

Stoke College

Ashen Lane, Stoke by Clare, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 8TE

Date of visit 04 November 2015

Purpose of visit

This was an unannounced visit carried out at the request of the DfE to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the unannounced emergency visit on 20 March 2015. The focus of the visit was on the compliance of the school with the regulations, in particular: those concerning safeguarding; security of premises; safe recruitment; and the handling of complaints. The visit also considered aspects of boarding accommodation and how effectively leaders and managers monitor arrangements for safeguarding and ensure the welfare and well-being of pupils.

Characteristics of the School

Stoke College is in the small village of Stoke by Clare, in rural Suffolk. It is a non-denominational charitable trust and has a board of governors. Of the 141 pupils in the school, 57 are girls and 84 are boys. The senior school, for those aged between 11 and 16, educates 81 pupils, while the junior school has 60 pupils between the ages of three and 11, including 11 in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). There are three weekly boarders, two boys and one girl, and 22 pupils board on a flexible basis between one and three nights per week. Eight pupils have statements of special educational needs, and the school has identified a further 36 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil has English as an additional language.

Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 & 8; NMS 11; EYFS requirements paragraphs 3.4-3.7]

The regulations are met.

The amendments to the safeguarding policy recommended in the previous unannounced visit (March 2015) have been made. The policy has been further updated to include changes in official guidance since March 2015. The most recent policy was reviewed and ratified by all governors in August 2015 and again with a minor amendment in October 2015. Staff training on 2 September 2015 included training on the new policy and how it should be implemented. Staff training records are maintained on the Single Central Register (SCR) to monitor the dates for child protection training. One new member of staff, who started in the school in October, was trained in the school's policy through her induction process. The new policy has detailed information on the Prevent strategy which has been outlined to staff. Although the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is waiting to be trained in the procedures by the local authority, she has accessed the on-line awareness training.

The chair of governors and a governor responsible for safeguarding meet each month with the DSL and deputy DSL. A safeguarding report is prepared for every governors' meeting, and safeguarding is now a standard item on the agenda. The chair of governors and the headmaster review the SCR each term. Examination of the SCR showed all recruitment procedures have been followed and all the required checks completed before any person has been allowed to start work or volunteer in the school. The recommendation to incorporate the school's procedures in dealing with mental health issues has been completed by the formulation of a suitable separate policy which is linked to the safeguarding policy. Records show that staff were trained in the policy on 2nd September 2015. The policy is on the school's web-site and covers issues such as self-harm and eating disorders.

Premises and accommodation – security [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25; NMS 5; EYFS requirement 3.28, 3.62]

The regulations are met.

A new security policy has been implemented to improve the security of the school site. This policy outlines new pick-up and drop-off procedures for parents of children in the EYFS, who have been given details of the new procedures. The school reports that the procedures have been well received by the parents who understand they are in the interests of their children. The head of the EYFS is monitoring the procedures and is reporting any issues to the head of the prep school and the school deputy head.

The school ensures that the unsupervised entry of parents and other visitors to school buildings is suitably restricted and monitored, and that entry codes to external doors are changed on a regular basis. The security policy has been made available for all parents. The deputy head and the school maintenance department are monitoring the implementation of the site security arrangements.

Boarding accommodation [NMS 5.5]

The standard is met.

A door was fitted to separate the boys' and girls' sleeping accommodation in August 2015. The door is not locked but a key pad is to be fitted for extra security. The door is clearly labelled with 'no entry' signs for boy boarders. No change to fire procedures has been required and the girls' means of exit remain the same. No further supervision arrangements were required.

Handling of complaints [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33; NMS 18; EYFS requirements 3.74-3.75]

The regulations are met.

The complaints policy now provides clear timescales for the management of a Stage 3 appeal panel hearing. Other parts of the policy have been updated. The school has a complaints log to record formal complaints and another log to record concerns. The logs contain sufficient detail to monitor any concerns and identify any recurring issues. At the time of the visit, the school had not received any formal complaints in this academic year. A number of minor concerns were recorded on the new concern form provided for staff. These are kept centrally, logged electronically and monitored by the deputy head.

Quality of leadership in and management of schools – [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34, NMS13; EYFS requirements 3.23]

The regulations are met

A new head, deputy head and head of boarding have been appointed since the unannounced visit of March 2015. They have conducted a full review of all school policies and implemented the changes. The deputy head is the deputy designated person for safeguarding. The chair of governors and the governor responsible for safeguarding work closely with the head and deputy head to monitor all safeguarding procedures. A monthly meeting takes place for this purpose. The head and deputy head are responsible for monitoring all other ISSR regulations and the NMS. Governors meet monthly to monitor school procedures and hold frequent meetings with the head and deputy.

Regulatory action points

The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework