

BELLERBYS COLLEGE BRIGHTON

1 Billinton Way, Brighton, East Susses, BN1 4LF

DATE OF VISIT

4th July 2016

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bellerbys College Brighton is a co-educational independent boarding college for pupils between the ages of 13 and 19. The majority of pupils join the college at the start of the sixth form. It moved to its current location in the city centre in 2007. It is one of four Bellerbys Colleges, all of which are part of Study Group, a global educational organisation which also owns language schools and international study centres. The college is governed by a board of directors which receives challenge, advice and support from a separate advisory board. At the time of the visit, there were 727 pupils on roll, of whom 256 were enrolled on A-level courses, 305 on the Bellerbys foundation course, 152 on GCSE courses and 14 on the English language programme. Boarding accommodation for over half of the pupils is on the main campus. Pupils over the age of 18 live in a smaller, off-site residence. Around 200 pupils live with host families arranged by the college in the Brighton and Hove area. A very small minority live in privately-organised accommodation or are day pupils. The school has 24 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), none of whom have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. A large majority of the pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL). The school's previous inspection was an integrated inspection in September 2015.

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

This was an announced visit carried out at the request of the DfE to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the integrated inspection on 22 to 25 September 2015. The focus of the visit was on safeguarding, the suitability of staff, provision of information, 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, 14.1 and 20.5]; the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18, 19, 20 and 21; NMS 14]; provision of information to parents [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32 (1) (c)]

The school meets the Regulations and the Standards.

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.

The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Since the previous inspection, the school has improved its procedures for checking the suitability of staff and regular visitors to homestay accommodation and its oversight of safeguarding policy and procedures.

The school now has a rigorous process for checking the suitability of a member of staff before he or she commences work at the school. The recruitment process is guided by a new recruitment policy which outlines in detail the procedures to be followed, including those required to check the suitability of staff. The procedures reflect the latest official guidance and fulfil all statutory requirements.

All of the required checks have been carried out before commencement of employment on each member of staff appointed since the previous inspection. Evidence of these checks has been recorded accurately on the school's single central register of appointments (SCR), and the required copies of documents have been stored electronically to provide further proof that the checks have been carried out. The school verifies the identity of each new member of staff, carries out criminal record and barred list checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and ascertains the person's right to work in the UK. For those who have lived or worked abroad, the school carries out further checks with overseas authorities. It seeks evidence of a person's medical fitness, previous employment and, where appropriate, a person's qualifications. It checks that all those carrying out teaching duties have not been prohibited from teaching and those with positions of management have not been prohibited from carrying out a management role in a school. In the event that a DBS check is delayed, the school carries out a separate barred list check, undertakes a risk assessment and ensures that appropriate supervision arrangements are in place before the member of staff starts work. For staff who are employed by an agency, the school seeks assurance from the agency that all of the required checks have been carried out and, in addition, verifies the person's identity and checks the person's DBS certificate. Similarly, stringent checks have been carried out on the school's board of directors.

The school has reviewed all appointments made prior to the previous inspection by checking staff files and the information recorded on the SCR. Retrospective checks have been made wherever evidence of the necessary checks had not been retained on a member of staff's file or information had not been recorded on the SCR. As a result, the SCR now provides a comprehensive picture of all of the checks that have been undertaken and gives reassurance that every member of staff employed by the school has been properly checked for their suitability to work with children.

The school has strengthened its procedures for ensuring that the proper checks have been carried out for all those aged 16 and over who are living in a house where pupils from the school have homestay arrangements, or are regular visitors. The school keeps a central register which records all of the checks that have been undertaken and when they are due for renewal and alerts the school when a child living in the homestay accommodation turns 16 and requires a criminal record check. It sends regular communications to homestay families, reminding them of the need to declare any changes with regard to adults or regular visitors living in the house so that the necessary checks can be carried out.

The proprietor now fulfils the requirement to review the safeguarding policy annually. In practice, the policy has been reviewed on various occasions during the past year as new guidance or legislation has come into force or in response to advice received from authoritative sources. The policy documents clearly when changes have been made and the reasons for the changes.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 13.1 – 13.6]

The school meets the Regulations and the Standards

Those with leadership and management responsibilities demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent standards are met consistently. They actively promote the well-being of pupils.

Since the previous inspection, there have been substantial changes and improvements to the governance arrangements for the school. The board of directors has a much clearer understanding than before of its responsibilities as proprietor. Governance has been strengthened through the creation of an advisory board whose role is to assist in overseeing the work of the school and to hold the school's leadership to account. A member of the advisory board has been nominated as senior safeguarding lead and has played an active role in working with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and reviewing the school's safeguarding procedures, particularly those for the safer recruitment of staff. Oversight of these processes by the senior leadership team has also been strengthened as no member of staff may start work until the principal has verified that those responsible for undertaking the necessary checks have completed them all, and that evidence of the checks has been recorded on the SCR.

REGULATORY ACTION POINTS

The school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.