



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Material Change Inspection Report

Bloxham School

February 2023

School's details

School	Bloxham School		
DfE number	931/6002		
Registered charity number	1076484		
Address	Bloxham School Bloxham Banbury Oxfordshire OX15 4PE		
Telephone number	01295 724341		
Email address	headmaster@bloxhamschool.com		
Headmaster	Mr Paul Sanderson		
Chair of governors	Mrs Lis Lewis-Jones		
Proprietor	Woodard Schools Corporation		
Age range	11 to 19		
Number of pupils on roll	553		
	Day pupils	147	Boarders 406
	Seniors	375	Sixth Form 178
Date of inspection	1 February 2023		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Bloxham School is an independent, co-educational boarding and day situated in Bloxham in north Oxfordshire, two miles from Banbury. The school was founded in 1860. The school operates as a charitable trust with an independent board of governors under the trusteeship of the Woodard Schools corporation. Since the previous inspection the school extended and refurbished a female boarding house and the day house moved location to become Merton house, now found in the previous bursary building, across the road from the main school.
- 1.2 The school comprises three sections: the lower school for pupils aged 11 to 13; the upper school for pupils aged 14 to 16; and the sixth form. The school has a house providing mixed gender accommodation, suitably segregated, for boarders in Years 7 and 8. From Year 9, boarders are accommodated in four male and two female gender houses. The school has identified 46 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 12 pupils. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection which took place in January 2020.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.3 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase pupil capacity from 500 to 600. 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 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 9	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety); NMS 10	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils); NMS 20	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 30 (premises of and accommodation at schools); NMS 4	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding and safeguarding of boarders [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 Scrutiny of records, discussions with pupils and staff indicate that appropriate safeguards are implemented effectively. Those responsible for safeguarding hold senior positions within the school and are suitably knowledgeable and appropriately trained, including for multi-agency working. Safeguarding, pastoral, healthcare and boarding staff share key information regularly. They take into account each individual pupil's physical and psychological needs and wishes. This information is used to agree appropriate action including the drawing-up and implementation of individual support plans. There is effective liaison with external agencies including referral to Child and Adolescent Health Services (CAMHS) and the local authority designated officer (LADO) for safeguarding. Training for other staff and for governors is conducted regularly as required. It is effective and includes informal updates. Staff are knowledgeable about changes in recent legislation including the management of children's mental wellbeing, contextual safeguarding, child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence. They understand the principles underpinning the staff code of conduct and the procedures for making a referral, including the importance of low-level reporting and whistleblowing. Senior leaders take appropriate action if any perceived breach of the staff code of conduct occurs. They understand their responsibility to make referral to relevant statutory bodies once investigations by external agencies are completed. They fulfil this effectively.
- 2.5 The governor responsible for safeguarding meets regularly with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies and this maintains effective oversight of safeguarding policies and their implementation in the main school and the boarding houses. Reports are given regularly to the governing board by the safeguarding governor and the DSL. These highlight appropriate details of any safeguarding incidents which occur including during trips and outside of school. This ensures that governors have an appropriate level of understanding, scrutiny and oversight. In addition to continuous monitoring, a suitable annual review of safeguarding is undertaken in line with guidance from the local authority (LA).
- 2.6 Pupils stated confidently that they receive a detailed induction when they start school including how to stay safe and who to talk to; how to contact helplines including Childline and the Children's Commissioner; online safety; and behavioural expectations. They can name a number of staff to whom they can turn if they are worried or concerned. Pupils know how to contact the school's independent listeners, and they appreciate the option to share concerns through the school's anonymised online system which is monitored and acted upon by the DSL. Records confirm that when pupils raise a concern they receive a timely response and action is taken where needed.
- 2.7 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

