



Material Change Inspection Report

Stowe School

September 2023

School's details

School	Stowe School		
DfE number	825/6001		
Registered charity number	310639		
Address	Stowe School Stowe Buckingham Buckinghamshire MK18 5EH		
Telephone number	01280 818000		
Email address	enquiries@stowe.co.uk		
Headteacher	Dr Anthony Wallersteiner		
Chair of governors	Mr Simon Creedy Smith		
Proprietor	Stowe School Limited		
Age range	13 to 18		
Number of pupils on roll	912		
	Day pupils	283	Boarders 629
	Seniors	510	Sixth Form 402
Date of inspection	12 September 2023		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Stowe School is an independent coeducational day and boarding school in rural Buckinghamshire, founded in 1923. Most pupils are boarders, who are accommodated in one of 13 boarding houses. There are three additional houses for day pupils. Since January 2020 Stowe School has been part of The Stowe Group which comprises Stowe School, Winchester House and Swanbourne House Preparatory Schools. The Stowe Group is responsible for governance oversight.
- 1.2 The school has identified 236 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of whom 56 receive additional support. No pupil has an educational health and care plan. Twenty-nine pupils receive additional support for English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in February 2023.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.3 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase pupil numbers from 900 to 1000. The increase is planned to be spread across the age range and to focus primarily on an increase in day pupils. 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 5, 6 and 8	Met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety); NMS 9	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire); 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 and 7	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 [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 5, 6 and 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's safeguarding policy and associated arrangements are implemented effectively. The positive safeguarding culture that exists stems from leadership and management, including governance, that places a high priority on ensuring that pupils' wellbeing and safety is paramount. All staff, including those with specific safeguarding responsibility, are appropriately trained in line with locally agreed protocols. All staff are also trained about the potential dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Staff understand the importance of the school's staff code of conduct and can readily identify which aspects that relate to pupil safeguarding. Staff induction procedures focus successfully on all aspects of safeguarding. These include understanding key associated policies, such as those relating to behaviour, low-level concerns about staff and whistleblowing. Staff feel that their training equips them well for recognising and responding appropriately to child-on-child abuse. They understand how to record and report any incidents should they arise. Staff also are knowledgeable around the definitions and signs of abuse as set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.
- 2.5 Governors have effective oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. They are appropriately trained in line with current statutory guidance. There is a designated governor responsible for safeguarding who liaises effectively with school leads. All governors are involved in reviewing the school's arrangements and this includes a review of the policy and the effectiveness of its implementation. This is carried out through an annual safeguarding audit and focused discussions which successfully test the effectiveness of procedures.
- 2.6 Pupils understand about how to stay safe online and know the key people who are responsible for keeping them safe. They state that the photographs and roles descriptions of the safeguarding leads are displayed around the school, including in boarding houses. Pupils feel that there is always someone to whom they can talk should they have any worries or concerns and that they will receive a response. They are also confident that their concerns will be acted upon promptly and appropriately. Recordings of safeguarding confirm that this happens in practice.
- 2.7 Laundry arrangements are suitable in each house. Boarders also have access to an on-site school shop where both uniform and stationery items can be purchased. There is also a tuck shop within this building. Within each boarding house there are suitable arrangements in place for boarders' possessions. They have access to secure areas where personal items can be locked away. Each boarder has their own designated area within their room where they can store their belongings.
- 2.8 All main meals are served centrally for all boarders. This facility is easily accessible. The arrangements cater appropriately for any specific dietary requirements including those around medical and/or religious needs. Within each boarding house, there is appropriate access to drinking water and hygienic areas where boarders can prepare snacks.
- 2.9 The school's safeguarding arrangements are suitable for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.10 The school meets the standards.
- 2.11 The school has a suitable health and safety policy that is implemented effectively. Governors have clear oversight of the school's arrangements and representatives make regular visits to check on procedures. Staff are given suitable training in health and safety, appropriate to their role. Health and safety checks on aspects such as electrical safety and the control of any hazardous substances are suitably detailed and recorded effectively. They show a systematic approach to ensuring pupils, staff and visitors are kept safe whilst on the school site. There are suitable written arrangements in place for any overnight emergency when evacuation may be required.
- 2.12 The school's health and safety arrangements support the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.13 The school meets the standards.
- 2.14 There is a suitable fire safety policy that is implemented effectively. Each building, including the boarding houses, carries its own fire risk assessment. These are regularly reviewed by school leaders, including governors. Any necessary actions are completed effectively. All fire safety equipment is regularly tested and suitable records of these tests are kept. All fire exits are clearly marked. Pupils, including boarders, know the procedures in case of a fire. All fire drills are carried out regularly, including in the boarding houses when boarders are asleep. Areas of the school have designated fire wardens who are suitably trained for this role.
- 2.15 The school's fire safety arrangements are suitable for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.16 The school meets the standards.
- 2.17 Scrutiny of duty rotas, including for each boarding and day house, and a tour of the school show that there are suitable arrangements in place for the supervision of all pupils, including boarders. This includes at break and lunchtimes when both full and day boarders may choose to return to their boarding houses. Boarders are always under the responsibility of a named staff member. Boarders can contact duty staff at any time during the night. Suitable signing in and out arrangements at each house ensure that staff know the whereabouts of boarders. There are appropriate arrangements in place that ensures pupils, including boarders, are effectively supervised whilst offsite. All boarding staff have suitable job descriptions in place. Any role of spouses, partners and/or other adult members of staff households within boarding houses is made clear.
- 2.18 The school's supervision arrangements support the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.19 The school meets the standards.
- 2.20 The school has a suitable risk assessment policy that is implemented effectively, including with regard to boarding. The school approaches all aspects of risk in a systematic approach demonstrating a depth of understanding of how risk impacts on all areas of school life. Staff are confident in filling out risk assessments, receiving support from school leads when required. The governance of the school has

