



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Additional Inspection Report

St Helen's School

December 2022

School's details

School	St Helen's School			
DfE number	312/6004			
Registered charity number	312762			
Address	St Helen's School Eastbury Road Northwood Middlesex HA6 3AS			
Telephone number	01923 843210			
Email address	enquiries@sthelens.london			
Headmistress	Mrs Alice Lucas			
Chair of governors	Mr Philip Young			
Age range	3 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	1200			
	EYFS	108	Juniors	363
	Seniors	551	Sixth Form	178
Date of inspection	12 December 2022			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 St Helen's School is an independent day school. It is registered as a single sex school for female pupils and occupies a 20-acre site in Northwood, north-west London. Separate buildings house the preparatory and senior schools. The preparatory school includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting. The visit was focused mainly on the senior school. The school is a registered charity governed by a council of trustees. The school has 103 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil has an education, health and care plan, and there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in September 2019. A new chair of governors was appointed in 2022.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced additional inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) 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.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Not met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

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 does not meet the standard.
- 2.4 In most areas the safeguarding policy is implemented effectively throughout the school. Suitable procedures are in place to listen to pupils, who confirm that they have sufficient channels to express concerns and that action is taken where necessary. Safeguarding records show that the school liaises promptly with the local safeguarding children partnership.
- 2.5 However, records indicate that the last safeguarding training for governors was in May 2021 and that they had not read *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022* until the end of November 2022 at the earliest for consideration in mid-December 2022. Consequently, at the time of the inspection, governors were not equipped with enough knowledge to enable them to provide sufficiently strategic challenge to assure themselves that the school's safeguarding policies and procedures are effective. In particular, governors were effectively unsighted about *KCSIE* changes for a term and therefore cannot have had the regard that they must have to the guidance, ensuring policies, procedures and training in their schools or colleges are effective and comply with the law at all times.
- 2.6 Records show that, on joining the school, new members of staff receive appropriate induction in safeguarding. The DSL and deputy DSLs have the required levels of up-to-date advanced training for their roles. The DSL ensures that all staff receive regular formal training in line with local requirements, as well as informal updates on safeguarding practice and issues. Records of this training are systematically kept and show that the training for all staff is current and appropriate. In discussion, staff showed that their safeguarding training equips them to deal effectively with pupil concerns. They understand current definitions of abuse, including sexual harassment. They recognise the vulnerability of pupils with SEND. Where concerns are expressed about sexual harassment occurring outside school these are investigated thoroughly and effectively, and advice is sought appropriately. Staff confirmed that they are aware of the procedures to minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse and recognise the possibility that such abuse may be taking place without being reported.
- 2.7 Documentation provided by the school shows that the school has clear and effective systems in place to identify pupils' mental health problems and provide any necessary support, including making appropriate referrals. These operate effectively.
- 2.8 There are appropriate mechanisms to deal with allegations against adults working with children. These are mostly understood by staff, although in discussion some confusion was evident about recently introduced procedures to report low level concerns. Where incidents require referral to statutory bodies such as the Disclosure and Barring Service and/or the Teaching Regulation Agency, this is done appropriately. However, records relating to referrals of other serious allegations were not always clear and comprehensive, did not include details of how the concern was followed up and resolved and/or did not record any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome, as required by *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9]

- 2.9 The school meets the standard.
- 2.10 The school has an appropriate written behaviour policy, which sets out the standards it expects of pupils. It incorporates a suitable system of rewards, and the sanctions to be adopted in the event of misbehaviour. The school's expectations are based on principles of respect and the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- 2.11 In discussion, pupils spoke of their respect for one another and for their teachers, as well as their capacity for self-discipline and ability to learn from their mistakes. They appreciate the fact that rules and sanctions are clear and say that they know what to expect if their behaviour fails to meet the required standard. Records show that the prevalence of behaviour of a serious nature in school and on trips is low, that sanctions are applied consistently and proportionately and that senior leaders take appropriate action to address any misbehaviour that is brought to their attention.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10]

- 2.12 The school meets the standard.
- 2.13 The school has an appropriate policy which sets out clearly the measures taken to prevent bullying, and those taken to deal with any which occurs. Staff receive appropriate training and pupils confirm that they receive effective guidance about bullying. They are confident that incidents are taken seriously and dealt with effectively. Staff understand their responsibility for reporting any instances of alleged bullying, and records show that this happens in practice, although cases of serious bullying are rare. The threshold for reporting concerns is low, thereby enabling early intervention and recognition of patterns. Resolution of bullying incidents involves discussion with both perpetrator and victim, and parents of all parties are kept informed. Staff understand that such incidents may become safeguarding issues and may require the involvement of the police or children's services. Those with designated responsibilities understand the thresholds for such referrals.

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

- 2.14 The school meets the standard.
- 2.15 Documentation provided by the school and discussion with staff and pupils show that arrangements for the supervision of pupils at break and lunchtime are appropriate. The school has strengthened arrangements for the supervision of co-curricular activities, including those involving pupils from other schools, following concerns recently expressed. Pupils confirm that they have confidence in the effectiveness of a strong staff presence.

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

- 2.16 The school meets the standard.
- 2.17 The school has an appropriate written risk assessment policy which is implemented effectively in all areas of school life. The school identifies and makes suitable assessments of risk encompassing places, activities and people and takes appropriate action to mitigate those risks. Appropriate consideration is given to risk in connection with co-curricular activities involving pupils from other schools.

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

- 2.18 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]

- 2.19 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.20 The school does not ensure that all those with leadership and management responsibilities demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, and that they fulfil their responsibilities so that the standards are met consistently, and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted.

3. Regulatory action points

3.1 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 and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7

- The school must ensure that all governors have due regard to and knowledge and understanding of statutory guidance on safeguarding, to enable them to ensure that policies, procedures and training in their schools or colleges are effective and comply with the regulatory guidance at all times and to enable them to provide effective oversight of the management of safeguarding. In particular, through strategic challenge to assure themselves that the school's safeguarding policies and procedures are effective [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].
- The school must ensure that safeguarding records clearly and comprehensively document decision-making relating to the handling of serious concerns about staff [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].

ISSR Part 8, Leadership and management, paragraph 34

- The school must ensure that all those with leadership and management responsibilities demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, and that they fulfil their responsibilities so that the standards are met consistently, and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].

4. Summary of evidence

4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors. They talked with groups of pupils and scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.

Inspectors

Mr Stephen Fox

Reporting inspector

Mr Matthew Lovett

Assistant reporting inspector