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

- 2.8 The school meets the standards.
- 2.9 The school has an appropriate policy in place for health and safety which is reviewed and updated regularly and implemented consistently. Senior leaders and governors monitor all aspects of health and safety regularly. Those responsible for day-to-day operations provide detailed reports including completion of required maintenance logs and work carried out by internal maintenance staff and contractors. The roles and responsibilities of staff and governors are stated clearly and there is appropriate delegation of duties and training. Maintenance staff know the site well and are aware of potential risks and hazards. Appropriate checks of school vehicles and drivers are undertaken which include the issue of annual driving permits. The school has a comprehensive asbestos management plan and appropriate measures are taken to ensure safe control and storage of hazardous substances (COSHH). The maintenance online call system is used effectively by maintenance staff in order to prioritise work schedules and respond to emergencies without delay.
- 2.10 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12; NMS 10]

- 2.11 The school meets the standards.
- 2.12 The school has a suitable fire risk policy which is reviewed and updated annually. The school's fire risk assessment is undertaken by a suitably qualified person. It is reviewed regularly, and any recommendations are implemented without delay. Appropriate fire procedures are in place including for boarding houses. Competent persons have been appointed to assist in taking preventative and protective measures including ensuring that all parts of the buildings are evacuated if there is a fire. Regular and suitable training is in place for staff and for those with responsibilities including fire wardens.
- 2.13 Staff, pupils and visitors are provided with appropriate fire safety information including how to evacuate and where the fire assembly points are located. Half-termly fire drills are conducted at different times of the day and night. These are recorded accurately including the time it takes for evacuation, any concerns and improvements that need to be made. Suitable emergency exits, escape routes and signage are in place including for the new boarding houses. Effective monitoring systems ensure that these are maintained consistently to the required standards. Fire equipment including extinguishers and alarms are checked regularly by external contractors. Records of all fire safety checks are maintained appropriately and monitored by governors.
- 2.14 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

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

- 2.15 The school meets the standards.
- 2.16 The school has a suitable policy for supervising pupils. Staff receive guidance when they are inducted and on-going revision is provided in the staff handbook and in regular updates. The roles of spouses, partners and other adult members of staff households within boarding houses are clear. Staff have clear job descriptions detailing their duties with regard to supervision. Comprehensive duty rotas are

in place covering all areas of the school and times of day taking into account the age, number and needs of pupils and the locations and activities involved. Monitoring by senior staff ensures that supervision is effective, and that cover is put in place without delay if it is required.

- 2.17 Boarders know the boarding staff allocated to them and are confident that they can contact staff during the day and at night. They are at all times under the responsibility of an identified member of staff who is suitably qualified and experienced. There is at least one member of staff sleeping in each boarding house at night, responsible for the boarders in the house. Suitable accommodation is provided for boarding staff which is separate from the accommodation and facilities provided for boarding pupils. School policy does not allow boarders to access staff accommodation. Senior pupils are always under the direction of a member of staff if they are carrying out duties in a house. Efficient electronic systems enable staff to know the whereabouts of boarders at all times. Staff are confident with regard to the school's policy and procedures if a pupil goes missing. There are thorough systems in place for searching the premises and for working with the police if necessary.
- 2.18 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

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

- 2.19 The school meets the standards.
- 2.20 There is a suitable policy and procedures with regard to risk assessment. These are recorded electronically and monitored effectively by the health and safety committee. There are clear lines of responsibility for assessing risk. Departmental heads including those responsible for boarding houses, oversee risk assessments in their departments effectively and senior leaders monitor those for off-site trips. Individual care plans include the assessment of risk for vulnerable pupils. Appropriate risk assessments are in place for boarders' sleeping accommodation and for all areas of the boarding houses. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly, and appropriate action taken where required to reduce risk.
- 2.21 The policy for offsite visits is detailed and clear with a helpful flow chart identifying risk assessments that are required. Parents are suitably informed of arrangements for school trips including behaviour expectations, safeguarding procedures, activities and travel details. Risk assessments are amended if changes occur and any changes to arrangements are communicated to parents without delay.
- 2.22 Staff confirmed that they had received training regarding the completion of risk assessments. They are confident in completing them, including those for boarding, trips and hazardous activities.
- 2.23 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

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

- 2.24 The school meets the standards.
- 2.25 There is a suitable recruitment policy in place which covers the required recruitment checks and procedures. All staff, governors and persons engaged in regulated activity are recorded on the single central register of appointments (SCR). Those responsible for carrying out the required recruitment checks and the maintenance of staff records ensure that checks and evidence are in place prior to commencing work in the school. Appropriate procedures are in place for managing contractors including ensuring that they are accompanied at all times if not checked by the school.

