

Trinity School and College

10-13 New Road, Rochester, Kent ME1 1BG

Inspection date

30 November 2022

Overall outcome

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

Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7–7(b), 32(1) and 32(1)(c)

- The school has a wide range of policies linked to safeguarding and welfare, health and safety published on its website. The safeguarding policy complies with present guidelines and is also published on the website in accordance with part 6 of the independent school standards (the standards).
- Current leaders are working hard to address the issues identified with safeguarding practice in the past, such as failure to make timely referrals to the local authority children’s services or designated officer. Other issues include the lack of close oversight of safeguarding by the proprietor, as well as in the procedures to recruit staff. These issues have now largely been addressed, but more time is needed to ensure that new policies and procedures fully embed.
- Action plans are in place to ensure that leaders and staff complete a range of training to enable them to strengthen the culture of safeguarding in the school. This includes both internally and externally in collaboration with members of the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership. This is helping leaders with specific responsibility for different aspects of safeguarding to understand their roles and responsibilities better, including working with external agencies.
- While some elements in the action plans have been completed, some have not. Additionally, leaders now need to ensure that all staff are fully proficient when recording information on the school’s new online safeguarding platform. This is specifically linked to the quality of recording and knowing when an issue is a ‘safeguarding’ concern rather than a ‘behaviour’ concern. Further training needs to be planned and should be undertaken without delay.

Paragraph 9

- Pupils generally behave well at the school. This was an unannounced inspection, but pupils were polite and curious when talking to the inspector during his tour of both sites of the school.

- Routines appear to be well established. Pupils move between both sites of the school in an orderly way.
- The behaviour policy has recently been reviewed to take into account more closely the specific context of the school and its pupils. Leaders feel the policy is more user-friendly for staff.
- Leaders have moved to strengthen the consistency in the way the policy is applied. While leaders are available if needed, staff are now expected to deal with low-level issues without calling on members of the leadership team or specialist 'behaviour' staff. Staff have also received specialised training in de-escalation and positive behaviour management strategies.
- Pupils learn about their own responsibilities to behave appropriately as part of the curriculum and through bespoke pieces of work in response to specific concerns. This includes areas such as relationships and sex education and what is acceptable and not acceptable when using social media.
- While paragraph 9 is met, aspects linked to paragraph 7 still need more time to fully embed; therefore, part 3 is not met.

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

Paragraphs 18(2)–18(2)(e), 18(3), 20(6)–20(6)(c), 21(1)–21(3)(b), 21(6), 21(7)(a) and 21(7)(b)

- The proprietor has reviewed arrangements for recruiting staff. Directors know that in the past, staff recruitment and induction did not always follow the school's own policies or good practice.
- Job application forms have been amended to include the need for candidates to disclose conflicts of interest regarding relationships and family links within the school. Other work, including the introduction of risk assessments, has been completed to raise awareness within the staff group of the potential problems created by working alongside family and close friends. All appointments made by the school are now signed off at director level.
- Procedures to induct new staff have been reviewed and strengthened. These include ensuring that staff fully understand their responsibilities regarding the safeguarding of pupils. Leaders are not afraid to curtail the contracts of staff within the probationary period if staff are deemed unsuitable.
- Current leaders are aware of their duty to report concerns to the Disclosure and Barring Service, as well as other safeguarding agencies if required.
- Key staff have undertaken appropriate safer recruitment training. They understand the need to make sure that the vetting of applicants is thorough and completed with complete integrity. This includes checking professional qualifications when appropriate.
- The single central record of checks on adults at the school is sound. Leaders are carrying out and recording the correct checks and in a timely manner. A number of retrospective checks are currently being made as a response to previous concerns. The school does not currently employ supply agency staff.
- The relevant standards in this part are met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33–33(k)

- The school's complaints policy is published on the website. It meets the requirements of part 7. The proprietor has reviewed the way complaints are handled. Evidence gathered during the inspection would indicate that the complaints policy and procedures are being followed appropriately. This includes upholding aspects of complaints when this is the right thing to do.
- The standards in this part are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1)–34(1)(c)

- Although the proprietor has a successful track record in running independent special schools, the oversight of leadership and management, including safeguarding, has not been strong enough in recent times. Poor practice has been allowed to creep in. Because of this, children have been put at risk.
- Leaders have worked hard to address the problems. The new headteacher is working tirelessly to re-establish a strong culture to safeguard pupils.
- New leaders and those that have been at the school longer are communicating more openly and honestly with each other. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is now a member of the senior leadership team. She is clear about the responsibility and the authority her role carries. Her dual role as designated teacher for looked after children will be relinquished in the near future, creating additional capacity within the DSL role.
- Leaders have undertaken refresher training regarding safeguarding. More is planned, including bespoke training with the school's allocated local authority designated officer. This will further strengthen leaders' understanding of working collaboratively with members of the Medway Safeguarding Children Partnership to the benefit of pupils and staff alike.
- While leaders correctly assert that much has been done to address past weaknesses, more needs to be done to ensure that the culture to safeguard pupils and young people at this school is as strong as it should be. This part of the standards is not met.

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. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	132097
DfE registration number	887/6006
Inspection number	10262474

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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	6 to 25
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	78
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Cavendish Education Ltd
Chair	Simon Coles
Headteacher	Joanne Baker
Annual fees (day pupils)	£20,750 to £67,300
Telephone number	01634 812 233
Website	www.trinityschoolrochester.co.uk
Email address	office@trinityschoolrochester.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	7 to 9 January 2020

Information about this school

- Trinity School and College is an independent special school that caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Many pupils also have additional learning difficulties, such as anxiety, dyslexia, dyspraxia and associated speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The school is governed by a board of directors.

- Nearly all pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school's most recent standard inspection was in January 2020. The school was subject to a material change inspection in October 2020. The school was subject to an emergency inspection in March 2022 when all independent standards that were checked were found to be met.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was an emergency inspection carried out at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) after complaints were received that raised concerns about the welfare, health and safety of pupils at the school. As an emergency inspection, it was carried out with no notice.
- The inspector visited both sites of the school, visiting classrooms and communal and office accommodations. Classroom visits included talking to pupils and staff.
- A range of documents and policies linked to the DfE's request were scrutinised before and during the inspection. These included the school's single central record of checks on adults and other safeguarding records.
- The inspector held a range of meetings, including with the headteacher and other senior leaders, as well as the school's DSL and deputy DSL.
- The inspector met with the school's executive headteacher and with a director, who joined online and also by telephone.
- The inspector held a discussion with the local authority designated officer as part of the inspection.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school does not meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

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; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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