



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Report for an Additional Inspection

Clifton College

November 2021

School's details

School College	Clifton College			
DfE number	801/6000			
Registered charity number	311735			
Address	Clifton College Guthrie Road Clifton Bristol BS8 3EZ			
Telephone number	0117 315 7000			
Email address	info@cliftoncollege.com			
Headteacher	Dr Tim Greene			
Chair of governors	Mr Nick Tolchard			
Age range	2 to 19			
Number of pupils on roll	1212			
	Day pupils	823	Boarders	389
	EYFS	84	Preparatory	365
	Seniors	425	Sixth Form	338
Date of visit	4 to 5 November 2021			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Clifton College is an independent co-educational day and boarding school located in Clifton, Bristol. It is a registered charity governed by an elected council. The school was founded in 1862 offering education for day boys with a house for optional boarding attached. The school became co-educational in 1987 and comprises: a pre-prep for pupils aged two to eight years which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); the prep school for those aged eight to thirteen; and the upper school for pupils aged from thirteen to nineteen. Boarders have accommodation in two houses in the preparatory school and seven houses in the upper school. All day pupils belong to a day house. The school has 102 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities, of whom one has an education, health and care plan. There are 335 pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in December 2019.

Purpose of the visit

- 1.2 This was an unannounced additional inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) which focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs), the National Minimum Standards for Boarding 2015 and the EYFS Statutory Requirements. The inspection was asked to focus specifically on the school's provision for, and implementation and teaching of, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) excluding other curriculum areas.

Regulations which were the focus of the visit	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraph 2 (curriculum)	Met
Part 1, paragraph 2(A) (relationships and sex education)	Met
Part 1, paragraph 3 (teaching)	Met
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils); NMS 17	Met
Part 3, paragraphs 7 (safeguarding) and 8 (safeguarding of borders); NMS 11	Met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour); NMS 12	Met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying); NMS 12	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils); NMS 15	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment); NMS 6	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints); NMS 18	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 13	Met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – curriculum, and relationships and sex education [ISSR Part 1, paragraphs 2 and 2(A)]

- 2.1 The school meets the standards.
- 2.2 The school has an effective programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) which has been revised for the current academic year. The scheme of work for PSHE also incorporates the DfE's statutory guidance for relationships and sex education (RSE). A synopsis of the RSE policy is available to parents on the school's website and the head of PSHE has consulted parents, pupils and staff, and taken their views into consideration. Parents, in response to inspection questionnaires, indicated they are very supportive of the RSE curriculum. Inspection evidence shows that schemes of work aim to allow most pupils to gain knowledge and understanding of personal and social skills in order that they develop positive attitudes and values and a greater understanding of the importance of appropriate age-related relationships between each other. The initial PSHE period allocation system did not ensure that all pupils covered the RSE curriculum to the same depth. A number of pupils, most especially in Years 10 and 11, confirmed to inspectors that their lessons did not always take place on a regular weekly cycle. Teachers reported that during COVID-19 lockdown periods it was more difficult to engage in meaningful discussions on more sensitive RSE topics. The school recognised these as issues and adjusted the topics covered during the remote learning period, prioritising those related to mental health and well-being issues. It then ensured that the required RSE content was taught when pupils returned to the school after lockdown. In respect of the delivery of the RSE curriculum in particular, leaders have identified the key areas for improvement and plans to address these are in process of being implemented. The senior leaders and governors have recognised weaknesses in the current curriculum coverage and provision and effective planning has identified how to teach PSHE lessons, incorporating the appropriate RSE components, on a weekly timetabled basis for all Year 7 to 13 pupils. This was planned to commence in September 2022 but during the course of the visit the school brought forward this start date to January 2022.

