

HOLMWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL

Chitts Hill, Lexden, Colchester, Essex, CO3 9ST

06 JULY 2018

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Holmwood House School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged from 6 months to 13 years. The school was founded in 1922 as a boys' school and admitted girls from 1985. The school operates on two sites. The main site accommodates pupils from age four years upwards. The early years foundation stage (EYFS) nursery, approximately three miles away, accepts children up to the age of four years. The proprietor of the school is Holmwood House School Ltd. This private company has a sole director who, supported by an advisory board, is responsible for the governance of the school. The previous regulatory compliance inspection took place on 30 to 31 January 2018.

At the time of the visit there were 398 pupils in the school, 151 girls and 247 boys, including 24 boarders and 140 children in the EYFS. The school has identified 35 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and 24 of these receive specialist support for a range of needs including dyslexia. There are no pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans or statements of SEND. The school has also identified three pupils for whom English is an additional language and each of these receives support from the school.

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

This was an unannounced progress monitoring visit at the request of the Department for Education to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the regulatory compliance inspection on 30 to 31 January 2018.

The focus of the visit was on safeguarding, the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and the quality of leadership and management.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b) & 8 (a) and (b); EYFS 3.4, 3.5, and 3.14]; Provision of information to parents [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32 (1) (c) and NMS 11]

The school meets the Regulations.

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.

The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which reflects current statutory guidance for day and for boarding pupils. It provides clear guidelines for the identification of the types and signs of child abuse. It provides guidance to staff on the suitable reporting procedures in cases of disclosures of abuse and also the contact details for local and national safeguarding agencies. It includes details of training for both new and established staff including for those with boarding responsibilities. There is a named designated person for the EYFS. The school

sets out suitable restrictions for the use of mobile phones and cameras in the EYFS. The policy provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b) & 8 (a) and (b); NMS 11; and EYFS 3.4, 3.5 and 3.14]

The school meets the Regulations.

The school has ensured that the published safeguarding policy reflects statutory guidance, in particular with regard to arrangements for making referrals, seeking advice from external agencies and staff training, and that it is implemented effectively. Safeguarding leadership is clearly and appropriately defined, including for the EYFS. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and four deputy DSLs work in partnership, with effective communication promoted by regular meetings, thereby ensuring consistency of implementation of the school's policy and procedures including for boarding and the EYFS. Those with designated safeguarding roles demonstrated a secure understanding: of their responsibilities; that they must act without delay should a referral be needed or if there is an allegation against any member of staff including the headmaster; and that they should follow the guidance given by local children's services promptly. Members of the safeguarding team regularly attend briefing and training meetings provided by the local children's services. Each member of the safeguarding team has current and suitable training recognised by the school's local authority.

The members of staff interviewed had received safeguarding training with this being provided at least once each term both in meetings and online and supported by questionnaires to check their understanding. The training records maintained by the school indicate that members of staff receive suitable safeguarding training regularly. Suitable safeguarding induction training is provided for new members of staff by the DSL, which includes the school's safeguarding and whistleblowing policies, staff handbook, and the latest version of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. Members of staff including those involved in boarding and in the EYFS demonstrated a clear awareness of the types and signs of abuse and how they should act should they have a safeguarding concern. Concerns about pupils and children in the EYFS are reported initially through a confidential and secure online facility which is monitored by the DSL. Serious concerns are reported directly to the DSL or to a deputy DSL. Members of staff understood what to do should there be an allegation against a member of staff, the DSL or the headmaster and that anyone may make a direct referral to external agencies and they were confident that they would do so should the need arise. Members of staff including all those working in the EYFS who work with children under the age of eight make declarations that they are not disqualified by association from this work. The day and boarding pupils interviewed felt safe in the school and understood how to keep safe online. They were confident that staff would listen if they had any concern or anxiety.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21]

The school meets the Regulations.

The school has a suitable safer recruitment policy and uses a pre-employment checklist to verify that checks have been made. The school carries out all required pre-employment checks for all staff, volunteers and proprietors, including for those working in the EYFS and in boarding. These checks are recorded in an appropriate manner in a suitably maintained single central register of appointments, thereby meeting the action point of the previous inspection.

The quality the leadership of and management in schools [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34 and NMS 13.1, 13.4, 13.5, 13.7 and 13.8]

The school meets the Regulations.

The current proprietor is guided by a volunteer advisory board, one member of which is nominated to liaise with the school on safeguarding matters and who meets with the DSL at least once each term. The DSL attends meetings of this board and presents safeguarding reports to each meeting. A comprehensive and detailed annual report is presented to the advisory board. Minutes of the senior leadership and of the advisory board demonstrate a clear understanding of and a determination to implement the actions required of the school by the previous inspection. Since the previous inspection, a safeguarding audit has been carried out by a member of the board of the incoming proprietors liaising with the current proprietor. This audit included meetings with all members of the DSL team and with individual members of staff including those with boarding responsibilities.

Through these actions, the proprietor has ensured that the leadership and management have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are met consistently, and the well-being of day and boarding pupils is actively promoted. The school has therefore met the action points of the previous inspection, with the proprietor ensuring suitable oversight of safeguarding arrangements through the effective review of the policies and procedures used by the school.

REGULATORY ACTION POINTS

The school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, and the Early Years Statutory Framework.