

Shernold School

17 January 2017

Hill Place, Queens Avenue, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0ER

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraphs 5, 5(a)

- The previous inspection found that the school did not actively promote British values. Although pupils knew about respect, tolerance and different faiths and religions, they were unclear about concepts such as democracy and the rule of law.
- Leaders and teachers have adopted an explicit approach to teaching and promoting British values. This is in addition to aspects already covered as part of the curriculum, for example as part of religious education or personal, social and health education.
- Teaching and learning explore a wide range of issues and topics. In particular year groups, pupils have explored areas such as the role of local and national governments, the differences between civil and criminal law in this country and the different ages of legal responsibility. Pupils wrote thoughtful responses when prompted to consider what new laws they thought should be passed in this country.
- Through this more-thorough approach, pupils are now familiar with the concepts of the rule of law and democracy. Their understanding is deepening. They have a growing language and vocabulary to discuss associated issues and engage respectfully and thoughtfully in reasoned debate.
- Pupils are able to draw parallels between systems of government and their own elected school council. Within school, pupils feel that their views are important. They say that they can express an opinion safely, even if it is different to somebody else's.
- The standard that was checked in this part of the independent school standards is met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- At the time of the previous full inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding were not effective. Leaders did not know or fulfil their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. Mandatory training in safer recruitment had not been completed.
- Lines of accountability for safeguarding are much more clearly established and understood now. Staff and leaders have undergone a wide range of safeguarding training, relevant to their differing roles. The varied topics that this has covered take

good account of current guidance and ensure that staff know what to do if they have a concern. Those responsible for staff appointments have completed safer recruitment training.

- The proprietor and leaders have commissioned external specialist advisers to review, refine and improve the school's safeguarding procedures and ensure that they are effective. Leaders act promptly on any advice that they are given.
- Staff and parents report that the profile of safeguarding in the school is now much higher. Parents say that their children feel safe and well cared for. Pupils echo this confidence, feel safe and know adults in school that they can go to with any issues.
- The school's comprehensive safeguarding policy is available on the school's website. It follows closely the model provided by the local children's safeguarding board, but has been made specific to the school, for example with specific contacts and procedures. It takes account of the latest guidance and links with other school policies, making clear how these can be accessed.

Paragraph 15

- Previously, the admissions register did not meet requirements because the telephone numbers of parents were not recorded.
- At least one emergency telephone number for each pupil is now included on the admissions register.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c)(ii), 20(6)(a), 21(3), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(b)

- At the time of the previous inspection, inspectors found serious weaknesses in the pre-employment checks regarding the suitability of staff. Systems were not in place for making and recording all of the necessary checks about the suitability of adults to work with children.
- Prohibition, barred list and disqualification checks are now carried out and recorded on the single central register. The proprietor and leaders have implemented a system of regular monitoring checks to ensure that the single central register is maintained correctly.
- When appointing new staff, leaders follow a detailed checklist to ensure that all necessary procedures are followed. The proprietor and new advisory board members have been subject to the necessary checks. These are recorded on the single central register.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 24(1), 24(1)(a)

- Previously, inspectors judged that the school's medical room was inadequate because pupils were treated in a room housing a toilet. The space was considered not large

enough for the medical examination and treatment of pupils.

- Leaders have designated and adapted a new medical room. This room is clearly labelled, has space for a small bed, contains a lockable cupboard for equipment, has a sink with running water and is adjacent to a toilet. However, space to move around is limited. Consequently, it is adequate but not ideal. This view is shared by the local authority safeguarding adviser.

Paragraph 25

- During the previous inspection, inspectors noted significant potential hazards on some of the old and poorly maintained play equipment.
- Various pieces of fixed-play apparatus have now been fully replaced, including those previously identified with potential hazards. In addition to the written risk assessments that already existed, leaders have implemented a system of regular documented checks to ensure that fixed-play equipment is maintained in an appropriate condition.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraphs 33, 33(h)

