



Summary of Inspection – 11th September 2015

Westholme as an independent school is accountable to the Department for Education (DfE) through the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). This provides the framework to ensure our policies, procedures and education are transparent and comparable with all other schools.

From time to time the ISI will inspect schools either on notice or unannounced; this can be done on any grounds. Such unannounced inspections have increased significantly in the last twelve months, which is a positive step to ensure that standards in schools are maintained.

Westholme was inspected through an unannounced visit on 11th September 2015. During this visit the school's systems and procedures on paper and in practice were examined and compared with the latest regulations, which had only just come into force also in September 2015.

The report identified that some of our written procedures did not absolutely comply with the latest regulations. The report does recognise that Westholme was already drafting the new policies in line with the new regulations and identified that these draft policies dealt with all but one of their observations.

It is clear that the minor content failures in the wording found did not materially affect the systems implemented in school. Westholme is pleased that the report found that in practice the procedures used do meet the requirements of the regulations.

We appreciate the feedback of the Inspectors which demonstrated that the school's new draft policies were almost entirely in line with the new regulations and indeed were able to be brought into effect within three days of the visit.

Our procedures and commitment to safeguard and protect the children in our care are clearly effective, fully understood by pupils and staff and support our mission statement:

'Westholme: where children come first'.

9th November 2015

Westholme School

Wilmar Lodge, Meins Road, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 6QU

Date of visit 11 September 2015

Purpose of visit

This was an unannounced visit carried out at the request of the DfE, to focus on the compliance of the school with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements, particularly those concerned with: safeguarding; pupils' welfare, health and safety, including measures to promote good behaviour, to guard against bullying, and to ensure suitable supervision of pupils; handling parents' complaints; leadership and management of the school.

Characteristics of the School

The school is located on the rural outskirts of Blackburn and was founded in 1923 as a preparatory school. It now comprises schools on three main sites within a mile of each other, educating boys and girls from 3 months to 18 years. Pupils in Year 6 spend most of each Thursday in the senior school, receiving teaching in areas such as science and design technology, and participating in activities. The school is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors. At the time of the visit, 752 pupils were on the roll. One pupil in the senior school has an education, health and care plan (EHC) plan. There are 36 pupils in the senior school identified as having a special educational need and/or disability (SEND) and 22 in the junior school. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2012.

Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 to 3.8]

The school does not meet the regulations.

The school does not meet the regulations because its published safeguarding policy omits a number of required details. However, in practice the procedures are effective and provide appropriate support for pupils' needs.

The safeguarding policy, dated May 2015, identifies the need to safeguard children at risk and those in need. This need is fulfilled effectively. The policy acknowledges guidance from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), Blackburn and Darwen, and makes suitable references to statutory guidance, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2015* (KCSIE) and *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015*. The policy is provided to parents online. At the time of the visit, the school was engaged in revision of its safeguarding policy and a draft revision was scrutinised by inspectors. The online policy

contains elements of a staff code of conduct. This gives some guidance to help staff avoid allegations of abuse, but the guidance is limited in some areas such as one-to-one teaching/coaching/tuition such as music tuition or sports coaching, staff/pupil relationships and breach of trust. These omissions had been rectified in the draft revision and staff showed effective understanding of appropriate conduct. Reference is made in both versions to a separate whistleblowing policy which staff understand. The recruitment policy, suitably cross referenced, includes all of the required checks.

The policy includes suitable definitions of abuse. It provides sufficiently for possible abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil, including linking such abuse to bullying. Discussion with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), supported by appropriate records, confirmed that pupils receive the right help at the right time to address risks and prevent issues escalating. This includes any serious incidents of bullying. The DSL acts on and refers the early signs of abuse and neglect, keeps clear records, listens to the views of the pupil, reassesses concerns when situations do not improve, shares information quickly and challenges inaction, as required by KCSIE. Communication with parents, where appropriate, is prompt and effective. Pupils confirm that they have many adults to whom they can turn if they are worried and that their concerns are listened to.

The policy identifies safeguarding elements relevant to the context of the school, such as its EYFS setting. The policy reflects the cultural make-up of the school, and includes cross reference to the school's anti-bullying policy. It includes relevant elements, including female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation. It emphasises the importance of effective communication between different sections of the school in promoting pupils' welfare and this is implemented effectively. Pupils understand how to stay safe online and develop tolerance and respect in response to the provisions of the curriculum.

