

Lucton School

Lucton, Leominster HR6 9PN

Inspection dates

10 October 2019

Overall outcome

The school does not meet all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Residential provision outcome

The school does not meet all of the national minimum standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b), 8, 8(a), 8(b) and 32(1)(c) and National Minimum Standards 5, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18

- The Department for Education (DfE) asked inspectors to find out whether suitable arrangements are in place to safeguard pupils and boarders. This is because the DfE received a serious complaint about bullying, the security of the boarding house and the manner in which complaints are dealt with. Inspectors were asked to pay particular attention to the National Minimum Standards for boarding that related to the complaint.
- The leadership of safeguarding is effective. Safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable because they receive appropriate training to enable them to do their job well. This includes local authority training to ensure that school staff follow regional child protection procedures. They make sure that training and guidance about safeguarding issues are cascaded effectively to all staff. All boarding house staff have received additional training in supporting children's mental health.
- The school has a suitable, comprehensive safeguarding policy that has regard to the most recent statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, September 2019. This policy is published on the school's website and is readily accessible to parents and carers. The policy provides staff with guidance on a wide range of safeguarding matters, including pupils' online safety. It makes specific reference to bullying, including cyber bullying, and the actions staff must take if it is discovered.
- Both school and boarding staff implement the school's safeguarding policy effectively. They ensure that keeping pupils and boarders safe from harm is a top priority. They consider aspects of safety both within the curriculum and beyond. For example, pupils' access to chemicals in science is strictly controlled, and in the kitchen, servers are aware of pupils' allergies. In the boarding houses there are clear signing in and out procedures for boarders that ensure that staff know their whereabouts at all times.

- Leaders ensure that there are robust procedures in place for staff to follow if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare. Staff are vigilant and act promptly if they have any concerns. They keep detailed records and store these securely. However, up until recently, record-keeping has not been well organised. Safeguarding leaders have recently reviewed and updated their recording systems. The new system is much improved and allows all documents to be kept in one place and easily accessible.
- The school site is well maintained and free from hazards. Entry to the school premises is controlled to prevent any unauthorised access. Extensive CCTV coverage, both externally and in communal areas, also helps to keep pupils and boarders safe. The boarding houses provide suitable accommodation and a safe environment for boarders.
- Leaders have established several ways to allow pupils and boarders to share their concerns or worries confidentially. This includes the school's 'listening service' – a dedicated team of trained staff, several of whom are always available for pupils to speak to should they have any concerns. Leaders have employed a Chinese speaker to support pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils can also use an email facility to share concerns with staff – they can do this anonymously if they wish.
- Despite leaders' efforts to encourage pupils and boarders to share their concerns, including those related to bullying, several children told inspectors that they do not like to tell for fear of being called a 'snitch'. Leaders recognise that there is further work to do to ensure that all children are prepared to speak up and tell someone when there is a problem.
- Staff and safeguarding leaders know pupils well. They understand their specific personal needs and help them to access the support required. This includes helping pupils to get support early on before problems escalate. At every opportunity, staff involve parents in these discussions. Staff regularly discuss any vulnerable pupils so they can provide help and guidance quickly.
- The governing body maintains an overview of safeguarding. They are provided with the necessary level of detail to understand and check safeguarding processes. However, they have not identified that the school does not have a single central register. The headteacher keeps governors informed about any bullying issues.
- Effective communication between boarding and school staff helps with supporting pupils' welfare and well-being. Boarding staff share information with school staff, just like any good parent would. They let the school know if something has happened out of school that may affect the pupil.
- Pupils and boarders report that they feel safe in school and in the boarding houses. They say that staff and house parents care for them and support them well when they are experiencing personal difficulties. It is also evident that children, both in school and boarding, take care of each other. They talk about their school and boarding experiences positively.
- The school has effective procedures in place to manage the behaviour of both boarders and pupils. Staff record incidents of poor behaviour appropriately and maintain a log of sanctions. Leaders have comprehensive procedures in place to combat bullying, including cyber bullying. Pupils have a reasonable knowledge of the different forms of bullying, although they are less clear about homophobic bullying.

