regulation and Standard are met.

The school has put much time and resources into improving its recruitment procedures which, judged by recent appointments since the previous visit, are now rigorous and meet regulatory requirements. Additional staff support has been provided to meet the personnel needs of a workforce of over 700. The single central register of pre-appointment checks (SCR) provides a comprehensive and accurate record which confirms the more robust

approach now in operation. A sample of entries for recent appointments of different categories of staff was examined and it was found that all required checks had been carried out in a timely manner and recorded appropriately. The use of barred list checks for staff starting work before the receipt of the criminal record check is now understood and evidence of its use was confirmed.

Part 6 Paragraph 32(1)(d) – Provision of information

The Regulation is met.

A copy of the advice note from the previous emergency visit is available to parents of current and prospective parents on the school's website.

Part 8 paragraphs 34(a),(b) and (c) and NMS 13.4 – Leadership and management

The Regulation and Standard are met.

The school has taken suitable steps to reorganise governance and management in order to ensure effective monitoring and oversight of the school's compliance with regulations, especially those relating to safeguarding and safe staff recruitment. With the departure of the former provost/chairman, a new proprietorial board has been created, initially of six members, five of them bringing a fresh external perspective and educational expertise, with the chair being a member of the family of the former owners. A nominated governor for safeguarding has attended specialist training relevant to her role. A senior member of staff is to be appointed to the new board of governors with a responsibility for regulatory compliance. Regular checks of the recruitment process take place, with an unannounced monitoring check of the SCR taking place the day before the inspection visit was notified. Safeguarding training for the new board of governors is planned for the spring term. In these ways, leaders and managers have taken appropriate steps to reinforce their skills and expertise to ensure continued compliance with regulations. Discussions with pupils, staff, and senior leaders, together with other documentary evidence, indicate that the school actively promotes the well-being of pupils.

NMS 15 – Staffing and Supervision

The Standard is met.

Interviews with senior leaders and boarding staff, including those recently appointed, confirm that whole-school induction and training has covered appropriate pastoral and welfare strategies for use by staff working with boarders. This is underpinned and supported by various staff handbooks and guidance, and supplemented by handbooks and guidance within individual houses. Boarding staff have suitable opportunities to meet together and discuss boarding and pastoral issues. However, documentation seen has little specific detail to clarify expectations for staff about the practicalities of being on duty or of how they will exercise their responsibilities to supervise boarders. Boarders spoken to confirmed that there is always at least one member of staff responsible for them by day, and several resident overnight. They know how to contact the duty member of staff by day and by night. There has been a high turnover of boarding staff recently, most of whom are single persons, as accommodation for couples or families is very limited. Boarding staff felt that, at times, deployment of staff in houses was thin and they did not have as much time or opportunity to just sit and talk informally to boarders as they would like. This was confirmed by some of the boarders. Inspectors considered that deployment of staff was sufficient to ensure appropriate supervision of boarders. No male members of staff are currently resident in or have assigned duties in girls' boarding houses. Female staff members on duty in boys' houses observe the expected sensitivity for boarders' privacy. Appropriate safeguards are in place to restrict boarders' access to staff accommodation.

Regulatory action points

The school meets all the requirements of those Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 and National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 inspected during the visit.