

RIDDLESWORTH HALL SCHOOL

Riddlesworth Hall, Hall Lane, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 2TA

04 OCTOBER 2017

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Riddlesworth Hall School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged from 2 to 13. The school occupies a large Victorian house in a rural location in Norfolk. The school is owned by the Confucius International Education Group, which currently devolves day to day responsibility to a local proprietor. There are 86 pupils on roll of whom 44 are boys and 42 girls. Sixteen pupils are boarders and 70 are day pupils. The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 11. One pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan and 19 have English as an additional language (EAL), 17 of whom receive support for development of English. The previous inspection was in February 2017.

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

This was an unannounced visit at the request of the Department for Education to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the regulatory compliance Inspection on 28 February and 1 March 2017. The focus of the visit was on safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety; the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors; and the quality of leadership and management.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) and (b) & 8 (a) and (b); NMS 11; EYFS requirements 3.4 to 3.8]

The school does not meet the regulations and standard.

The school's policy for safeguarding provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school. It is based on the most recent statutory guidance: *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (September 2016)*. The policy is supported by suitable guidance covering the safe recruitment of staff, whistleblowing, a staff code of conduct and information on how pupils are educated about online safety. It names those with proprietorial oversight. However, responsibility for the monitoring and review of policy and procedures by the proprietor is not clear. The most recent document defers this responsibility to the principal who is also the designated safeguarding lead (DSL).

The school's safeguarding arrangements are not always implemented effectively. Safeguarding procedures are in line with the local authority guidance. There are suitable arrangements for listening to pupils. Appropriate procedures are in place to support pupils in need and at risk, and parental consent for referrals to statutory agencies is not a requirement. A recent disclosure led to a prompt referral to local safeguarding agencies.

The DSL and her deputy have suitable safeguarding training, including inter-agency training, provided by the local authority. All other staff receive regular safeguarding training, including an update in September 2017. Staff are aware of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation, and during interviews they demonstrated understanding of their responsibilities and were aware of how to refer concerns. They understand that anyone can make a

referral to the children's services and understand procedures to follow to deal appropriately with allegations against staff, volunteers and the DSL. New staff undergo suitable induction training. All staff have received a copy of KCSIE Part 1, which includes Annex A. Appropriate records of staff training are maintained. Leaders understand their responsibility to report any allegations against staff to the Disqualification and Barring Service (DBS) and/or National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL).

The proprietor maintains careful oversight of procedures for safer recruitment and the school has received declarations of 'disqualification from childcare by association' from all staff who work with children under eight years of age and references for staff are received and recorded in a timely manner.

As identified at the last inspection, the proprietor has not undertaken a formal review of the safeguarding policy and procedures in order to remedy any weaknesses. The standards on implementation of the health and safety policy and of fire precautions are not met and represent a failure to safeguard boarders' welfare.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety, and fire [ISSR Part 3 Paragraphs 11 and 12 and NMS 6 and 7]

The school does not meet the regulations and standards.

A health and safety manager has been identified and the school has formed a health and safety committee as the policy requires. The school has implemented its health and safety policy by seeking external surveys, for example for asbestos and legionella testing. The fire risk assessment has been updated and a report has been provided on emergency lighting. However, the limited staffing available has not enabled recommendations from these surveys and reports to be addressed in a timely fashion or for the necessary monitoring of these actions to have been undertaken. For example, checks on play equipment have commenced but not all have been undertaken. Emergency lighting has not been checked within a suitable time frame. Staff training in fire was undertaken following the previous inspection. However, staff most recently appointed, including those in boarding, have not yet been trained.

The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18(2)(c) and (f), 18(3), 21(3)(a)(ii) and (iii), 21(3)(b) under Suitability of staff and proprietors and NMS 14.1 and 14.4]

The school meets the regulations and standards.

The required recruitment checks have been undertaken. Medical declarations have been made and prohibition from teaching and management clearance has been obtained. In cases where the criminal record check was late, the school has undertaken their own barred list check before the member of staff began work and supervision arrangements have been appropriate. References have been received in a timely fashion. The single central register of appointments is accurately completed, with required entries in place and appropriately dated. Supervision of visitors to boarding accommodation is effective.

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

The school meets the regulation.

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(1)(a) (b) and (c) and NMS 13]

The school does not meet the regulation and standard.

The owners and proprietor have not discharged their responsibilities for ensuring that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge and that the regulatory standards are consistently met.

They have not actively promoted the well-being of the pupils. Outside expertise has been sought and enabled the school to address some of the issues previously identified. However, the lack of sufficient personnel has limited the necessary monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations. As a result, the implementation of the school's policies for child protection, health and safety and fire safety, as at the last inspection, is insufficiently rigorous. The school's action plan has, thus, not been implemented fully.

REGULATORY ACTION POINTS

The school does not meet all of the relevant requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework 2014. The school must:

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, Health and Safety - safeguarding; paragraphs 7 and 8 and NMS 11

- Ensure that the safeguarding policy sets out consistently and clearly the responsibilities of the proprietor.
- Ensure that proprietors undertake an annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures in order to identify and remedy any weaknesses.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, Health and Safety – health and safety, and fire safety; paragraphs 11 and 12 and NMS 6.1 and 7.1

- Ensure that the school's health and safety policy is implemented in full, appropriate records kept and procedures monitored for effectiveness.
- Ensure full compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order

ISSR Part 8, quality of leadership and management, paragraph 34 and NMS 13

- Ensure that the proprietor and senior managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the regulations and standards are consistently met, and that they actively promote the well-being of all pupils.