



From the Headmaster  
S V Pritt-Roberts,  
B.Ed, M.Ed, N.P.Q.H

# Ellesmere

A 7-18 Co-educational

5 December 2024

Dear Parent,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to share some important news regarding the Independent School Inspectorate (ISI) inspection, at the start of this term, week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> September, which was conducted using the new 2024 framework.

Inspection reports are limited in their linguistic freedom, so not always easy to interpret, particularly as the framework by which we were inspected is new and we are in the early batch of schools to experience it.

The new 2024 ISI standards emphasise a holistic approach to education, focusing not only on academic outcomes but also on the overall well-being and personal development of students. These standards encourage schools to foster an inclusive environment that promotes critical thinking, creativity, and resilience. Additionally, they place a strong emphasis on safeguarding and the quality of pastoral care, ensuring that every child feels valued and supported. By aligning our practices with these new standards, we aim to enhance the educational experience for all our students and prepare them to thrive both in and out of the classroom.

During the inspection, several strengths were highlighted, showcasing the dedication and hard work of our staff and students. The inspectors praised our positive environment and culture, the whole-school approach and commitment to student well-being, and the strong relationships between teachers and students.

- Governors and senior leaders have systematically reviewed the school's safeguarding procedures. This has resulted in, for example, the creation of a larger safeguarding team, and a move to electronic recording. Pupils who need support are quickly identified and concerns managed effectively by safeguarding leaders.
- The quality of relationships between pupils and staff and the pastoral system contributes to an environment in which the concerns of pupils are heard, and appropriate support actioned. Staff are well trained to identify changes in behaviours that might indicate a risk to any aspect of a pupil's wellbeing.
- The curriculum covers all the required areas of learning. In the middle and senior schools, pupils study a range of examination courses matched to their interests and aspirations. These include programmes leading to qualifications at GCSE, A Level, the International Baccalaureate (IB) and BTEC.
- The school's culture is characterised by the respectful approaches and language used in the discussions between staff and pupils. In this way, and through the messages of assemblies and PSHE lessons, pupils deepen their understanding of each other.
- The curriculum effectively guides pupils, including boarders, to recognise potential bullying behaviours in themselves or others. Records show that when bullying is reported, it is dealt with swiftly and appropriately, with support given to both victim and perpetrator. After an appropriate interval, the action taken is evaluated and if necessary, changes made in this area.

The inspection also identified some areas where we did not fully meet the new criteria. We are committed to addressing these points and using the feedback to enhance our practices. If any aspect is not met that judgement triggers an automatic 'not met' in aspects of section one 'Leadership and management, and governance'. Our leadership team is already developing an action plan to ensure that we make the necessary improvements and continue to provide the best possible education for our students.

I have picked out the main points and provided a brief response and, where appropriate, some context.

### Section 2 Education, training and recreation

The report noted that *'Leaders have created a balanced and relevant curriculum that in outline meets the needs of pupils at all ages'*. It confirmed that *'teachers have secure subject knowledge and manage pupils' behaviour effectively and use the wider range of resources available to them appropriately'*.

Inspectors identified good progress, through lesson observations and by talking with pupils, in sixth form and lower school. They noted variation in middle school in that in some areas feedback, whilst regular, can lack detail on what pupils should do to make progress in their learning. It was noted that in some lessons observed there was a focus on consolidation work for those not finding a topic straightforward, which the Inspector concluded limits the progress of others and therefore prevents this area being fully met.

The response to this is a sharper focus on pace and challenge so that consolidation work will be more individualised and set out of taught lesson time. There is ongoing work with regard to the data we have on prior attainment and progress tracking. We will provide greater evidence of that in our action plan that we now do for the Department of Education. A new role to support the reviewing and strengthening this area has been established, effective January 2025.

