



**Additional Inspection Report**

**Appleford School**

**July 2024**

## School's details

<b>School</b>	Appleford School			
<b>DfE number</b>	865/6008			
<b>Address</b>	Appleford School Elston Lane Shrewton Salisbury Wiltshire SP3 4HL			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01980 621020			
<b>Email address</b>	headspa@appleford.wilts.sch.uk			
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr David King			
<b>Chair of proprietors</b>	Dr Peter Gardner			
<b>Proprietor</b>	Appleford School			
<b>Age range</b>	7 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	156			
	<b>Day pupils</b>	102	<b>Boarders</b>	54
	<b>Prep</b>	34	<b>Seniors</b>	122
<b>Date of inspection</b>	8 July 2024			

## 1. Introduction

### Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Appleford School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school catering for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), in particular, dyslexia and associated learning needs. Founded in 1988, the school has a Christian ethos and is located on an eight-acre rural site. The school is divided into two sections: the prep school for pupils aged 7 to 13; and the senior school for those aged 13 to 18. The school is proprietorial, with limited company status, and has an advisory board. All pupils require support for SEND. Education, health and care (EHC) plans are in place for 140 pupils. No pupils speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a material change inspection in July 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). Boarding was not inspected.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 2 (curriculum)	<b>Met</b>
Part 1, paragraph 2A (relationships and sex education)	<b>Met</b>
Part 1, paragraph 3 (teaching)	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding)	<b>Not Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 15 (admission and attendance registers)	<b>Met</b>
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	<b>Not met</b>
Part 4, paragraph 18 - 21 (checking of members of staff)	<b>Not met</b>
Part 5, paragraph 25 (maintenance of premises)	<b>Met</b>
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	<b>Met</b>
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	<b>Not Met</b>

## 2. Inspection findings

### Quality of education provided – curriculum [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2]

- 2.1 The school meets the standard.
- 2.2 The school has recently revised its curriculum policy and planning effectively, including for personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils are provided with appropriate experiences in the required areas of linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. There is a focus on ensuring pupils have secure literacy and numeracy skills which supports pupils in accessing learning across the curriculum.
- 2.3 Dedicated PSHE lessons for all year groups and comprehensive careers education for secondary pupils support pupils in preparing for life in British society. Planning effectively takes into account pupils' individual needs and starting points. Suitably aspirational targets motivate pupils, who have appropriate opportunities to learn and make progress. Many attain above national averages in their GCSE and vocational examinations.
- 2.4 Pupils with EHC plans are monitored closely by relevant staff to ensure that statutory requirements are met and that pupils have appropriate targets.

### Quality of education provided – relationships and sex education (RSE) [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A]

- 2.5 The school meets the standard.
- 2.6 The scheme for RSE has been reviewed recently and is in line with statutory guidance. Parents have been consulted appropriately and the school's policy in relation to RSE is available on the school's website. Lessons in RSE are taught by suitably qualified and experienced staff with the requisite skills and knowledge to teach PSHE and RSE. Specific time is allocated to RSE as part of the timetable as well as other opportunities for discussion being provided, including during tutor time. This ensures that the RSE curriculum is implemented consistently.
- 2.7 Assessment of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to RSE is in the early stages of development. Older pupils speak with appropriate understanding and maturity regarding a range of issues including boundaries, consent and abusive relationships. They say that they find the RSE lessons helpful and that they can discuss any issues or questions they may have, confident that the staff will listen and respond.

### Quality of education provided – teaching [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 3]

- 2.8 The school meets the standard.
- 2.9 Leaders have recently reviewed lesson planning to ensure that plans consistently take into account schemes of work, examination requirements and the needs of individual pupils. Centralised tracking of pupil progress and attainment enables leaders to implement appropriate interventions and support, and to monitor their impact. This is particularly effective in mathematics and science and is being developed further in other subjects. Pupils are clear with regard to their examination targets and are motivated to achieve them. Teachers have extensive knowledge of special needs and the individual needs of the pupils in the school. They use a range of resources and techniques to support learning including supportive questioning, providing visual aids and notes, use of colour and structuring learning into manageable sections. Teachers continually assess pupils' understanding and

make adjustments to support their learning. Teaching enables pupils to make good progress according to their ability.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]**

