



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Progress Monitoring Inspection Report

Reading Blue Coat School

November 2022

School's details

School	Reading Blue Coat School			
DfE number	872/6006			
Registered charity number	1087839			
Address	Reading Blue Coat School Holme Park Sonning Lane Sonning on Thames Reading Berkshire RG4 6SU			
Telephone number	0118 9441005			
Email address	reception@rbcs.org.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Peter Thomas			
Chair of governors	Mr Peter Bertram			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	794			
	Lower School	195	Middle School	326
	Sixth Form	273		
Date of inspection	9 November 2022			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Reading Blue Coat School is an independent day school located in Sonning, near Reading. The school is registered for male pupils aged between 11 and 18, and for female pupils in the sixth form. The school is operated through a charitable company limited by guarantee and is overseen by the board of governors who are also members of the company. The school has 18 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or English as an additional language (EAL). The school's previous inspection was a material change inspection in October 2021.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced progress monitoring inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the material change inspection on 21 October 2021 and to confirm the proposed material change to increase capacity to 850 pupils. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs).

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 2 (curriculum)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision)	Met
Part 5, paragraph 25 (maintenance of premises and accommodation)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints procedure)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

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

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 Written policies, plans and schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. The school has suitable arrangements to identify pupils' individual needs. Curriculum arrangements for those identified with SEND are effective. They include suitable support within classes and/or on an individual basis as required. This ensures that these pupils receive full access to the curriculum.

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

Safeguarding policy

- 2.3 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.4 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

- 2.5 The school meets the standard.
- 2.6 The school's implementation of its safeguarding procedures ensures appropriate support for all pupils' needs, including those with SEND. The school has improved its arrangements for listening to pupils effectively since the previous inspection. Any concerns expressed about child-on-child abuse that are made, including any relating to sexual harassment, now receive an effective and active response, consistent with the school's policy. Pupils confirmed in discussion that they have suitable opportunities to express concerns and that they are listened to.
- 2.7 Staff receive suitable training that includes the full range of safeguarding issues as identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2022. They understand the school's expectations of them as expressed in the staff code of conduct. Staff understand current definitions and guidance relating to child-on-child abuse and recognise the particular vulnerabilities of those with SEND. Staff are suitably trained to recognise the signs of sexual harassment in the behaviour of pupils or staff and implement procedures effectively if allegations are made. In particular, staff understand and implement effectively the school's procedures for dealing with concerns about adults working in the school which do not meet the harms threshold identified in the safeguarding policy.
- 2.8 Leaders have followed proper procedures to report any safeguarding concerns since the previous inspection. They have proceeded in all cases paying due regard to the advice received from the local safeguarding partners and the LADO. Leaders understand the need to report any allegations against staff to the Disqualification and Barring Service (DBS) and/or the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) when appropriate. Records of correspondence with external agencies, including local safeguarding partners show that referrals are made promptly.
- 2.9 Minutes of governors' and leaders' meetings confirm that effective review takes place after serious incidents. Governors carry out an effective annual review of safeguarding. The number of safeguarding personnel has been increased to provide sufficient cover for the proposed increase in the number of pupils.

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

- 2.10 The school meets the standard.
- 2.11 The school has a suitable behaviour policy which is implemented consistently and includes the promotion of positive relationships and inclusivity for all members of the community. A record is kept of all sanctions for misbehaviour. These take into account any pupil's individual circumstances, including those pupils with SEND. The record now includes a log of discriminatory incidents. All staff are aware of how to implement the behaviour policy with regard to inappropriate comments made by pupils relating to gender identity or sexual orientation. Where incidents occur which show elements of inappropriate behaviour with regard to gender the school takes appropriate action. The integration of records allows senior leaders to monitor patterns and trends in pupils' behaviour effectively. They then ensure that appropriate adjustments are made to behaviour management strategies.

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

- 2.12 The school meets the standard.
- 2.13 The school has an appropriate policy that includes suitable measures to combat bullying. Procedures enable pupils and staff to report bullying, including any which might occur outside school or via social media. Staff record incidents of bullying appropriately and senior leaders monitor these effectively. Appropriate consideration is given to situations where bullying may be considered to be a safeguarding concern. Staff understand the threshold for reporting bullying as a safeguarding concern. Staff training ensures a clear awareness of the needs and vulnerability to bullying of those with SEND, disabilities or those who identify as LGBTQ+.

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

- 2.14 The school meets the standard.
- 2.15 Senior leaders clearly identify staff supervision duties at all times during the school day, including prior to morning registration and at the end of the extended school day. They ensure appropriate ratios of staff to pupils in all areas of the school at all times. They have analysed behaviour records to identify particular locations that may require increased supervision.

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

- 2.16 The school meets the standard.
- 2.17 The school site is maintained effectively to a standard commensurate with health and safety requirements. In response to the action required by the previous inspection, senior leaders commissioned an external audit of site security. They have acted on the findings effectively to secure external doors and ensure appropriate management of all visitors to the site.

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

- 2.18 The school meets the standard.
- 2.19 Governors and leaders implement effectively a suitable procedure to handle complaints. This includes the opportunity for complaints to be dealt with on an informal basis and a suitable procedure to consider formal complaints. A written record of formal complaints is maintained as required. This includes findings that are appropriately communicated to the complainant. Governors and leaders

undertake a systematic review of all formal complaints to determine actions taken and lessons learned, regardless of whether they are upheld.

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

2.20 The school meets the standard.

2.21 The school's leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are consistently met. The action plan prepared following the previous inspection has been implemented effectively. In particular, the governing body has expanded the capacity of the leadership team to provide suitable focus on pupil welfare, health and safety. Senior leaders have ensured the promotion of the school as a fully inclusive society. Leaders and governors have prepared effectively for the proposed increase in the number of pupils as the school phases in full co-education.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Summary of findings

- 4.1 The school has effectively implemented the action plan following the previous inspection with the result that all standards are met. In particular, the school currently meets the regulatory requirements with regard to safeguarding, the promotion of good behaviour, maintenance of the premises and leadership and management. Provision in all areas of the regulations is likely to be compliant when additional numbers of pupils are admitted.

Recommendation

- 4.2 It is recommended that the application for the material change be approved. The school has taken all appropriate measures to support the proposed increase in the number of pupils attending the school to 850. Appropriate arrangements remain in place to support the phased introduction of full co-education.

5. Summary of evidence

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

Inspectors

Mr Roger Tapping

Reporting inspector

Mr Michael Evans

Assistant reporting inspector