Quality of education provided – teaching [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 3]

- 2.3 The school meets the standard.
- 2.4 In line with improvements in the curriculum delivery, effective plans are in now in place to prioritise the teaching of RSE and in doing so raise the importance of RSE to that of a key curriculum core subject. In the prep school, lessons in RSE are taught as single sex groups in Year 4 to 6 and to mixed groups in Year 7 and 8 by an assigned PSHE teacher whereas in the upper school from Year 9 onwards teaching is by teachers who are not subject-specific PSHE teachers. In order to complement the new PSHE and RSE teaching programmes the school has established plans for RSE teaching by subject-specific PSHE teachers across the senior school from January 2022. Schemes of work take into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of all pupils and does not undermine the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils' progress is assessed effectively, and planning responds to this. Teaching endeavours to prepare pupils effectively for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society. The schemes of work reflect the school's aims, by encouraging respect for people and pay particular regard to the protected characteristics which are set out in the Equality Act 2010. Teaching supports those pupils with an EHC plan and others with SEND appropriately so that all pupils can access the PSHE and RSE curriculum.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5; NMS 17]

- 2.5 The school meets the standards.
- 2.6 The school's effective programme for PSHE and RSE is supported additionally by a relatively new initiative, the equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging (EDIB) group formed of both staff and pupils. This provision has had a significant influence already on pupil attitudes towards diversity and is contributing positively to the changing culture evident in the school. Pupils in discussion groups confirmed this was the case. Members of minority groups interviewed confirmed that they feel themselves to be fully integrated into the school community and that diversity is an accepted part of the school's culture. Within the PSHE curriculum, principles and values are actively promoted to encourage pupils to be responsible, tolerant and law-abiding citizens and this is reinforced through assemblies, house group meetings and the input provided by specialist guest speakers. Pupils in discussion were mostly positive about the contents of the PSHE and RSE programmes. A minority of pupils, mostly in the middle years of the senior school, stated that some teaching lacks interest and does not enable them to gain new knowledge, however the majority of pupils in discussions stated that they were satisfied with their teaching. Scrutiny of the teaching programme and pupils' work in PSHE confirmed that teaching was effective and, in most cases, allowed the pupils to have an input into PSHE course content. Pupils report that topical media issues relating to pupil relationships are discussed within the PSHE curriculum and senior leaders address such issues in both assemblies and house meetings. Teachers have all received suitable training in the delivery of PSHE and RSE and scrutiny of programme resources confirmed that the subject is well resourced. Pupils in discussion stated that their courses were having a positive impact on the school culture. Older pupils noted that the school has changed markedly, and they perceive it as a more caring and integrated community in which healthy relationships between and across genders are now seen as the norm. Inspection evidence supports this view. Inclusivity and diversity are further promoted successfully by the existence of active LGBTQ and pride groups in the school, which are mostly pupil led.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 11]**Safeguarding policy**

- 2.7 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.8 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

- 2.9 The school meets the standards.
- 2.10 The school implements its safeguarding arrangements effectively, including in the EYFS. All staff have received recent comprehensive training with regard to their safeguarding responsibilities; all training, including that for those with designated safeguarding responsibilities, is in line with the requirements of the local safeguarding partnership. Staff new to the school, including teaching assistants and gap students, receive appropriate induction training. All staff have been trained in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2021 including Part 1 and Annexe B. Their understanding of what they have read is checked appropriately by the designated safeguarding lead (DSL). In interviews, staff showed suitable understanding of the training they receive in relation to safeguarding and child protection matters. Training records confirm that all staff have undertaken safeguarding training and that they

have been suitably trained in their duty to prevent radicalisation. Staff training includes updates of the school's safeguarding policy, the staff code of conduct and procedures for reporting any allegations against adults working in the school. Regular briefings ensure that staff and the governors are kept up to date with new legislation. All staff including governors have received recent training on how to understand, identify and respond to sexual harassment, sexual violence, peer on peer sexual abuse and on-line sexual abuse incidents and training records confirm this. The school has a mental health accredited trainer who is able to deliver training, such that all day and boarding houses have a suitably qualified staff mental health first aider. A voluntary team of sixth-form pupils act as mental health peer supporters and there are three professionally qualified counsellors on the school staff

