

## Queen's College

Trull Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4QS

**Date of visit**            22 February 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 National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 (NMS), particularly those concerned with safeguarding, premises and accommodation, and leadership and management.

### **Characteristics of the School**

Queen's College is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged from 0 to 19. Situated about a mile from the centre of Taunton, it is one of a group of schools owned by the Methodist Independent Schools' Trust (MIST). The school is administered by a board of local trustees.

There are 776 pupils on the school roll, 395 boys and 381 girls. The school has recently opened a nursery, in a new purpose-built building, for babies to children of age three. The pre-preparatory school accommodates Reception children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and pupils in Years 1 and 2. There are 67 children in the Nursery, 52 pupils in the pre-preparatory school, 128 pupils in the preparatory school, aged from 7 to 11, and 529 pupils in the senior school. One hundred and ninety-one pupils are boarders, accommodated in four boarding houses, one of which is for preparatory school boarders, one for senior girls and two for senior boys. With the exception of one boarding house, all the school buildings are on a single site. In the senior school, 50 pupils require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities and 104 pupils require support for English as an additional language.

The previous inspection was an intermediate boarding welfare inspection in December 2014.

## Inspection findings

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b), NMS11]

The regulations and standard are not met.

The school has a safeguarding policy which indicates concern for the pupils, but the arrangements described in it do not fully reflect the current statutory guidance. To meet the minimum requirements of the above regulations, the school would need to ensure that the policy evidences the school's recognition of its duties both to children in need and to children at risk of harm; give guidance to staff who have concerns that a child may be in need or at risk; update definitions of the different kinds of abuse in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) July 2015; recognising that children can be abusers as well as adults; give a clear account of the way allegations of abuse are reported in the school; if a member of staff is reported to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), ensure that the head is informed; outline the main responsibilities of the DSL in line with KCSIE; stipulate all the required contents of induction training; state that a report is made 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.

The recruitment policy includes most of the necessary vetting checks but makes no mention of checks on prohibition from teaching or management. There is also no mention of overseas checks. The school has a system for reviewing its child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures annually through the work of one of its committees and the full governing body. These had not identified these deficiencies.

The school has a programme of safeguarding training for the head, the staff and volunteers, approved by the LSCB, including updates, e-safety and awareness of radicalisation. However, it does not have evidence that all staff have received the training. The DSL does not have oversight of the training list, or monitor it. The school was not able to produce evidence of induction training for new staff. The current DSL of the senior school was due to receive advanced level training at the time of the visit. The deputy DSL, the headmaster, has received advanced level training, as have the heads of the junior and pre-prep schools.

The DSL has a good understanding of the requirements for making referrals to other agencies. Somerset does not have a LADO directly accessible to schools for dealing with allegations of abuse against members of staff or volunteers. All concerns of any kind must be made to a first referral helpline who decide where the call should be directed. The DSL has made appropriate referrals to outside agencies, when necessary, such as counselling services, the local GP surgery and CAMHS. Confidential records are kept of all referrals to outside agencies.

Staff interviewed indicated that they understand lines of reporting concerns to the DSL or the head and they have been issued with small cards which give the appropriate reporting channels. Pupils interviewed say that they feel safe in school. They are given advice about their personal safety and know what to do and whom to contact if they are worried. They understand the rules for signing in and out of boarding houses and that they are in place to keep them safe. They have received education in e-safety from the school's information and communication technology (ICT) department, through the acceptable use of ICT policy, which they must sign, and from an outside speaker. They are aware of the school's filtering systems for the internet.

Boarding staff record all incidents, of whatever nature, in their house incident books and report any serious occurrence to the appropriate member of the leadership team at once by phone. They know who is on duty to take their call.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14 and NMS 15]**

The regulation and standard are met.

