

Mount St Mary's College

College Road, Spinkhill, Sheffield, S21 3YL

Date of visit 22 September 2015

Purpose of visit

This was an announced visit carried out at the request of the DfE to ensure that the school had fully implemented the action plan submitted following the intermediate boarding inspection in November 2014. The visit focused on: aspects of safeguarding, pupils' behaviour, measures to safeguard pupils from bullying including cyber-bullying, and the governance, leadership and management of the school, particularly the development of boarding and the provision of information to parents.

Characteristics of the School

Mount St Mary's College is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils from the ages of 11 to 18. It is situated in Spinkhill, near the border of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire. It was first founded by Jesuit fathers at Stanley Grange near Derby in 1620. The college at Spinkhill was formally opened in 1842 and is part of the international network of Jesuit schools. It is now run as a charitable trust, which was established in 2006, and is administered by a board of governors, some of whom are also trustees. At the time of the inspection visit, there were 300 pupils on the school roll, 176 boys and 124 girls, of whom 217 pupils were in Years 7 to 11 and 83 were in Years 12 and 13. Seventy-two pupils board at the school, 39 boys and 33 girls, of whom 57 come from overseas, and approximately one-half of these come from Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico, Chile and Spain. The boarders live in three boarding houses, and are accommodated by gender with boys in two houses. Forty-six pupils have been identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom two have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care (EHC) plans. Forty-eight pupils use English as an additional language (EAL), and all receive support with their acquisition of English. The previous inspection was of the boarding provision in November 2014.

Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b), and 8(a) and (b); and NMS 11]

These regulations are met.

The current safeguarding policy is compliant in content and is available to parents on the website. It is implemented effectively. It cross-refers to a staff behaviour code of conduct which gives the staff guidance to ensure that their behaviour and actions do not place pupils or themselves at risk of harm or of allegations of harm to a pupil. The designated

safeguarding lead (DSL), his deputy and the headmaster have all been trained within the required intervals by the local authority, and all staff have also received training as required. Staff training has included reference to the latest guidance on how to recognise the signs of abuse, the importance of listening to pupils and raising awareness concerning the wider aspects of safeguarding such as internet safety, emotional health issues and radicalisation. In discussion with a group of staff, all are clear about how they should report to the leadership immediately any concerns they might have about these topics, and the inappropriate behaviour of another member of staff towards pupils. They know what to do in the event of a disclosure, or an allegation against another member of staff or the headmaster. Staff who have started at the school this term have received induction concerning child protection and the associated documentation. Records confirm that all staff have been given a copy of *Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 1 (July 2015)*.

The school has regular contact with the local children's social care services and the local authority designated officer. Disclosures, allegations or concerns are carefully recorded and are referred on to external agencies expeditiously, and recent concerns have been dealt with meticulously and in line with local guidance. The leadership is aware of its responsibility to refer on to the DBS and the NCTL anyone whose services are no longer used because he or she is considered unsuitable to work with children. The governing body receives at least an annual report from the DSL which describes the generalities of the issues dealt with, the training of staff and any other issues arising from the policy. It reviews the policy and the procedures annually. However, its minutes do not indicate clearly the effectiveness of governors' oversight through discussion or of their formal review of the safeguarding policy and its implementation.

In discussion, pupils said that they feel very safe within the school. They know who to approach if they have a concern, as the names and contact details of different people, including an independent listener and a supportive listener, are available to them around the school or boarding houses. They report that they are taught about the effects of cyber-bullying, and how to keep themselves safe online. There are effective rules about when mobile phones and other devices can be used, and the younger year groups are required to hand in mobile devices overnight. The PSHEE scheme of work covers the protected characteristics and having respect for others, recognising when pressure from others threatens their personal safety and well-being, developing effective ways of resisting pressures and knowing how and when to get help. In the sixth form, the ethics and beliefs programme covers e-safety, grooming, child pornography and responsible use of the internet.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour and anti-bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 9 and 10; NMS 12]

These regulations are not met.

