



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Additional Inspection Report

Old Buckenham Hall School

March 2023

School's details

School	Old Buckenham Hall School		
DfE number	935/6019		
Registered charity number	310490		
Address	Old Buckenham Hall School Brettenham Park Ipswich Suffolk IP7 7PH		
Telephone number	01449 740252		
Email address	admissions@obh.co.uk		
Headmaster	Mr David Griffiths		
Chair of governors	Mr Andrew McGregor		
Proprietor	Old Buckenham Hall (Brettenham) Educational Trust		
Age range	3 to 13		
Number of pupils on roll	221		
	Day pupils	147	Boarders 74
	EYFS	34	Pre-prep 35
	Prep	152	
Date of inspection	22 March 2023		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Old Buckenham Hall School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. Since 1968, the school has been run as a charitable trust managed by a board of governors. The school comprises an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting and provision for pupils in Years 1 and 2 within the pre-prep department, and provision for those in Years 3 to 8 in the preparatory section. Pupils can start boarding from the age of seven. Senior boarders are accommodated in the main boarding house and younger boarders have their own boarding house nearby. All boarders' accommodation is gender separated. The school has identified 62 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, 60 of whom receive additional specialist help. One pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for nine pupils, for whom extra English support is offered as required. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in May 2021.

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), the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework 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; EYFS 3.4-3.8	Met
Part 3, paragraphs 9 (behaviour) and 10 (bullying); NMS 16; EYFS 3.53-3.54	Met
Part 3, paragraphs 11 (health and safety) and 12 (fire safety); NMS 9; EYFS 3.48-3.50, 3.55-3.56	Met
Part 3, paragraph 13 (first aid); NMS 7; EYFS 3.25, 3.45-3.47, 3.51	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils); NMS 20; EYFS 3.28-3.31	Met
Part 3, paragraph 15 (admission and attendance registers); EYFS 3.73	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9; EYFS 3.65-3.67	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints procedure); NMS 14	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	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 Implementation of all aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures is effective in providing appropriate support to ensure the welfare of pupils, including with regard to boarders, children in the EYFS and any pupils with additional needs.
- 2.5 Safeguarding procedures are implemented to safeguard children at risk and those in particular need. Staff show effective understanding of their responsibilities, including with regard to child-on-child abuse. They understand the nature of sexual harassment, and any such abuse linked to respect for those with protected characteristics. Staff show appropriate awareness of the staff code of conduct, whistleblowing policy and safeguarding procedures and are confident to use them. They have a suitable knowledge of the thresholds for reporting issues or incidents. Staff are aware of who to go to if they have a concern or receive a disclosure. They understand that they can make a direct referral to children's services if necessary. They take appropriate action when appropriate.
- 2.6 The safeguarding policy provides appropriate and clear guidance regarding possible abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil, including linking such abuse to bullying and/or sexual harassment. Pupils receive suitable help to address risks and such help prevents issues escalating. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) acts on and refers to appropriate agencies the early signs of risk or need, including in relation to self-harming or eating disorders.
- 2.7 The DSL ensures the school listens to the views of individual pupils as required by *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. This is confirmed in written evidence from safeguarding records. Records are detailed, although still in the process of being transferred to one centralised system. All behavioural issues and allegations of sexualised behaviour or bullying, including allegations of sexual harassment, are treated as potential safeguarding concerns and addressed effectively. The risk to pupils is properly considered, and formal assessments drawn up. In the light of recent incidents, the threshold of potential risk set for instigating such assessments has been lowered. Senior leaders and/or governors maintain effective communication with parents about children involved in safeguarding incidents. Pupils receive guidance on staying safe and show understanding of what they have been taught, including in relation to e-safety. Monitoring and filtering of technology is effective. The physical and mental health of all pupils involved in any incident are given a high priority.
- 2.8 The safeguarding policy gives contact details as required for local safeguarding partners. Suitable recruitment procedures for staff are outlined within the safeguarding policy and detailed in a separate recruitment policy. The training for those with specific safeguarding responsibilities is in line with local requirements and statutory advice and is up to date. Training in safeguarding for teaching and non-teaching staff is of sufficient quality and frequency.
- 2.9 Suitable arrangements for handling allegations against staff, senior leaders or the governors, and potential misconduct, are included in safeguarding procedures; they include seeking immediate advice

from the local authority designated safeguarding officer (LADO). Records show that such procedures are followed effectively, and the school follows up actions promptly. The school understands its role in reporting any person to relevant regulatory bodies if circumstances require it.

