

The Mount School

Dalton Terrace, York, North Yorkshire, YO24 4DD

Date of visit 06 May 2016

Purpose of visit

This was an unannounced visit carried out at the request of the DfE to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the regulatory compliance inspection on 8th and 9th December 2015. The focus of the visit was on the safeguarding of pupils, the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors and the quality of leadership and management.

Characteristics of the School

Located close to the city of York, The Mount School offers an independent education to boys aged 2 to 11 years and girls 2 to 18 years. Girls can board from Year 5 onwards. The school was founded by The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in 1785 and moved to its present site in 1856. The school is an educational charity, governed by a committee of 13 members who have responsibility for directing the school in accordance with the founding principles of the Quakers.

The school has 283 pupils, including 38 children in the EYFS, some of whom attend the nursery part time until they join the reception class. The 79 boarders are accommodated in two houses, one for girls up to Year 11 and one for sixth form girls. One pupil has an education health care plan (EHC) and 36 pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). 62 pupils, mainly boarders, have English as an additional language (EAL).

Inspection findings

ISSR Part 3 - Welfare, Health and Safety - Safeguarding [paragraph 7(a) and (b) and paragraph 8(a) and (b), and for the same reason, NMS 14.1]

The school meets the regulations and standard.

The safeguarding policy (dated January 2016) available to parents on the school website meets requirements and has been approved and adopted by the committee (board of governors).

Two references have been received for all staff working at the school, including those employed by the external catering company, and their date of receipt recorded accurately on the single central register (SCR). Pre-employment history checks on all staff working at the

school have also been carried out and have, together with the references, been checked and signed off by the principal.

To ensure the appointment process is rigorous and that all necessary checks are carried out a single system has been introduced for all appointments including staff, volunteers and governors. A pro-forma listing all possible checks is completed by designated staff and the information transferred to the SCR where relevant. When the pro-forma is complete it is checked and signed off by the principal and only then may a person start work. Scrutiny of completed pro-forma and SCR entries showed that the system had been applied effectively in the case of recent appointments including that of a governor.

The principal and the administration surrounding recruitment have been trained on all aspects of the appointments process, including carrying out and recording pre-employment checks and the robust use of the new pro-forma. In discussion they showed a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the regulatory requirements and of the school's new systems for carrying out and recording checks, including when relevant disqualification by association.

ISSR Part 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [paragraph 18(2)(b)(c)(f), paragraph 18(3), paragraph 20(6)(b)(i), paragraph 21(3)(a)(i)(iii)(iv)(vii), (b), (5)(a)(i) and (6) and for the same reasons, NMS 14.1]

The school meets the regulations and standard.

The new requirement, as part of the school's updated employment process, for designated staff to complete a comprehensive pre-appointment pro-forma which when complete is signed off by the principal ensures that all legal requirements are met for staff, volunteers and governors prior to their joining the school. The pro-forma includes a detailed record of all checks undertaken including identity, medical fitness, right to work in UK and where relevant qualifications. The personnel files of all current staff have been rigorously checked and any historical errors and omissions recorded and rectified where possible. Additional checks have also been carried out on all current staff in regulated activity, including peripatetic staff and sports coaches, to ensure their working at the school does not contravene a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order or any other relevant disqualification, prohibition or restriction. Scrutiny of records and discussions with the principal and staff showed that the new system has been fully implemented and is effective in ensuring the suitability of all staff, including those who have been at the school for some time.

The single central register (SCR) has been reorganised and now provides a detailed and accurate record of all checks that have been carried out on all current staff, volunteers and governors. Clear explanations are given for any omissions or anomalies. The SCR accurately reflects the contents of personnel files. The principal routinely checks the SCR with administrative staff. Notes of these meetings show that she carries out random sampling of entries and the corresponding personnel files and also ensures that anyone responsible for carrying out checks has the knowledge and understanding to carry out their role effectively. A governor has recently been designated special responsibility for checking the SCR and monitoring the effectiveness of the systems. She is currently undergoing training for this role.

ISSR Part 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools [paragraph 34(1)(a) and (b)]

The school meets the regulation.

The on-going review of governance has identified a number of training needs, particularly with regard to regulatory compliance and monitoring, of both the whole committee and of individual members with designated roles. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding

has undergone safer recruitment training and the governor with responsibility for monitoring the SCR and recruitment checks is currently undergoing training for her role. The whole committee will be given governor training later this term on the responsibilities under Part 8 of the regulations. Scrutiny of committee meeting minutes and discussion with a governor show a good understanding of the role and responsibilities of governors and a determination to deepen their understanding and hence ability to carry out their role more effectively.

Since January 2016 members of the management and leadership teams have attended weekly compliance training sessions led by the principal, focused mainly to date on health and safety. Records are kept of those attending and of the areas covered. Staff indicated in discussion that they found the sessions beneficial and felt that the staff body as a whole are now much more aware of their responsibility for implementation of policy.

The recently established health and safety committee chaired by the principal and with governor representation meets for the first time later this term. The committee will evaluate and monitor all aspects of health and safety across the school and report regularly to the governors.

Regulatory action points

The school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.