



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Material Change Inspection Report

Dean Close Preparatory School

March 2023

School's details

School	Dean Close Preparatory School			
DfE number	916/6034			
Registered charity number	1086829			
Address	Dean Close Preparatory School Lansdown Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL51 6QS			
Telephone number	01242 512217			
Email address	dcpsoffice@deanclose.org.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Paddy Moss			
Chair of governors	Mrs Kathryn Carden			
Proprietor	The Dean Close Foundation			
Age range (including Pre-prep)	2 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	476			
	Day pupils	374	Boarders	102
	EYFS	90	Pre-prep	64
	Juniors	174	Seniors	148
Date of inspection	8 March 2023			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Dean Close Preparatory School, and its associated pre-preparatory school, is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between two and thirteen years. The school is located in Cheltenham and is part of the Dean Close Foundation. The warden is the chief executive officer (CEO) of the foundation and reports to a board of trustees who are responsible for governance. The two schools consist of an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting; a pre-prep for pupils in Years 1 and 2; a junior section for those in Years 3 to 6; and a senior section for those in Years 7 and 8. The prep school provides boarding for pupils from the age of seven on both a full-time and flexible basis. They have 40 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), none of whom has an education, health and care plan. There are 17 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The schools' previous inspections were focused compliance and educational quality inspections in March 2019. The application for material change covers both schools.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the proposal to increase the total capacity across all parts of the school from 460 pupils to 510. The inspection 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;	Met
Part 3 paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 9	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety); NMS 10	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision); NMS 20	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 9	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors); NMS 19	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 30 (premises and accommodation); NMS 4	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [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 effectively implements all aspects of its safeguarding policy and provides appropriate support for the needs of pupils, including in boarding and for children in the EYFS. The current arrangements are likely to be suitable to meet the needs of the proposed increase in numbers.
- 2.5 Staff, including senior leaders, listen to the concerns of pupils effectively. Pupils confirmed this to be the case and say that the school responds to any issues promptly and takes action when necessary. This is confirmed by records of safeguarding which are detailed and stored confidentially. Pupils say that they feel safe and would not hesitate to report any concerns, mentioning a wide range of adults to whom they could speak with confidence. They feel well educated about the risks of their on-line activity and are fully supportive of the school's policy of no mobile phone use during the school day. The school's online system is effectively filtered and monitored.
- 2.6 The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy are appropriately trained in line with local requirements and statutory guidance. Staff confirm that they are trained effectively and receive regular updates. There are comprehensive records of online and face-to-face training which are held centrally and confirm suitable courses completed, including in Prevent. Staff demonstrate effective knowledge of safeguarding procedures, are aware of how to listen to children and report any concerns that they have. They say that they would report directly to children's services, should the need arise.
- 2.7 Suitable arrangements for the handling of any allegations against staff are included in the safeguarding policy. Staff say that they would not hesitate to use the whistleblowing policy if necessary. They understand how to report any low-level concerns about colleagues and the centrally held log of these confirms suitable use by staff, including self-referrals when appropriate. The school understands the necessity to refer any staff allegations to the LADO promptly and before carrying out any investigation internally.
- 2.8 School governors are trained appropriately and carry out an effective annual review of safeguarding. The safeguarding governors with oversight for the preparatory and pre-preparatory schools are regular visitors who provide appropriate support and challenge to the safeguarding team and report back regularly to the wider governing body.

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

- 2.9 The school meets the standards.
- 2.10 There is an appropriate health and safety policy which is implemented effectively to ensure the safety of pupils. Records show that testing of all utilities is regularly and systematically carried out. Training is comprehensive and staff confirm that they understand the importance of referring any concerns.

Senior leaders and governors monitor any trends in order to mitigate the effects of any incidents. Drop-off and collection for pupils and children in the EYFS are effectively managed. Daily checks of the EYFS setting are carried out to identify any problems. Health and safety arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

- 2.11 In the newly refurbished areas of boarding houses, including the newly converted building for use by flexi-boarders, suitable arrangements are in place to ensure the health and safety of boarders.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12; NMS 10]

- 2.12 The school meets the standards.
- 2.13 The school has a suitable fire prevention strategy; fire risk assessments and evidence of consequent actions shows suitable measures have been taken to reduce any risks identified. Fire procedures are understood by staff and pupils and regular fire drills are undertaken and recorded, including in boarding time. Pupils who flexi-board are given clear instructions about how to exit the boarding house in the case of a fire. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.14 The school meets the standards.
- 2.15 Pupils of all ages in the school are properly supervised by suitably qualified and trained staff. This is the case during breaks and lunchtimes, at the beginning and end of the school day and in the EYFS, where required ratios are always maintained. The school has suitable plans in place to recruit more staff should the increase in numbers necessitate this. Arrangements for the supervision of boarders, including at night, are implemented effectively. The arrangements are likely to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.16 The school meets the standards.
- 2.17 The school has a suitable risk assessment policy and implements it effectively. It ensures that there is a systematic approach to identifying and mitigating risk throughout the school. Appropriate risk assessments are prepared for buildings, including those with specialist uses such as science laboratories, the theatre, and boarding facilities. Similarly effective assessments are made for trips out of school. The arrangements are likely to continue to be sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.18 The school meets the standards.
- 2.19 All required checks on staff, together with checks on contractors and proprietors, are carried out and completed before anyone starts work in the school. They are accurately recorded on the single central register of appointments. Staff recruitment files are well organised and contain all the necessary documents to verify effective recruitment practice.

Premises and accommodation – toilets and changing accommodation; medical facilities; maintenance; acoustics; lighting; water supply and outdoor space; boarding accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23 – 30; NMS 4]

2.20 The school meets the standards.

2.21 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to the standard required by the health and safety executive, acoustics and lighting are appropriate and water provision is adequate. There is suitable outdoor space for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is appropriate. Two boarding houses have been refurbished to change the configuration of sleeping and recreational areas and a flexi-boarding house is now in use, providing suitable accommodation for twelve pupils on any one night. The premises and accommodation are already sufficient to meet the needs of the envisaged increase in pupil numbers. There is currently spare capacity in boarding and in the EYFS building, opened in 2019.

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

2.22 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]

2.23 The school meets the standards.

2.24 Senior leaders and governors monitor safeguarding and welfare arrangements and carry out effective oversight of compliance with the regulatory standards. They fulfil their responsibilities so that the independent school standards are met consistently and they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. They have planned effectively for the proposed increase in pupil numbers so that the standards are likely to continue to be met.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the school's request to increase its capacity to 510 be approved as facilities and systems already in place are likely to be suitable for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the warden. She visited different areas of the school and talked with a group of pupils. She scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.

Inspector

Mrs Kate McCarey

Reporting inspector