- 2.10 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.11 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding. However, there are significant weaknesses in relation to the implementation of the policy, statutory guidance and safeguarding procedures. Consequently, the standards in relation to safeguarding are not met and the culture of safeguarding is not secure throughout the school.
- 2.12 Although the proprietor is trained in safeguarding and receives regular reports and updates in relation to safeguarding from school leaders and from members of the advisory board, the monitoring of safeguarding is not sufficiently rigorous in evaluating actual practice, records and lessons learnt.
- 2.13 A comprehensive safeguarding review has been undertaken with the local safeguarding partnership. The school has acted upon recommendations in the review. However, there remain outstanding issues to be addressed that impact on the extent to which the school meets the independent school standards.
- 2.14 Although electronic records in relation to safeguarding are detailed with appropriate confidentiality levels and are continually reviewed by the safeguarding team, staff do not always recognise when concerns and incidents must be referred to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) or to the local authority designated officer (LADO). Consequently, timely referrals to external agencies have not been made in response to safeguarding concerns and disclosures when it was essential to have done so.
- 2.15 Members of the safeguarding team are trained to the appropriate level for their roles and are members of the senior management team. Staff have received safeguarding training and updates including in relation to the Prevent duty. Consistent and effective implementation of the safeguarding policy and procedures detailed in training is not in place.
- 2.16 The school has recently begun to maintain a suitable low-level concerns record. Details with regard to actions taken and lessons learnt are now recorded. Staff are now more confident to make self-referrals and to consider with leaders appropriate actions to be taken to address the issues that have been raised. However, they are less confident about making low-level concerns in relation to other adults working with pupils as this practice is not embedded throughout the school.
- 2.17 Staff do not always implement the school's safer recruitment policy effectively. Details of online searches conducted as part of suitability checks are not recorded appropriately.
- 2.18 Members of the safeguarding team liaise regularly with staff responsible for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and other staff who support pupils pastorally and in relation to their mental wellbeing. Detailed and suitable individual plans are implemented if there are concerns regarding a pupil's wellbeing.
- 2.19 Pupils identified a range of staff and trusted adults they can talk to if they are worried or concerned. Pupils are given guidance about how to stay safe through their PSHE and RSE lessons, including online. They are confident of the suitable actions to take including not responding to messages from people they do not know and not sharing personal information or passwords. The use of technology is safeguarded appropriately, including through effective monitoring and filtering of internet access.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – admission and attendance registers [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15]**

- 2.20 The school meets the standard.
- 2.21 The school maintains appropriate admission and attendance registers. Attendance of individuals is monitored continuously by the safeguarding team, staff with specialist knowledge of SEND, and leaders.
- 2.22 Overall, attendance by pupils is satisfactory, although attendance in one year group in the senior school is currently slightly lower due to non-attendance by a small number of pupils with SEND. The school has appropriate individual plans in place to support pupils who struggle to attend school and who need home learning or alternative provision. There is regular liaison with these pupils and their parents with weekly monitoring by specialist staff, with reports to leaders. Pastoral support from form teachers and support from the emotional literacy support staff contributes to enabling pupils to attend school.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16]**

- 2.23 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.24 Leaders have not assessed risk effectively or implemented appropriate mitigating actions in all instances where safeguarding concerns have been raised. The school has suitable risk assessments in place in relation to health and safety, the premises and for aspects relating to pupils who have SEND.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21]**

- 2.25 The school does not meet the standards.
- 2.26 Appropriate pre-employment checks have been conducted in relation to identity, qualifications, DBS, barred list check, right to work in the UK, overseas check, references, employment history and medical fitness. Checks in relation to prohibition from management and prohibition from teaching have not been conducted in some cases in line with statutory requirements.
- 2.27 An electronic single central register (SCR) is maintained. The structure and format of the record is appropriate. Dates when checks have been completed have been entered accurately for most checks. However, these are not recorded consistently in relation to checks for prohibition from teaching and/or prohibition from management.
- 2.28 Recently appointed staff responsible for human resources and maintaining the SCR have attended suitable training and are gaining confidence in understanding the statutory requirements. Monitoring of recruitment procedures and records is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the standard is met consistently.

### **Premises and accommodation – maintenance [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 25]**

- 2.29 The school meets the standard.
- 2.30 During the inspection the proprietor responded to the DfE's request for confirmation regarding cladding on the premises. The school does not have external cladding and appropriate fire risk assessments are in place.

**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.

**Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]**

- 2.32 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.33 Monitoring of the effectiveness of the implementation of the school's safeguarding, recruitment and risk assessment policies lack sufficient rigour. The proprietor has not ensured that leaders and managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge of the standards and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the standards are met consistently, and so that they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.

### 3. Regulatory action points

3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

#### **ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety, paragraph 7**

- The school must ensure that safeguarding concerns it receives, including disclosures from pupils, are referred to the appropriate agency without delay [paragraphs 7(a) and (b)].
- The school must ensure that low level concerns are recorded and managed in line with statutory guidance [paragraphs 7(a) and (b)].
- The school must ensure that details of online searches undertaken during pre-employment checks are kept in staff files [paragraphs 7(a) and (b)].
- The proprietor must exercise suitable oversight of safeguarding to ensure that all statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding are met consistently and a secure culture of safeguarding is promoted and maintained throughout the school [paragraphs 7(a) and (b)].

#### **ISSR Part 3, risk assessment paragraph 16**

- The school must ensure that suitable risk assessments covering the safeguarding and welfare of individual pupils are completed and implemented consistently [paragraph 16(a) and (b)].

#### **ISSR Part 4, Suitability of staff, paragraphs 18 - 21**

- The school must ensure that every member of staff appointed to carry out teaching activities has been checked against the list of prohibited teachers before they begin work [paragraph 18(2)(b)].
- The school must ensure that every senior manager has been checked against the list of those prohibited from management before they begin work, including any promoted to management positions [paragraph 18(2)(b)].
- The school must ensure that the dates when employment checks are conducted are recorded accurately on the single central record, in particular those relating to checks of the lists of those prohibited from teaching and/or management [paragraph 21(3)(a)(iii) and 21(3)(b)].

#### **ISSR Part 8, Quality of leadership and management, paragraph 34**

- The proprietor must ensure that leaders and managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role, fulfil their responsibilities effectively and promote the wellbeing of all pupils so that the standards are met consistently [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].

## **4. Summary of evidence**

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the proprietor. They visited different areas of the school, observed lessons and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.