The school's safeguarding policy shows awareness of the procedures of the local children's services. Staff understand what to do if they have concerns about a child and the need for immediate reporting to the DSL. They understand that they must not promise confidentiality to pupils or ask leading questions and act upon the guidance given. The policy confirms that anyone can make a referral; staff are aware of this and are confident that they could take action regarding a concern without any detriment to themselves. The DSL works closely with local agencies and makes prompt contact with children's social care where there are concerns that a child may be in need of help or at risk. The policy gives contact details for local agencies.

The policy makes appropriate provision for handling allegations against staff, including provision for reporting to the police. These have not had to be implemented recently. The policy provides for reporting any person whose services are no longer used, and where referral criteria are met, to DBS and/or NCTL.

The published policy names an individual to take responsibility for child protection matters in each section of the school, together with an alternative person in the absence of the DSL. The status of all figures is appropriate. However, although the published policy names all those trained as DSLs and, in a separate section, shows which post takes the lead in each part of the school, together with their name and status, this information is not easy to find, and the identity of the overall lead is unclear. The revised draft policy corrects this latter point. Neither version of the policy includes contact numbers for the DSLs, but includes those for other agencies giving support and advice about radicalisation.

The policy requires that any deficiencies or weaknesses in child protection arrangements are remedied without delay, and provides for annual review by the governors. This is carried out effectively, prompting the review being carried out at the time of the inspection. Governors are alert to safeguarding incidents within the school; they reviewed the incident identified in

the concern and required a detailed account of actions taken and lessons learnt. The policy identifies a governor whose responsibility is to liaise with the school regarding safeguarding, and with the local safeguarding board and other agencies.

Training is stipulated for all staff including volunteers and temporary staff on induction and thereafter. The training for the DSLs is appropriate. Records of most recent training confirm that training is up to date for all staff and that all staff confirm having read at least Part 1 of KCSIE July 2015. All staff received Prevent training in September 2015. Although the policy does not specify that whistle-blowing procedures form part of induction training, they are referred to within the safeguarding policy, which is included in the training, and are included in the checklist of items which form part of induction.

The policy identifies that it applies to the EYFS; it names an individual to take responsibility for safeguarding in the EYFS, makes clear the school's policy on the use of mobile phones and/or cameras in the setting and, as a registered setting, includes suitable provision for reporting concerns to Ofsted.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – the promotion of good behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9; EYFS 3.52 to 3.53]

The school meets the regulations.

The school has an appropriate policy to promote good behaviour which is implemented effectively. It is not published on the school website but is made available to parents, together with the school's measures to guard against bullying. Information on how to access both policies is provided in the handbook for new parents and on the school website.

The policy makes reference to, and follows, advice from the DfE on behaviour published in 2014. It promotes good behaviour through celebrating achievement with an effective range of rewards. Pupils confirmed that they find these helpful. The policy provides for sanctions to be imposed and acknowledges the need to recognise particular circumstances, such as where pupils have SEND, when imposing sanctions. In interview, staff showed that they take into account individual pupils' needs when administering sanctions. The types of sanctions used in the school are described in a graded manner, and it is shown how they are linked to different types of poor behaviour. In interviews, pupils considered that sanctions are administered fairly and that they understand the sanctions that different types of misbehaviour would invoke. The policy requires staff to record poor behaviour centrally; senior staff monitor the sanctions given and identify any trends. The policy states that corporal punishment is not to be used, and makes the provision that it must not be threatened in the EYFS. Reference is made to the school's anti-bullying policy, and sanctions are consistent with those provided in that policy. Staff understand the training they receive about promoting good behaviour. Approaches to promoting good behaviour are consistent across different sections of the school while being suitably adapted to suit the age of different pupils. The policy makes suitable reference to keeping parents informed when sanctions are imposed and this happens in practice. Pupils confirm that they receive guidance about their behaviour and the school rules through personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons, form times and assemblies.

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

The school meets the regulations.