### Section 3 Physical and mental health and emotional well-being

The report notes that *'the school's culture is characterised by the respectful approaches and language used in the discussions between staff and pupils. In this way, and through the messages of assemblies and PSHE lessons, pupils deepen their understanding of each other'*. It was pleasing to read the comment *'In line with the school's aim, they (pupils) start to develop into morally grounded human beings'*. The inspectors confirm that the *'school has a taught and recreational curriculum that is accessible to all pupils regardless of gender, ability, or special educational need and /or disability. Hence it satisfies its duties in terms of the Equality Act, 2010'*.

In reviewing the PHSE programme the Inspectors concluded that the school had not overtly communicated to parents the relationships and sex education curriculum. They acknowledged that the information was available to parents on the website, but it had not been directly communicated by letter. This has been rectified by the correspondence you received from the relevant Heads of Section (Lower, Middle and Sixth Form) earlier this term which signposted what we teach on relationships and sex education in more detail.

The report also stated that the school does not teach about respect in terms of LGBT relationships. The topic is taught within the PHSE programme, however the approach taken did not satisfy the inspectors that this curriculum area was sufficiently met. We had purchased and implemented, for the current academic year, a new set of resources that is designed to meet the statutory guidance for PHSE. Consequently, there will be further cross referencing of the statutory guidance on the teaching of respect in term of LGBT relationships with the resources procured.

The report states that *'The school meets the requirements of fire and health and safety legislation stating that Leaders quickly identify and mitigate any risk to pupils. As a result, the wellbeing of pupils is promoted by the provision of a safe and stimulating environment'*.

#### Section 4 Social and economic education and contribution to society

The report notes *'Respect between pupils is positive and the quality of interactions is evidence of the school's successful promotion of values such as tolerance and empathy. Despite gaps in RSE teaching, pupils' attitudes reflect how much they value an inclusive and diverse community'*. The gap referred to here is not so much the teaching but the comment by the Inspectors in section 3 that the school had not 'clearly communicated with parents' which has since been rectified.

All standards in section 4 were recorded by the Inspectors as met.

#### Safeguarding

The report by the Inspectors noted that *'Leaders' approach to the practice and implementation of safeguarding is effective'*. The report states that policies and procedures are in line with the latest statutory advice. Leaders understand the action necessary around attendance, the safeguarding team (Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a large team of Deputies (DDSL) are appropriately trained and respond quickly to potential safeguarding issues across the school.

Boarding standards fall within this section. Inspectors noted that all but one point on boarding standards were met. The one area challenged was the naming of the independent listener. This does not affect safeguarding across the whole of the school.

In boarding it is a requirement that there is an independent listener. We had appointed an independent listener who is a qualified Counsellor. As a Counsellor she engaged in some occasional work for the school and therefore sends an invoice in for that work. The inspectors concluded that this work meant she was not truly independent. Action was taken immediately, and the independent listener was changed to a volunteer who has no financial connection with the College. Nevertheless, it remains in the report as an aspect not met, triggering the comment in Leadership and Governance criticising governors and leaders for 'not rigorously checking implementation'.

As I am sure you realise, the report is a snapshot of what the inspectors see on the day that they are in the school. This matter of independency was resolved within 24 hours. The decision to retain this point in the final report was formally challenged through the ISI complaints procedure with a request that the new rule of proportionality be applied, which is central feature of the new framework for Inspections. This led to the delay in finalising the report and why I am only now able to share it with you.

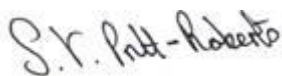
I would like to express my gratitude for your continued support and involvement in our school community. The inspection process is a valuable opportunity for us to reflect on our practices and identify areas for improvement. We believe that this process will ultimately lead to a stronger, more effective school environment.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the inspection further, please feel free to reach out.

The link to the report on the website is [here](#)

With all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Ellesmere College, Ellesmere, Shropshire SY12 9AB  
Tel: 01691 622321 Fax: 01691 624458  
hmsecretary@ellesmere.com www.ellesmere.com  
A Woodard School

Registered Charity number 1103049 Ellesmere College Ltd. is a company, registered in England, no: 5066406