ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

Additional Inspection Report

The Mount School (York)

May 2024

School's details

School	The Mount School (York)
DfE number	816/6003
Registered charity number	513646
Address	The Mount School (York) Dalton Terrace York North Yorkshire YO24 4DD
Telephone number	01904 667500
Email address	office@mountschoolyork.co.uk
Principal	David Griffiths
Chair of Governors	Margaret Bryan
Proprietor	The Mount School York Ltd
Age Range	3 to 18
Number of pupils on roll	238

Day pupils	201	Boarders	37
EYFS	20	**Juniors**	58
Seniors	160		

Date of inspection	9 May 2024

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

1.1 The Mount School (York) is an independent day and boarding school for female pupils, admitting male pupils to the pre-school. It is located in York, and founded by The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). The school is a registered charity directed by a local governing body of appointed trustees. The school is organised into: the pre-school for children aged 3 to 5 years; the junior school for pupils aged 5 to 11 years; the senior school for pupils aged 11 to 16 years; and a sixth form. The school has 29 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 44 pupils. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in June 2023.

Purpose of the inspection

1.2 This was an unannounced additional inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2022 and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8 and 12	**Not all met**
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour); NMS 15	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying); NMS 16	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 9	**Met**
NMS 7 (boarders' health and wellbeing)	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils); NMS 20	**Met**
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9	**Not met**
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and the proprietor); NMS 19	**Met**
Part 5, paragraph 25 (maintenance of premises and accommodation); NMS 9	**Met**
Part 5, paragraph 30 (boarding accommodation); NMS 4	**Met**
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	**Met**
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints procedure); NMS 14	**Met**
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	**Not met**

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding and safeguarding of boarders [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 8 and 12]

Safeguarding policy

2.1 The school meets the requirements.

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

Safeguarding implementation

2.3 The school does not meet all of the standards.

2.4 Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding do not communicate sufficiently well or openly. This prevents consistent management of records of concerns about the behaviour of adults working in the school and clear identification of patterns in behaviour. Staff have a clear understanding of the school's expectations of their behaviour. They are confident to report low-level concerns and more serious allegations about the behaviour of adults in the school, in line with the school's stated policy.

2.5 Governors have co-operated with external agencies and investigated allegations about adults working in the school when advised to do so. They understand the potential risks to pupils identified in allegations of abuse or harm. However, they have not assessed effectively enough the potential safeguarding risks to pupils arising from concerns about the behaviour of adults in the school, including those about whom low-level concerns have been expressed. They have not sought external advice on these matters nor recorded them methodically as required by statutory guidance. As a result, potential risks to pupils have not been identified or mitigated.

2.6 Pupils identify trusted adults in school and in the boarding houses with whom they can share concerns. Pupils understand how to stay safe, including online. Governors have implemented an effective system of filtering and monitoring to support pupils in this regard.

2.7 Boarders appreciate that staff actively question their welfare following time spent with their guardians. Boarders are able to contact their friends and families. Staff involved in boarding understand their safeguarding responsibilities and their roles in promoting boarders' wellbeing. They are confident to report safeguarding concerns, including allegations against other adults in the school and in boarding. Boarding and day staff communicate effectively in relation to boarders' safeguarding concerns.

2.8 Staff understand how to report pupil concerns on the school's online pastoral system and do so effectively. Leaders and staff liaise closely so that pupils are supported appropriately when they raise concerns, and their needs met. Leaders work closely with parents and external agencies to support pupils' safeguarding needs, making suitable arrangements when required in response to pupils' individual circumstances. Staff and leaders respond appropriately to concerns about pupils' mental health needs. They make appropriate adjustments for pupils who have SEND.

2.9 Staff, including those with leadership responsibilities for safeguarding, and governors, are suitably trained. Those with responsibilities for the management of allegations against adults working in the school have not always used their training to manage these with sufficient rigour. The school has a clear approach to the Prevent strategy.

2.10 Governors discuss safeguarding matters with school leaders and undertake an annual review of safeguarding policy and procedures. However, their oversight has not been sufficiently detailed or

robust to identify inconsistencies in the management of low-level concerns about adults working in the school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9; NMS 15]

2.11 The school meets the standards.

2.12 Leaders implement a suitable policy to promote pupils' positive behaviour. Incidences of poor behaviour are few and are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Boarders are confident to report issues to boarding staff. Leaders and staff in school and boarding contexts liaise closely so that pastoral concerns are communicated effectively. Pupils receive continuity of care throughout their day. Leaders keep detailed records of concerns which arise in both boarding and school time so that patterns of behaviour can be identified and addressed.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10; NMS 16]

2.13 The school meets the standards.

2.14 Leaders implement an effective strategy to prevent bullying in the school so that incidences are rare and any that occur are handled effectively and sensitively. Pupils know how to report bullying and understand the importance of reporting bullying incidents they observe. Staff are well versed in how to support pupils. Suitable arrangements are made to support boarders if they have been bullied by others in the boarding house.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11; NMS 9]

2.15 The school meets the standards.

2.16 The school implements its health and safety policy effectively. The boarding house and wider school premises are checked each evening to confirm that they are secure.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – boarders' health and wellbeing [NMS 7]

2.17 The school meets the standard.

2.18 The school promotes the physical and mental health of boarders effectively. Staff help boarders to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle through information given in the curriculum and implementation of suitable policies and procedures. Boarders' attendance at meals is closely monitored. Concerns relating to pupils' mental or physical wellbeing are addressed quickly and appropriately. Boarders are encouraged to maintain physical health through healthy options at mealtimes and access to the school gym in boarding hours.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; NMS 20]