effective oversight of all aspects associated with risk management. The risk of increasing total pupil numbers has been effectively assessed.

2.21 The school's risk assessment arrangements support the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

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

2.22 The school meets the standards.

2.23 The school ensures that all members of staff and those with governance responsibilities are checked in accordance with the standards. All checks are accurately recorded on the school's central register of appointments and supporting documentary evidence is stored appropriately in staff files. Any person over the age of 16 who is not employed by the school, living in boarding accommodation, is appropriately checked. There are written agreements in place for such persons regarding accommodation, guidance and expectations on contact with pupils.

2.24 The school's safer recruitment arrangements support the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

Premises and accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 30; NMS 4 and 7]

2.25 The school meets the standards.

2.26 Throughout the school, including in all boarding houses, there are suitable toilet and washing facilities which are strategically placed. Suitable showering facilities are made available for pupils to use after games and physical education. Medical accommodation is located in the heart of the school ensuring easy access and appropriate provision for all pupils, including boarders. There is a separate wellbeing centre that supplements the school's arrangements. In both locations, there are spaces for pupils to rest and be treated, as required. There is suitable, segregated overnight accommodation for boarders if needed. Each room has its own wash basin and toilets are located throughout the facilities. Boarders can access external medical provision as needed. Due attention is paid to any boarders' medical conditions and prompt action is taken when health concerns are identified, ensuring their physical and mental health. All boarders are registered with local health care professionals ensuring the needs of boarders are met promptly. Any medication is locked away in designated areas. Staff are suitably trained in the administration of medicines. Such health and wellbeing arrangements ensure boarders' confidentiality, rights, privacy and dignity as patients. All areas of the school are well maintained, including the boarding houses, and during the tour no areas were identified that pose a health and safety risk. Acoustics and lighting throughout all buildings are appropriate for the activities that take place therein. There is suitable outdoor lighting ensuring that everyone can move around the site safely during the hours of darkness. Throughout the school there is a suitable supply of hot and cold water. The hot water does not pose a risk of scalding. Drinking water, that is suitably labelled, is available right across the school site. The extensive site ensures that there is adequate outdoor space for pupils to relax and for activities connected with physical education and games.

2.27 Boarding house accommodation for both day and full boarders is suitable. Separate boarding houses for male and female boarders provide appropriate sleeping arrangements with a mix of group, paired and single rooms being used. When rooms are shared, boarders have some choice as to with whom they share. There is appropriate privacy within the sleeping areas and boarders are encouraged to personalise their own areas. Boarders have access to both study and social areas within each house, including in day houses. Each area of boarding has suitable toilet and washing facilities, some of which are ensuite. Tours of the houses showed them to be well maintained with suitable lighting and ventilation. Appropriate arrangements are made for any pupils who may have a disability. All boarding accommodation is suitably sized and well furnished. Any staff accommodation is separate from boarders' sleeping and social areas. There are suitable arrangements in place for any visitors to

boarding houses. They must always be accompanied. The use of fingerprint technology to access the houses and CCTV cameras on the external doors, does not impose on boarders' privacy.

- 2.28 The schools' arrangements relating to premises and accommodation, including boarding accommodation, supports the school's application for an increase in pupil numbers.

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

- 2.29 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]

- 2.30 The school meets the standard.
- 2.31 School leaders and managers, including those in boarding, have appropriate knowledge and skills. They implement these effectively to ensure that the standards are met consistently and that they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils, including boarders. Planning for the proposed increase in pupil numbers is effective.
- 2.32 The quality of leadership and management supports the proposed increase in pupil numbers.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the application to increase pupil numbers from 900 to 1000 be granted. There are ample spaces within each teaching area and the development of the additional day house will comfortably cater for the proposed increase.

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 visited different areas of the school, including full and day boarding houses, and talked with groups of pupils. He scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.