

Old Palace of John Whitgift School

Old Palace Road, South Croydon, CR0 1AX

Date of visit 22 March 2016

Purpose of visit

This was an unannounced emergency visit at the request of the Department for Education which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, particularly those concerned with safeguarding; welfare, health and safety, in particular, supervision of pupils, including children in the EYFS; premises and accommodation; and the quality of leadership and management.

Characteristics of the School

Old Palace School of John Whitgift is an independent school for girls aged 3 months to 18 years and boys from 3 months to 4 years in the Nursery. The school has three locations, but operates educationally and administratively as one school, led by the head of the senior school. The Nursery and Preparatory School are based on two sides of a shared field in south Croydon, and the senior school is sited in central Croydon. The Court of the Whitgift Foundation oversees the governance of three schools in Croydon, one of which is Old Palace School. Each school has its own school committee to which the Court delegates day-to-day governance. The Court oversees the implementation of key policies, including safeguarding and health and safety.

At the time of the visit there were 732 pupils in the school, including 39 boys and 93 girls in the EYFS. There were a further 124 girls in the preparatory school and 492 in the senior school, to which pupils transfer at the end of Year 5. Thirty-two pupils, including those with education and/or health (EHC) plans receive extra support for special educational needs and/or disability (SEND). No pupils need support because English is not their first language. The previous integrated inspection was in October 2010 and the inspection of the EYFS was in November 2013.

Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils [ISSR Part 3, Paragraphs 7(a) and (b) – safeguarding and child protection; EYFS requirements 3.4 – 3.8]

The school does not meet all of the Regulations.

The school provides appropriate support for pupils' needs, including those of children in the EYFS, to ensure their welfare, health and safety. The safeguarding policy covers the full context of the school, including measures required for registered EYFS provision. Although

the implementation of the policy is effective, some elements required by statutory guidance are omitted from the policy. These include provision that if a crime may have been committed, the matter should be reported to the police; and a clear statement that the restriction on the use of mobile telephones and cameras in the EYFS applies to all entering the setting, not just the staff. Some references in the policy are outdated, for example that to 2006 version of the LSCB child protection and safeguarding procedures; that to Working Together 2006; and a reference to ISA. At the time of the visit none of the omissions had a material consequence on the welfare, health and safety of pupils or children in the EYFS.

The staff code of conduct and professional guidelines are covered in two separate documents. The former is part of the safeguarding policy, gives clear advice and is suitable for the school, and includes the necessary guidance for those working in the EYFS. The school regularly reviews the code in response to incidents. Staff showed a good awareness of the code. The Foundation's whistleblowing policy applies to all staff and volunteers across the charity. Hence the guidance given is unspecific to safeguarding. Although the wording of the safeguarding policy says that anybody can make a referral to children's social care in exceptional circumstances, suggesting that there are caveats imposed, members of staff were clear that any adult can contact children's services with concerns about a child, and were aware of the reporting lines if there were allegations about a senior leader.

The designated senior leads (DSLs), including those with designated responsibility in the EYFS, act on and refer the early signs of abuse and neglect, keep clear records, listen to the views of the pupil, reassess concerns when situations do not improve, share information quickly and, particularly with regard to bullying and any other pupil-on-pupil abuse, although a clear job description for their role is not included in the safeguarding policy. The relationship with other agencies is frequent and advice is actively sought. Local procedures are followed. However, the safeguarding policy does not give a sufficiently clear account of the way allegations or suspicions of abuse are reported in the school, in particular, it does not state that allegations against the head are reported to the chair of governors without the head being informed or provide that all allegations against staff or other adults working in the school are reported to the LADO immediately and within one working day. It lacks the specific requirement that a report is made directly to Ofsted within 14 days if there is an allegation of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working or looking after children at the premises or elsewhere or any other abuse on the premises. Safeguarding issues, including those concerning adults, have been quickly communicated to the appropriate agencies and authorities.

The DSL and other designated safeguarding leads have up-to-date training, including in working with other agencies. All staff have received up-to-date training at the appropriate level. Induction procedures include the component elements recommended by Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE July 2015). Staff are aware of the difference between children at risk of harm and in need, of the issues surrounding children missing in education, and that bullying can be a safeguarding issue, although the need to refer abuse by one or more pupils against another to an external safeguarding agency where there is risk of significant harm is not included in the safeguarding policy. They understand the signals of potential radicalisation and female genital mutilation (FGM) of pupils. The safeguarding policy states that in the case of FGM staff should activate local safeguarding procedures using national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and children's social care. Staff were unaware of the mandatory reporting responsibility of FGM to the police.

The school's recruitment policy is suitable, but as yet does not include the need to check that relevant people are not subject to a check against the list of those prohibited from management, nor the need for overseas checks where applicable.

Pupils and EYFS children receive the right help at the right time to minimise risks. They receive effective teaching and on keeping safe. Senior school pupils speak positively about the guidance they have received about minimising risk on their journeys to and from school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils [ISSR Part 3, Paragraph 9 - promoting good behaviour]

The school meets the Regulation.