2.19 The school meets the standards.

2.20 Leaders allocate suitable numbers of staff to supervise pupils on residential trips and in boarding time. Pupils identify adults in the boarding house with whom they can communicate. Leaders provide continuity of staffing so that boarders' relationships with staff are not overly disrupted. Suitable arrangements ensure that boarders' whereabouts are known to staff at all times.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 9; EYFS 3.76]

2.21   The school does not meet the relevant standards.

2.22   Governors have identified the need for improvements in the assessment of risks associated with adventurous overseas residential trips following previous incidents. This includes the need for leaders with safeguarding responsibility to be involved in drawing up safeguarding protocols for such trips. However, although governors were informed of the changes made to required risk assessments, they have not engaged actively in monitoring or questioning their content. They have not ensured that previous deficiencies have been addressed. Leaders with safeguarding responsibility have not been sufficiently involved in the process. Communication between governors and school leaders has lacked clarity. As a result, the means by which the requirement to include female staff on residential trips will be met has not been understood or discussed by all relevant staff, including those with safeguarding responsibilities. Leaders and governors have amended the risk assessment policy with regard to the requirements of trip leaders without full consideration of the potential impact on pupils.

2.23   Leaders identify and mitigate risks associated with boarding accommodation effectively. Those with responsibility for safeguarding carry out suitable risk assessments in relation to pupils' individual needs when required. Leaders and staff draw up suitable risk assessments for educational day trips and visits. Staff understand their roles in the drawing up and implementation of risk assessments in school and on day trips.

2.24   Governors understand that potential safeguarding risks to pupils may arise from allegations of abuse or harm in relation to adults working in the school. However, they have not assessed with sufficient care the potential risks raised by low-level concerns about adults in the school or the required measures senior leaders take to mitigate these.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21; NMS 19]

2.25   The school meets the standards.

2.26   Leaders implement suitable procedures for staff recruitment. All necessary checks are carried out in advance of a person starting work at the school and these are recorded as required. Governors undertake regular checks of the single central record of appointments and staff files. Governor review and investigation has identified necessary improvements to procedures and these have been implemented swiftly and effectively.

Premises and accommodation – maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25; NMS 9]

2.27   The school meets the relevant standards.

2.28   The boarding accommodation and school buildings are suitably maintained so that they provide a safe environment in which pupils can live and learn. The boarding accommodation is housed within the main school building and suitably secured to prevent unauthorised entry or exit.

Premises and accommodation – boarding accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 30; NMS 4]

2.29   The school meets the standards.

2.30 The school provides suitable accommodation for boarders, including access to the internet during boarding hours. Boarders' accommodation is reserved for their sole use, and access by unauthorised persons, including day pupils and non-boarding staff, is securely prevented.

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

2.31 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.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33; NMS 14]

2.32 The school meets the standards.

2.33 The school manages informal and formal complaints in line with its stated procedures. These include suitable three-stage procedures which encompass informal and formal complaints within appropriate timescales. No panel hearings have been held since the previous inspection. Complaints about boarding are identified as such in the record of complaints. Complaints raised by parents whose pupils have left the school are managed in accordance with the procedure when these relate to concerns first expressed whilst their child was a pupil at the school.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 2]

2.34 The school does not meet the standards.

2.35 Governors have not ensured that leaders and managers demonstrate sufficient skills and knowledge in regard to safeguarding and risk assessment so that the independent school standards are met consistently and the wellbeing of pupils, including boarders is actively promoted.

2.36 Leaders have not communicated sufficiently well to enable the consistent recording and management of low-level concerns about staff conduct.

2.37 Leaders have assessed the practical risks associated with adventurous overseas residential trips in detail. Governors and leaders have considered concerns raised about pupils' wellbeing on such trips. They have recognised the risks associated with health and safety and pupils' pastoral wellbeing, but safeguarding risks have not been understood, identified or mitigated with sufficient rigour or detail. Governors have been kept informed of revised risk assessments and practical arrangements for such trips. However, when discussing these plans with school and trip leaders, they have not taken the safeguarding needs of the pupils into sufficient account.

2.38 Leaders have drawn up a plan to address the concerns raised in response to allegations about the behaviour of adults in the school. However, this has not been implemented effectively. Governors have not monitored its implementation with sufficient care.

3.   Regulatory action points

3.1   The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7 and 8; NMS 8; EYFS 3.7

*   The school must ensure effective and open communication between those in positions of responsibility so that low-level concerns about adults in the school are managed effectively and patterns are identified [paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.7].

*   The school must ensure that when low-level concerns are registered about adults working in the school, external advice is sought in line with school policy [paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.7].

*   The school must ensure that when allegations and low-level concerns are received about adults working in the school, associated safeguarding risks to pupils are identified and mitigated [paragraphs 7(a) and (b), 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.7].

*   Governors must ensure that their oversight of safeguarding is sufficiently robust and detailed to identify inconsistencies in the management of low-level concerns about adults working in the school [paragraphs 7(a) and (b) and 8(a) and (b); NMS 8.1; EYFS 3.7].

ISSR Part 3, Risk assessment, paragraph 16; NMS 9

*   The school must ensure that the potential safeguarding risks to pupils on residential trips are discussed, identified and mitigated effectively [paragraph 16(a) and (b); NMS 9.3 and, for the same reason, paragraph 8(b)].

ISSR Part 8, Quality of leadership and management, paragraph 34; NMS 2

*   The school must ensure that leaders and managers demonstrate sufficient skills and knowledge in regard to safeguarding and risk assessment so that the independent school standards are met consistently and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); NMS 2.1, 2.2 to 2.5 and 2.7].

*   Governors must exercise active oversight of the implementation of plans drawn up by leaders in response to the findings of governor investigations [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); NMS 2.1, 2.2, 2.4 and 2.5].

4. Summary of evidence

4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head and other senior leaders, and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors. They visited different areas of the school and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.