- 2.10 Governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding. A governor with appropriate expertise maintains a close working contact with the DSL and annually conducts a termly review of the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements on behalf of the governors. Governors commission external reviews following any serious incident, and act swiftly on any recommendations made, including with regard to improvements in how safeguarding and behavioural issues are managed in the school.

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

- 2.11 The school meets the standards.
- 2.12 A suitable behaviour policy and arrangements to guard against bullying are in place. Both are implemented effectively. There is a clear code of conduct for pupils. Arrangements recognise the particular needs of pupils, and appropriate adjustments are made. Sanctions are applied appropriately and proportionately. Records of misbehaviour are detailed, allowing trends to be identified and the effectiveness of sanctions to be evaluated.
- 2.13 The school promotes respect of those with protected characteristics effectively through its behaviour policy. It has defined levels of behavioural expectations that guide decisions appropriately when individual incidents arise, including those which involve physical violence. Records corroborate the views of pupils that there is almost no child-on-child abuse of those with protected characteristics. Pupils reported that there is very little bullying in the school. Records show that if it does occur then the school provides suitable support for the alleged victim and perpetrator and monitors the effectiveness of any action taken.
- 2.14 Detailed recording enables all pastoral concerns to be logged for each pupil. All incidents of misbehaviour between pupils are considered as potential bullying and/or safeguarding issues, and trends analysed. Documentation shows that parents of both alleged victim and perpetrator are involved at the earliest stages of any incident.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety, and fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 11 and 12; NMS 9]

- 2.15 The school meets the standards.
- 2.16 The proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy. Senior leaders and governors confirmed that there has been no change in arrangements since the previous inspection. Systematic records ensure steps are taken to mitigate recurrence of any health and safety issues. The site is secure, and all teaching accommodation is suitable for pupils.
- 2.17 An appropriate fire safety policy is in place. Those with direct responsibility have a detailed understanding of procedures. Pupils confirm that they know what to do in case of fire, and that they regularly practise fire evacuation procedures. The provision of these practices is confirmed by suitable records.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – first aid [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 13; NMS 7]

- 2.18 The school meets the standards.

- 2.19 Senior leaders ensure that the school's first aid policy is effectively implemented and administered in a timely and competent manner. There are suitable additional policies which are relevant to the context of the school, including for boarding and in the EYFS. Senior leaders ensure that the physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing of pupils are promoted effectively.

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

- 2.20 The school meets the standards.
- 2.21 Pupils are properly supervised by qualified and trained staff, including in boarding. Protocols are in place to identify immediately if pupils do not appear at expected lessons or activities and find their whereabouts. Records show that these are implemented effectively. Procedures are reviewed in line with known incidents.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – admission and attendance registers [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15]

- 2.22 The school meets the standard.
- 2.23 Admission and attendance registers are maintained as required.

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

- 2.24 The school meets the standards.
- 2.25 The school's risk assessment policy clearly describes appropriate lines of responsibility for identifying and managing risk and the approaches to be taken to do so. There is an effective culture of assessing risk to pupils in any decision taken, in particular regarding individual pupils about whom behavioural or safeguarding concerns have been identified. The threshold for formal recording of these assessments has recently been lowered appropriately. Appropriate assessments are also made for the needs of individual pupils both while in school and in the surrounding area. In all these areas, appropriate action is taken to mitigate risks identified.

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

- 2.26 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.

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

- 2.27 The school meets the standards.
- 2.28 The school's complaints procedure is available on the school website. It provides for concerns and complaints to be considered on an informal basis; the establishment of a formal procedure for a complaint to be made in writing; for a hearing before a panel which includes an independent member and allows for parent to be accompanied; for the panel to make findings and recommendations; and for a confidential record to be kept of findings. Records of complaints show that the school follows its own policy appropriately. Depending on the nature of the complaint and wishes of the complainant, formal complaints are handled by senior leaders or governors in line with the school's procedures.

Whether or not complaints have been upheld, the school undertakes a detailed review to identify any lessons to be learned from them and implements any consequent recommendations effectively.

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

2.29 The school meets the standards.

2.30 Senior leaders and governors demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are consistently met. The wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted. Governors monitor compliance with regulations appropriately.

3. Regulatory action points

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, the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022, and the and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Summary of evidence

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

Inspectors

Mr Stephen Cole

Reporting inspector

Mr David Scott

Assistant reporting inspector