The school has a suitable policy to promote good behaviour which is implemented effectively. This includes an appropriate rewards and sanctions policy. The central record of sanctions is transparent and monitored effectively to enable any trends or patterns to be identified.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils [ISSR Part 3, Paragraph 14 – supervision; EYFS requirements 3.28 – 3.36]

The school meets the Regulation.

The school has suitable supervision arrangements. Staff have a clear awareness of the need for appropriate supervision at break and lunchtimes. Staff supervision is supported by chaperones where pupils perform outside school in professional productions. Handover arrangements are effective, including at the end of the school day, and their consistency corroborated by staff, pupils and security staff employed by the school. Staff are present at the local tram stop at the end of the day. Staff:child ratios in the EYFS are appropriate. Effective systems ensure that EYFS staff know children's whereabouts at all times, that children are within both sight and hearing wherever possible, and always within hearing.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils [ISSR Part 3, Paragraph 16 - risk assessment; EYFS requirements 3.64 risk assessment]

The school meets the Regulation.

The school has a risk assessment policy which provides appropriately for the range of activities that pupils undertake, including in the EYFS. Risk assessment templates include detailed guidance for their completion, which is effective. The risk assessment forms themselves do not give opportunity for staff to consider further minimising danger to pupils.

Premises of and Accommodation at the School [ISSRs Part 5, Paragraphs 23, 25, 26, 27, 28; EYFS requirements, 3.57 – 3.63]

The school meets all the Regulations.

Suitable toilet and washing facilities are provided for the sole use of pupils in all parts of the school. Suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education. Doors close properly and the standard of maintenance is good, ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils. Doors near the EYFS have suitable devices attached to ensure that they close sufficiently slowly to avoid any danger of children's fingers being trapped. Acoustic conditions and standard of lighting in rooms support the various activities which normally take place there. Suitable drinking water facilities are provided although not all fountains have adequate pressure. Toilets and urinals have an adequate supply of cold water and washing facilities have an adequate supply of hot and cold water. Cold water supplies that are suitable for drinking are clearly marked as such; the temperature of hot water at the point of use does not pose a scalding risk to users. External lighting is provided in order to ensure

that people can safely enter, leave and move around the school premises, which at the senior school astride a road. There is plenty of outside space on all three sites in which pupils can play. Access to all three sites is secure.

At the senior school site there are two medical rooms. One is on the first floor, has a bed and access to a sink, but the toilet is on the ground floor. A second has easy access to a disabled toilet and washing facilities, but no bed. The school has plans to rationalise the arrangements.

The EYFS premises are organised to meet the needs of children. The setting is secure from intruders and arrangements ensure that children cannot exit the setting unescorted. There is an adequate number of toilets and hand basins available. Changing facilities are hygienic and the school has recently improved its protocols to ensure that children are always supervised on their way to the toilet or when changing. Appropriate arrangements for sleeping children ensure that they are frequently checked.

Quality of leadership and management in the School [Part 8]

The school meets the Regulation.

The Court of the Whitgift Foundation, the school committee and its leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently. The governors have a suitable range of experience to support the leadership in its aims.

The governors and leadership fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently. The school committee reviews safeguarding issues at its quarterly meetings, and the Court of the Foundation undertakes an annual review of the effectiveness of the safeguarding policy and procedures. The report to the Court is thoroughly scrutinised.

The leadership and management actively promote the well-being of pupils. Senior staff have an effective awareness of the challenges facing adolescent pupils, and balance appropriately the need to confront and support. Governors are kept informed of potential safeguarding issues in the school, and are appropriately involved in the complaints procedure. A review of procedures has followed any new incident. The physical safety of pupils in and on their journeys to and from school is given a clear focus in discussions and actions.

Regulatory action points

The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, Health and Safety, Paragraph 7(a) and (b)

Whilst the implementation of the policy is effective, the school must improve the wording of the policy as follows:

- Ensure that there is clarity in the policy about the mandatory reporting responsibility regarding FGM and that staff understand their responsibility to do so
- State that all allegations against staff or other adults working in the school are reported to the LADO immediately and within one working day

- Be clear that if a crime may have been committed, the matter should be reported to the police
- Be clear that possible abuse by one or more pupils against another includes the legal threshold, and stress the need to refer such abuse to an external safeguarding agency where there is risk of significant harm
- Give a clear account of the way allegations or suspicions of abuse are reported in the school, and in particular that allegations against the head are reported to the chair of governors without the head being informed
- Outline the main responsibilities of the DSL as described in KCSIE Annex B
- Clarify that the restriction on the use of mobile telephones and cameras applies to all entering the setting, not just the staff
- Clarify that in the EYFS a report is made directly to Ofsted within 14 days if there is an allegation of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working or looking after children at the premises or elsewhere or any other abuse on the premises.