The school has implemented its action plan in most respects. However, the amended behaviour policy was not available on the school's website in April 2015, as stated in the action plan, and neither was it accurately replicated in all relevant material published by the school; on the day before the inspection visit, the school still had the previous behaviour policy available on the website, along with various other associated policies which were dated several years ago. In practice, behaviour and bullying issues are dealt with effectively. A suitable behaviour policy has been drawn up, which focuses on rewards and sanctions and is the same version as that sent to the DfE in January. Other policies for behaviour management, discipline and exclusions of pupils, and use of reasonable force set out the school's expectations. The school rules, which are in the process of being simplified, are reproduced in other documentation such as the pupils' planner and the handbooks for parents. The dispersal of information across this range of policies results in repetition and a

lack of clarity for pupils and parents. It is recommended that they are either subsumed into one behaviour policy which covers all guidance and requirements, or that they are cross-referenced within each policy, as stated in the evaluation of the action plan. The countering bullying policy includes a definition of cyber-bullying, a point of guidance about how pupils can keep themselves safe online and the rules concerning their use of mobile phones. No further information on cyber-bullying from the guidance *Preventing and Tackling Bullying in Schools* (2014) is included concerning the use of technology, for example information about the use of technology by staff or visitors to the school, informing and educating parents in online safety, and a statement that staff are trained in e-safety; there was no other document shown in evidence, such as an e-safety policy, which covers these issues on cyber-bullying.

The systems for recording and documenting behaviour and bullying issues both within boarding and in school during the day, are suitable. The house-parent logs in a diary any issues in the boarding houses and alerts the head of boarding. Other academic staff will be emailed as appropriate, although the school tries to run the boarding houses as a 'home from home', where school and 'home' issues are kept separately. The boarding house-parents meet weekly with the head of boarding to discuss concerns about pupils. The head of boarding effectively monitors behaviour patterns within boarding. The head of line (head of year) records any incidents that occur during the school day; form tutors contact the deputy head directly responsible for behaviour in more serious cases. Concerns are passed on to him mainly through the school's intranet, although this is an evolving system, and currently there is a lack of uniformity in using this process; some staff still prefer hard copy records. The deputy head and/or the DSL meet every fortnight with the heads of line to discuss and retain an overview of pupils of concern. In addition the pastoral team, consisting of the special educational needs co-ordinator, head of boarding, nurse, headmaster, deputy head, DSL, chaplain and the supportive listener, meet every week to share relevant information from across the school. Records show that the sanctions for serious disciplinary offences, other misbehaviour and bullying, are consistently applied and appropriate for the offence.

Parents are informed immediately of all disciplinary concerns unless they are minor. Open communication between school and home is encouraged. All staff are made aware of pupils about whom the school is concerned during weekly briefings. Staff training in strategies to address bullying, including listening to children, takes place regularly. Pupils' perceive behaviour to be very good and that bullying is rare. They are confident that, when it does arise, staff deal with it effectively and constructively. Older pupils said that they know the school's rules, agreeing with most of them. They believed that generally sanctions are applied fairly, although they felt that senior pupils receive rewards less frequently.

Provision of information [ISSRs Part 6, paragraph 32; NMS 1]

These regulations are not met.

The action plan submitted by the school in January 2015 stated that the new behaviour policy would be available to parents on the website in April 2015, and the action point at the time of the previous inspection stated that the policy must be 'accurately replicated in all relevant material published by the school.' This part of the action plan has not been properly implemented. Parents of current and prospective pupils are not clearly informed which policies and information is 'made available' to them. Not all the required documents are available on the website; some of those that are available are out of date and are not the current policies which the school is using. For example, the parents' and boarders' handbook makes clear how the houses are run and organised as from this term, but the boarding principles and practice statement on the website refer to previous practice. The school intends that a new website, currently under construction, will contain all the information which must be 'made available'. Currently, there is no indication on the website

or elsewhere to show how parents are 'provided' with the contact details of the chair of governors, who was appointed in September 2015. In discussion the chair said that parents know they can contact him through the school.