- 2.11 The school has a strong working relationship with external agencies and the school, in particular the newly appointed designated safeguarding lead (DSL), liaises promptly with the relevant agencies. In particular, it seeks prompt advice should there be a concern about a pupil or allegation against any adult working with children. This ensures that appropriate and swift action is taken in connection with any safeguarding matters that arise. Pupils in discussions confirmed that they feel safe in the school and are confident that should safeguarding issues arise they would be dealt with swiftly and appropriately. They confirmed that should they have a concern or worry they are confident that staff are available to listen to them, that they receive a response, and that appropriate action is taken where necessary. This was supported by documentation seen during the visit in connection with the reporting and recording of safeguarding incidents. Such recording has significantly improved since previous inspection visits.
- 2.12 Suitable action is taken in any instances of serious peer-on-peer abuse, including any related to sexual harassment. Pupils considered that there are very few cases of harmful sexual behaviour and those that do occur are mainly in respect of name calling, which they said is firmly dealt with by senior staff, including through appropriate use of sanctions. In pupil discussions, pupils across genders agreed that cross-gender relations are mostly positive and appropriate. Serious cases are notified appropriately to the local authority and police. In cases where individual pupils may be at risk or demonstrating potentially harmful behaviour, the school has engaged a variety of appropriate strategies, with the consent of parents. In their questionnaire responses, the majority of parents stated that the safeguarding of pupils has significantly improved and that the school does all it can to tackle unwanted sexual behaviour. There is an appropriate procedure should a pupil go missing and arrangements to safeguard boarders are appropriate for a school with a large and diverse boarding population. Staff, during discussion, confirmed that they have a secure understanding of their responsibilities regarding whistleblowing and felt they could approach the senior management or the governors of the school.
- 2.13 The school liaises appropriately with parents about safeguarding concerns that arise and ensures that parental wishes do not override the best interests of the child. Pupils show awareness of safeguarding arrangements in the school, including those for online safety. There is guidance for the appropriate use of mobile phones and cameras, including in the EYFS. Pupils feel that they are treated fairly, and that staff are approachable. A suitable annual review of safeguarding procedures covers relevant practice and addresses any changes required in safeguarding arrangements, including those related to peer-on-peer abuse. Arrangements to recruit staff are appropriate and in line with requirements. A suitable review of the school's processes and procedures is also held after any serious incident with appropriate action taken.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9; NMS 12]

2.14 The school meets the standards.

2.15 There is a suitable written behaviour policy. Good behaviour is promoted for both day and boarding pupils, with rewards for good conduct and sanctions for misconduct set down clearly. The policy aims to promote good behaviour, self-discipline and respect, and to encourage all members of the school community to adopt positive attitudes and values which include kindness, courtesy and integrity. It is implemented effectively. Pupils, including boarders, said during interviews that standards of behaviour are good, with any minor issues which arise from time to time typically being dealt with quickly and effectively. Examination of behavioural logs supports this view. These show very few incidents of inappropriate images produced by pupils and when this has occurred, appropriate action was taken in every case. Additionally, records show that the school implements its zero-tolerance policy towards sexual harassment and online abuse issues. In a very small number of cases, pupils across genders have been known to show a lack of respect and kindness to others and use inappropriate and offensive language. Senior leaders are alert to this type of inappropriate behaviour and deal with it effectively. Discussions with governors confirmed that they support this practice, seeing it as an essential component in continuing to improve the behavioural culture of the school. Pupils in discussions supported these approaches and were clear that they too have a zero tolerance over such matters. Governors and senior leaders are keen to retain a behavioural approach, including the use of appropriate sanctions such as suspensions or exclusion to reinforce a culture where poor behaviour, including sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are not tolerated and there is a determination to continue to take appropriate actions in dealing with pupils who cause such offence.