- 2.26 Persons over 16 living in boarding premises are checked appropriately. Suitable written agreements are in place between the school and any person over 16 not employed by the school but living in the same premises as the pupils. These specify their responsibility to supervise their visitors and that they must inform the DSL if they are charged with, or convicted of, any offence. All persons visiting the boarding houses are appropriately monitored. They are required to register with the school office and be accompanied at all times. Visitors are not allowed to enter bedrooms. The school does not appoint guardians but where parents have appointed private guardians the school monitors arrangements appropriately.
- 2.27 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

Premises and accommodation – [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23–30; NMS 4]

- 2.28 The school meets the standards.
- 2.29 Suitable policies and procedures are in place which ensure that the school premises and accommodation and facilities are maintained to a standard where the health, safety and welfare of pupils is ensured as far as possible. Suitable living accommodation is provided for boarders enabling them to study and socialise outside of school hours. There is appropriate separation between genders, age groups and staff accommodation. A range of suitable furnishings have been purchased taking into account the size, number, needs and ages of boarders. Boarders are encouraged to care for and personalise their spaces with suitable posters and personal items.
- 2.30 Boarding houses provide suitable toilet, washing facilities, showers and changing accommodation for the sole use of pupils. These are located in the vicinity of the sleeping accommodation and provide appropriate privacy. Boarding accommodation is reserved for the use of those boarders designated to use it. Electronic systems enable boarding staff to continuously monitor entry and exit to the boarding houses.
- 2.31 There are designated facilities, toilets and changing rooms for male and female pupils throughout the school. Suitable disabled facilities are available for staff and visitors.
- 2.32 Suitable accommodation is provided for the medical examination and treatment of pupils and for the short-term care of sick or injured pupils both in boarding houses and in the school's well-equipped health centre. The accommodation includes toilets and bathroom facilities and is adequately staffed. Separate medical accommodation is provided for male and female boarders. Boarders have access to local medical, dental, optometric and other specialist services or provision as required.
- 2.33 The site is suitably secure. All visitors are required to sign into the main office and are accompanied at all times. Use of surveillance equipment and patrolling of the school by security staff does not intrude upon boarders' privacy. Acoustics and water supply are appropriate throughout the school. Lighting to the footpaths has been increased and vehicular access to the centre of the site stopped in order to improve further the safety and security of those walking around the school. Boarding houses have large outdoor garden areas in addition to the school's extensive grounds and outdoor facilities.
- 2.34 The current arrangements are likely to meet the needs of the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

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

- 2.35 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.

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

- 2.36 The school meets the standards.
- 2.37 Senior leaders and governors, including those with specific responsibilities for safeguarding and boarding, demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that all the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils. Measures planned or implemented for the proposed increase in pupil numbers are likely to ensure pupils' continued wellbeing.
- 2.38 Senior boarding staff have appropriate experience and training. Leaders of boarding ensure that the development of boarding is underpinned by strong links between academic and residential staff. Detailed planning has been put in place in order to ensure that the school is able to meet the needs of pupils and the proposed increase in pupil numbers. Changes made to boarding accommodation take into account the requirements of the minimum standards and the views of boarders.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

3.1 It is recommended that the request to increase pupil capacity from 500 to 600 is granted.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with a group of governors. He visited different areas of the school, observed lessons and talked with groups of pupils. He scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.

Inspectors

Mr Desmond Dunne

Reporting inspector