The quality of leadership in, and management of, schools [ISSRs Part 8 paragraph 34(1); NMS 13]

These regulations are met.

Since the boarding inspection of November 2014, there have been major changes in senior leadership. The composition of the senior leadership team, including the headmaster who was appointed in September 2014, has changed over recent years. The new chair, appointed from September 2015, is experienced in oversight of Jesuit schools. He indicated in discussion that he has a clear vision for the future of the school and for ensuring it complies with regulatory requirements. The minutes of the most recent governors' meeting in September, record the chair's desire that the school would review its policies with urgency, to enable the new governing body, of whom two-thirds of its members have been recently appointed, to set up a regular system of review and monitoring. The chair stated his awareness that the systems for doing this in the past have not been sufficiently rigorous.

Whilst there are weaknesses in ensuring that the action plan has been completely fulfilled within its timeframe, and in 'providing' and 'making available' the required information for parents of current and prospective pupils, these issues do not appear to have any significant impact currently on the pupils' well-being. Evidence indicates that pupils' pastoral care and welfare is now given a high priority within the school.

Governance, leadership and management have fulfilled the second part of their action plan effectively by ensuring that sufficient time, opportunity and resources are allocated to the management and leadership of boarding. A new leadership structure for boarding has been put in place as from September 2015. The head of boarding attends governors' meetings so that governors are informed about boarding. In addition, they visit boarding houses in the evening, talk to the staff and have dinner with the senior pupils. The head of boarding is supported by three house-parents (of whom he is one) and three deputy house-parents. They all have job descriptions which reflect their skills and experience. The boarding accommodation is gradually being refurbished. The boarding staff spent part of the summer holiday preparing for the return of the boarders, so that the organisational changes were well advanced before the boarders returned. Senior leaders and the governing body have a clear vision for the future of the school including boarding.

The head of boarding has set up systems for monitoring the work of the boarding staff; there are weekly meetings with house-parents and the well-being of pupils is at the heart of the new arrangements. He has held individual discussions with each boarder to identify their needs and concerns. All the boarding staff appointed have previous boarding experience and several have received previous training. Induction and appraisal include the gap students. They are supported and encouraged to develop professionally within their role. The pupils have regular opportunities to express their views and opinions, including meetings within their houses, the school council, a food committee, and termly surveys. The school has written a boarding development plan, containing short and longer-term improvements, but this is in its early stages of fulfilment. Management encourages strong links between the boarding and academic staff; for example, boarding staff attend weekly staff briefings, and some academic staff are boarding tutors. The head of boarding is a member of the senior leadership team.

Communication with parents, including those of boarders, is effective. The headmaster tries to meet all overseas parents before their child begins at the school, either at the school or

overseas. The head of boarding and the house-parents make themselves as accessible as possible to parents, and the importance of regular email communications is emphasised. Parents know they can approach the boarding staff at any time as they are given 24-hour contact telephone numbers. Pupils are very well known by all staff and this contributes to the family atmosphere. Pupils say they are well looked after and that the level of care is very strong. Boarders particularly enjoy the effective time management provided, in that there is a good balance of study time and activities. They also enjoy having kitchen facilities within the houses, and the common rooms. They say that relationships between the pupils themselves and with the staff are strong, and they are well supervised. They stated that they always have someone to turn to if they have a problem and they know how to contact external help should they require it.

Regulatory action points

The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2014, or the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils – Anti-bullying, paragraph 10 and NMS 12

- Complete the action plan proposed by the school concerning the new behaviour policy, by ensuring that the new behaviour policy is published on the website, and that all other previous policies concerning behaviour are removed from the website.
- Ensure that the countering bullying policy contains all the school's arrangements for the online safety of pupils, so that the school's expectations and safeguarding obligations are communicated and effective.

ISSR Part 6, Provision of Information, paragraph 32(1)(a) and (b)

- Ensure the required information is 'provided' or 'made available' to parents of current and prospective pupils, including how they may contact the chair of governors.