- Leaders monitor pupils' and boarders' online use closely. Those who access or try to access inappropriate sites are identified and staff take appropriate action. Pupils learn about how to stay safe online. They know that cyber bullying is wrong. Pupils trust adults in school to help them resolve any bullying issues. Occasional issues with bullying occur, but these are dealt with appropriately by the school.
- The school keeps an appropriate record of complaints and any resolutions. Leaders aim to resolve complaints informally where possible and usually address matters straight away. Children also know how to raise concerns.
- Boarding staff work in partnership with parents and school staff to ensure the well-being of boarders. They help boarders understand the importance of personal safety. They support them to understand appropriate behaviour. They discuss risks and dangers that enable them to make informed decisions as they develop into young adults.
- The DfE asked inspectors to check whether there was unrestricted access to the boarding house.
- The good arrangements in place to ensure unauthorised access in and out of the boarding houses were potentially compromised on the day of the inspection. One external door did not have an automatic closure. However, the door was closed and had a sign reminding others to close the door. In addition, fingerprint entry and a CCTV camera added to the security of the house. Leaders fitted a door closure within 24 hours of inspectors raising the issue.
- The school meets all the requirements of the independent school standards for this part, with the exception of the one National Minimum Standard below.

National Minimum Standard 13.8

- The health needs of boarders are not being consistently met. The school has a system in place that asks all parents to provide medical information and consent prior to their child starting boarding. However, there has been a delay in some parents sending this documentation to the school. Leaders have followed this up with those parents, and boarding staff have made alternative health care arrangements to minimise risk to those children affected. Leaders are currently exploring ways of ensuring that these systems are more effective before the beginning of the next term.
- The school does not meet all the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for this part.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

Paragraph 21(1)

- The school does not have a single central record where all checks are recorded in one single document. Instead, the school has individual electronic files for each member of staff that record all safer recruitment checks. At the time of the inspection, the school was transferring information into a single record. However, checks on a person's right to work in the United Kingdom and checks on professional qualifications were not included in this single central record. Inspectors checked, through random selection, several individual staff files. These all showed that leaders had carried out the necessary recruitment checks.

- The school does not meet all the requirements of the independent school standards for this part.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

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

- The proprietor and leaders have not ensured that the independent school standards are met consistently and continually. For example, they have not ensured that the checks on staff's suitability to work with children have been recorded on a suitable single central record. However, pupils' well-being has not been compromised.
- The school does not meet all the requirements of the independent school standards for this part.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietor has a suitable accessibility plan that meets the requirements of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet 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, as set out in the annex of this report. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	117045
DfE registration number	884/6007
Inspection number	10123253

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	Independent
School status	Independent boarding school
Age range of pupils	0 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	357
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	45
Proprietor	Lucton Pierrepont School Educational Trust
Chair	Dr Tony Paterson
Headteacher	Mrs Gill Thorne
Annual fees (day pupils)	£7,350 to £14,250
Annual fees (boarders)	£27,885 to £33,780
Telephone number	01568 782000
Website	www.luctonschool.org
Email address	enquiries@luctonschool.org
Date of previous standard inspection	19–21 March 2019

Information about this school

- Lucton School is a co-educational day and boarding school in rural Herefordshire, near to Leominster.
- The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of governors.

- The school has a nursery for children from birth to four years, a pre-prep and prep school for pupils in Years 1 to 5, a middle school for pupils in Years 6 to 8, a senior school for pupils in Years 9 to 11 and a sixth form.
- A small proportion of pupils have special educational needs.
- The school provides full-time and flexi boarding.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The last focused compliance inspection, which was combined with an inspection of educational quality and boarding provision was in March 2019. It was carried out by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection judgements ranged from good to outstanding. All of the independent school standards and national minimum standards which were checked were met.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out, unannounced, at the request of the DfE because it had received information that raised concerns about safeguarding arrangements and pupils' welfare.
- The headteacher was not available in person at the time of the inspection as she was visiting Lucton's new sister school in Shanghai, China.
- Inspectors conducted a tour of the school site to look at the premises and boarding facilities.
- Inspectors talked to senior leaders, the designated lead for safeguarding, a group of support staff and teachers, and the headteacher's personal assistant with responsibility for the school's single central record. An inspector also spoke to the chair of the governing body on the telephone.
- Inspectors spoke on the telephone to Herefordshire local authority safeguarding officers.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from the prep, middle and senior schools to talk about their safety and their experiences at school and in the boarding houses.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation including school policies, risk assessments, safeguarding information, behaviour, bullying and exclusion records.

Inspection team

Tim Hill, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Dawn Bennett

Social Care Regulatory Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school—
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently.

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