The school has a suitable policy to guard against bullying and this is implemented effectively throughout the school. Arrangements for parents to access the policy are the same as those

for the behaviour policy. The policy is regularly reviewed and reflects published advice, such as *Preventing and Tackling Bullying*. It makes suitable reference to e-safety and cyber-bullying as well as racist bullying and provides for guidance to be given to pupils from the junior school onwards. This they understand. The policy includes comprehensive definitions of bullying. In interviews, staff showed up-to-date awareness of the types of bullying, in particular cyber-bullying, gained from training they receive.

The policy provides for educating pupils about bullying and its consequences through assemblies and PSHE, and pupils know what to do if they are bullied or observe bullying. The policy supports victims of bullying and the perpetrators. Pupils are encouraged to confide in an adult and do so. They express confidence that any bullying is handled effectively by the school. The policy refers to serious sanctions outlined in the behaviour policy and is consistent with these. It also recognises that serious bullying may result in a child being put at serious risk although no cross-reference is made with the safeguarding policy's provision to deal with such instances. Pupils described the sanctions given as a result of a known bullying incident and these matched those identified in the anti-bullying policy. These include exclusion as a sanction when persistent bullying occurs. The policy requires staff to inform a designated senior manager when an incident occurs, and careful recording enables patterns to be identified. Records are passed on when a pupil moves from one section of the school to another. Bullying is discussed in senior management meetings, and serious incidents are identified to governors. Logs of bullying incidents demonstrate that the school's policy is implemented effectively; due care is shown for both the victim and the alleged bully, appropriate strategies are employed to monitor behaviour and to enable the bully to consider the consequences of his or her actions. Strategies include effective 'restorative justice' measures where bullies and victims restore amenable relations. Parents are involved appropriately at all stages.

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

The school meets the regulations.

Suitable arrangements are made and implemented to supervise pupils. Sufficient staff are on duty to supervise playgrounds in both senior and junior schools. Arrangements when pupils from Year 6 visit the senior school on Thursdays include an appropriate number of staff to supervise pupils. Staff are deployed effectively across the designated playground, activities and sports areas.

The manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR part 7, paragraph 25; EYFS 3.74 & 3.75]

The school does not meet the regulation.

The complaints procedure, under revision at the time of the visit, includes most of the required elements, including for the EYFS. It does not include the most recent changes in requirements because there is no stipulation that the school's record of complaints will show action taken by the school as a result of formal complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld). Consequently, the current record does not systematically include this information, although some entries allude to actions taken. The policy also includes incorrect reference to relevant legislation and lacks timescales for acknowledging any complaint made. The current policy's provisions are implemented effectively and in accordance with its procedures and timescales. Staff are clear about the expectations for them to respond to parents' informal concerns promptly, and do so.

Quality of Leadership and Management [ISSRs Part 8, paragraph 34]

The school meets the regulations.

Appropriate procedures are implemented which allow senior leaders and governors to manage safeguarding and welfare arrangements, including bullying, and monitor compliance with regulations. This includes regular review of policy, which is prompt in the case of safeguarding requirements. Governors review serious incidents effectively and require information from senior managers to enable them to do so. Evidence shows that senior leaders actively promote the well-being of pupils. Effective communication ensures suitable consistency in arrangements between the junior and senior schools.

Regulatory action points

The school does not meet all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and, therefore, must:

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, Health and Safety, paragraph 7(a) and (b) and paragraph 8(a) and (b) and EYFS 3.4 to 3.8

- Improve the wording and implementation of the safeguarding policy as follows:
 - Identify clearly the senior DSL, which DSL operates in each section of the school, and give contact numbers for all these figures;
 - Specify that whistleblowing procedures are included in staff induction.

ISSR Part 7, The manner in which complaints are handled, paragraph 25 (j) and (k); EYFS 3.74 & 3.75

- Improve the wording and implementation of the complaints procedure as follows:
 - set out clear time scales for the management of a complaint, including for acknowledging receipt;
 - provide for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) of the standard and: (i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and (ii) action taken by the school as a result of these complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld);
 - provide that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 108 or 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Other Recommendations

In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Include cross reference in the anti-bullying policy to the provision in the safeguarding policy that, where a child is at serious risk as a result of bullying, referral will be made to children's services.