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

2.16 The school meets the standards.

2.17 The school has suitable written anti-bullying and anti-cyberbullying policies and implements them appropriately. The school maintains an appropriate record of instances of bullying or behavioural matters that could be considered as such. This recording is now centralised and requires house staff to log all incidents so that the senior pastoral leaders are able to maintain an overview of any such incidents. Day and boarding pupils said during interviews that bullying is rare, and should it arise staff deal with it quickly and effectively. Pupils indicated that during the return to school after COVID-19 lockdown periods there had been limited mixing between houses and that there had been a small rise in incidents once restrictions had been lifted. They expressed confidence that issues taken to house staff are dealt with quickly and effectively. Bullying logs support this view. They show that there have been very few incidents since September 2021. Any that have occurred have been appropriately managed by senior pastoral leaders. School prefects are suitably trained to support the senior leaders as role models in reducing the occurrence of bullying incidents. Senior pupils address groups of pupils in assemblies and chapel to reinforce the message that bullying is unacceptable. Prefects felt that the inability of pupils in different houses to mix during the pandemic had hindered the process of implementing change and communicating changes to pupils. Inspection evidence shows that relaxation of restrictions this term has allowed the school to reinforce messages more effectively as whole school assemblies and chapel gatherings have returned.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14; NMS 15]

- 2.18 The school meets the standards.
- 2.19 Suitable levels of staffing are in place to ensure that day and boarding pupils are supervised effectively throughout the time they are in school. Members of staff understand their responsibilities with regard to supervision, including overnight in the boarding houses. Rotas indicate that appropriate levels of pupil supervision are implemented. Areas of the school where there have been habitual behavioural incidents in the past such as inappropriate name calling are subject to increased supervision by staff with appropriate actions taken should any incidents arise.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16; NMS 6]

- 2.20 The school meets the standards.
- 2.21 There is a written risk assessment policy which is implemented effectively and strategically. The school's health and safety policy sets down clearly the responsibilities of boarding staff with regard to risk management in the boarding houses. Suitable guidance is provided for staff dealing with pupils in school, on trips and visits and in the boarding houses. Effective individual pupil risk assessments encompassing safeguarding and welfare assessments support pupils where they may be at risk.
- 2.22 The school has effective measures to manage risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and this includes the management of on-line teaching when this is required. In addition, the school has implemented effective measures to control the movement of pupils around the school, including during break and at lunchtime in order to ensure, as far as possible, the health and safety of staff and pupils.

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

- 2.23 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.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33: NMS 18]

- 2.24 The school meets the standards.
- 2.25 The school has an appropriate complaints policy which provides suitably for an informal stage and two formal stages. It has appropriate timescales for responding to complaints and these are observed in practice., including with regard to appeal panel hearings. The school holds a suitable written log, which records the stage at which complaints are resolved, any action taken as a result of complaints and whether or not they were upheld. This indicates where complaints involve boarding. Scrutiny of the complaints log indicated that all complaints are taken seriously and are appropriately and thoroughly investigated, with written responses being made to the complainants.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34; NMS 13]

- 2.26 The school meets the standards.
- 2.27 The governors, senior leaders and school staff have been successful in steadily improving the underlying culture of the school, including standards of behaviour. This has been acknowledged by pupils and their parents and was evident from discussions with a wide range of pupils throughout the school. The school is fully aware that there is more work to be done and this is reflected in the detailed reports which pastoral leaders submit to the council on a termly basis. The increased need to support pupils with regard to mental health following the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the appointment of a governor with medical expertise to the school's council to further promote and monitor the well-being of pupils.
- 2.28 Senior leaders and council members are clear that the school has not yet completed all necessary changes to improve pupil behavioural standards. Inspection evidence demonstrates this to be true, but actions taken and records of behaviour over the past two years demonstrate that effective progress is being made. The need to improve PSHE and introduce statutory RSE provision to best prepare pupils for the future has been recognised and acted upon appropriately. This supports and promotes the well-being of pupils effectively. In continuing to manage the school through this period of change leaders and governors demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the school continues to meet the regulatory standards.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this visit, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, and no further action is required as a result of this visit.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of council. They talked with pupils from a wide range of age groups and scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies. Inspectors also considered the responses to questionnaires and written comments from parents, pupils and staff.