



ISI

Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Progress Monitoring Inspection Report

Blundell's School

April 2023

School's details

School	Blundell's School		
DfE number	878/6011		
Registered charity number	1081249		
Address	Blundell's School Blundell's Road Tiverton Devon EX16 4DN		
Telephone number	01884 232543		
Email address	info@blundells.org		
Head	Mr Bart Wielenga		
Chair of governors	Mr Nigel Hall		
Proprietor	Blundell's School		
Age range	11 to 18		
Number of pupils on roll	625		
	Day pupils	376	Boarders 249
	Seniors	432	Sixth Form 193
Date of inspection	27 April 2023		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Blundell’s School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. The school was originally founded in 1604 and is overseen by a board of governors. Blundell’s Preparatory School is located on the same campus but is inspected separately. Boarders are accommodated in seven houses on the school site. There are 78 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), none of whom has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Ninety-one pupils speak English as an additional language. The school’s previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection, which took place in September 2022.

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 regulatory compliance inspection on 22 to 23 September 2022. The inspection focused on the school’s compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2022.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of boarders); NMS 8	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18–21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	Met

2. Inspection findings

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

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 meets the standards.
- 2.4 The school implements its policy effectively to safeguard the welfare of pupils, including boarders. It acts in the best interests of the child and provides effective mechanisms to enable pupils to share any worries that they might have. Pupils who spoke to the inspector said that they have staff that they can talk to and that the school responds to their concerns. Scrutiny of safeguarding records confirms this. It shows that the school implements appropriate and locally agreed inter-agency procedures to respond to any concerns raised, including those relating to child-on-child abuse and sexual harassment or sexual violence. Pupils affected by any such issues are provided with appropriate support. The school also responds effectively should any safeguarding concerns or allegations against staff arise, including working with appropriate external agencies such as the LADO and the police. Pupils confirmed that the school teaches them how to keep themselves safe, including when online. The school filters and monitors internet use effectively. Staff, including the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSLs, are appropriately trained and understand their safeguarding responsibilities, the school's safeguarding procedures, and the expectations of the staff code of conduct. The safeguarding team provide sufficient cover for their role, including in boarding. Governors are trained appropriately in safeguarding and maintain a comprehensive and regular overview of the safeguarding policy and procedures.
- 2.5 Leaders now ensure that the school's safer recruitment procedures are suitable and effective. In particular, since the previous inspection, the school ensures that, when appropriate, it carries out prohibition from teaching checks on staff before they commence working at the school, and prohibition from management checks on relevant staff and on governors. In addition, if an enhanced criminal record certificate has not been seen before staff commence work, the school carries out a separate barred list check and puts an appropriate risk assessment in place. The school also ensures that it receives at least two suitable references for all staff before they start working at the school. The school maintains evidence of the safer recruitment checks undertaken in staff files in line with current statutory guidance.

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

- 2.6 The school meets the standards.
- 2.7 The school now conducts appropriate safer recruitment checks on staff and governors. In particular, since the previous inspection, the school ensures that, where relevant, it checks qualifications for all staff, including those involved in boarding. The school also ensures that an enhanced criminal record certificate is obtained for all members of staff, including those in boarding, and that all relevant checks are undertaken before a member of staff begins work at the school. The school ensures the accurate recording of all checks that are required on the single central register of appointments.

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

- 2.8 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; NMS 2]

- 2.9 The school meets the standards.
- 2.10 The proprietor ensures that school leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently, and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted. In particular, the proprietor and school leaders have fully implemented the action plan submitted following the previous inspection.

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 the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors. He talked with groups of pupils and scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.

Inspector

Steven Popper

Reporting inspector