- The previous inspection reported that the school's complaints policy did not conform to requirements because it did not allow for parents to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing.
- The school's complaints policy has been reviewed and updated. It now allows for a parent to be accompanied at all stages of the complaints procedure if they wish.
- The standard that was checked in this part of the independent school standards is met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- At the time of the previous full inspection, leadership was judged to be weak because no single person was responsible for the school. There was a lack of strategic oversight and leaders did not have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There were no clear lines of accountability, leading to important aspects of the school's work being overlooked. Governance was found to be ineffective because the sole proprietor did not hold school leaders to account.
- The proprietor and leaders responded rapidly and effectively to the findings of the previous full inspection. A new leadership structure has been created and a clear framework for greater accountability is developing. The headteacher has risen cheerfully to the challenges of her increased role. At all levels, leaders are commendably frank about where they have 'got it wrong' in the past and convey and act on their strong determination to improve.
- Leaders have introduced a new system for the appraisal of all staff. Performance targets focus strongly on improving pupils' outcomes. Increased opportunities for professional development and training are aimed at both meeting individual needs and tackling whole-school priorities. Leaders are using a growing range of qualitative and quantitative checks to deepen their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

- Guided by a local authority specialist adviser for governance, the proprietor has formed a new advisory board of governors. The chair conveys a strong sense of purpose and clarity about the strategic function of the board. With the wealth and breadth of experience the members have, it is well placed to be a positive force to contribute to school improvement. For example, meeting minutes already show evidence of robust debate around safeguarding responsibility, making certain that lines of accountability are robust.
- Leaders responsible for particular subjects or age ranges now feel that they have 'more of a voice' in decision-making and a role in leading the school. They like the approach and direction that the school is taking, seeing it as drawing on the existing strengths, but making sure that their approaches are more consistent and systematic.
- The proprietor and leaders commission external checks of priority areas for improvement and act upon the advice and recommendations they are given. However, they must make full use themselves of the written guidance available and not become over-reliant on external advice.
- Following the previous inspection, the proprietor and leaders acted quickly to allay parental concerns which, overall, has improved or sustained their confidence. Parents that spoke informally with the inspector reported that communication has improved dramatically. They were well informed about the tighter safeguarding procedures, staff training and the creation of the new advisory board.
- All standards that were checked in this part of the independent school standards are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

- The proprietor ensures that the school actively promotes fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs (paragraphs 5, 5(a)).
- The proprietor ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraphs 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).
- The proprietor ensures the suitability of staff including that no such person is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that person is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to that Act; no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction. The proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person, their medical fitness. In relation to an individual ("MB"), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, MB is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that individual is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 of that Act; and does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction. In relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act; a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction; a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed (paragraphs 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c)(ii), 20(6)(a), 21(3), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(b)).
- The proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils (paragraphs 24(1), 24(1)(a)).
- The proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities

provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured (paragraph 25).

- The proprietor ensures that the complaints procedure allows for a parent to attend and be accompanied at a panel hearing if they wish (paragraphs 33, 33(h)).
- The proprietor ensures that leaders have sufficient skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently and that they fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), (b), (c)).

School details

Unique reference number	118972
DfE registration number	886/6030
Inspection number	10025859

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Preparatory school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Number of part-time pupils	2
Proprietor	Valerie Waite
Chair	Steve Sherry
Headteacher	Sandra Dinsmore
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,525–£7,425
Telephone number	01622 752 868
Website	www.shernoldschool.co.uk
Email address	shernold@shernold.plus.com
Date of previous standard inspection	20–22 April 2016

Information about this school

- Shernold Preparatory School is an independent co-educational school which was registered in 1935. The previous standard full inspection of this school was 20–22 April 2016.
- The school aims are 'to develop confident, caring, enquiring individuals who are successful learners well prepared for adult life'.
- Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds, although an increasing proportion are from other ethnic backgrounds. There are very few pupils who are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- This was the first progress monitoring inspection since the school's previous standard inspection on 20–22 April 2016. It was conducted without notice.
- The school's action plan to address the failings identified in the last full inspection was accepted by the Department for Education on 20 October 2016.
- The inspector met with the proprietor, chair of the advisory board of governors, headteacher and other leaders and staff. He also spoke informally with parents at the start of the school day. The inspector met with a group of pupils and sampled work relating to the promotion of British values in books and on display. The inspector scrutinised a range of the school's documents and records relating to safeguarding, including the admissions register. He sampled the school's website and other documentation and toured parts of the premises and grounds relevant to previously unmet standards.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Parent View

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2017