The governors have given consideration to the personal safety of boarders and resident staff in their termly risk management review. The school has a security policy setting out how all residents on the site should respond in particular circumstances. In interview both boarders and boarding staff were clear about the rules for boarders moving around the campus and for going off-site. During the school day, both day and boarding pupils may not leave the school campus and are at all times under the supervision of members of staff. There is a rota of staff who are on supervision duty outside lesson times. In the evenings, boarders must sign out of the house and sign back in again when they return. Sixth form boarders may use the sixth form centre until 9.30 pm. The centre is supervised at all times and the staff on duty cross-check with house staff by telephone during the evening. House staff advise boarders about personal safety.

Staff sufficient in number, training and experience for the age, numbers and needs of the boarders supervise boarders at all times. Particularly with older boarders, an element of trust is involved and boarders need to move around the campus to participate in activities, such as music, drama or sport but boarders are at all times under the responsibility of an identified member of staff. Staff have boarders' mobile phone numbers, so that they can contact them if necessary and the boarders have the boarding staff numbers saved to their phones. At night time, if they need a member of staff, they can phone or knock on their doors.

## **Premises and accommodation – security [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 25 and 30, and NMS 5 and 6]**

The regulation and standards are met.

Risk assessments have been carried out for all buildings on the school site, including their security. The governors regularly review all risks to the school, including security. The school site is large and includes spacious sports grounds. The buildings form a line close to the road and there are a number of entrances to the site. The school has given much consideration to improving security and is taking steps to minimise and eradicate identified risks. The CCTV cameras are being increased and lighting is currently being improved. A number of the buildings are currently electronically access-controlled. Pupils and staff have fobs and cannot access the buildings at certain times, unless permitted. The school has an on-going programme to include all its buildings in this system. Currently, those which are not yet completed are protected by keypad locks and some buildings, such as the music block which pupils may need to access for practise in the evenings, are supervised.

The school has installed fencing at the rear of the site, so that unauthorised access is prevented. Both the nursery and the pre-preparatory school are protected by electronically-controlled gates and fencing. The school is engaged on a programme of making all entrances to the school access-controlled so that any visitors will only use one entrance. All visitors to the school must sign in at reception and wear a visitor's badge so that they can be readily identified.

Boarders and boarding staff confirmed that boarding accommodation is safe from unauthorised persons. Rules for visitors are clear, both for visitors from within the school and from families and friends. During the evenings, there are always school staff on the site and it is patrolled until after the boarders have returned to their houses. Risk assessments

have been carried out for all buildings and there is evidence that the school has acted decisively to risk of unauthorised entry to them. Within the buildings there is an efficient system for reporting hazards or problems which are dealt with promptly.

Pupils are educated in personal, social and health education (PSHE), by tutors and house staff, about personal safety. They confirmed that, in the event of any concern, such as an intruder, they could call a member of staff.

### **Leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34 (a) (b) and (c) and NMS 13]**

The regulation and standard are not met.

Leadership and management of the school demonstrate many appropriate skills and knowledge, particularly in the matter of improving safety of the site and in supervision of the pupils. However, they do not consistently meet all of the responsibilities in the ISSRs and NMS with regard to the safeguarding of pupils. The safeguarding policy does not have sufficient regard to the most up to date guidance. Monitoring of safeguarding training records is not rigorous. The annual review of safeguarding had failed to identify these deficiencies. In most respects, leadership and management actively promote the well-being of pupils but current safeguarding arrangements are not yet sufficiently rigorous.

### **Regulatory action points**

The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 and National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

#### **ISSR Part 3, Welfare, Health and Safety, paragraph 7(a) and (b) and paragraph 8(a) and (b), NMS 11 and NMS 13.8**

- Improve the wording of the safeguarding policy fully to pay closer regard to the latest statutory guidance.
- Ensure that the staff code of conduct is in line with statutory guidance.
- Ensure staff training records are maintained up to date, monitored and action taken as appropriate.

#### **ISSR Part 8, Leadership and management, paragraph 34 (b) and NMS 13**

- Ensure that all safeguarding arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State, by introducing a thorough review process.