

EF ACADEMY TORBAY

EF House, Castle Road, Torquay, Devon, TQ1 3BG

21 SEPTEMBER 2016

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

EF Academy Torbay is one of a group of schools in the UK and the USA that is operated by a Swiss-based parent company, Education First. Founded in 2005, EF Academy Torbay is a fully residential international school for pupils between the ages of 14 and 19, studying for international GCSE examinations, A levels or the International Baccalaureate. The school is governed by a small executive committee, which has proprietorial responsibility and contains members of the parent company board, in addition to other members. A new principal took up post in September 2016. At the time of the visit, there were 264 pupils in the school, 146 boys, and 118 girls, all of them boarders living in one of the two boarding residences, or lodging with host families throughout the town. No pupil has an education, health or care plan, but the school has identified two who are receiving support for particular learning difficulties. All pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). The school's previous full ISI inspection took place in January 2016.

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT

This was an unannounced progress monitoring visit at the request of the Department for Education to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the ISI integrated inspection of 19 to 22 January 2016. The focus of the visit was on those areas of the regulations and standards deemed not met at the time of the inspection visit, notably safeguarding, health and safety, recruitment checks, premises and accommodation, the provision of information and the leadership and management of the school.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

Welfare, health & safety - safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8, and NMS 11]

The school meets the Regulation and Standard.

The school's safeguarding policy meets the requirements, has regard to *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)* (September 2016) and is appropriate for the specific needs of the school. The associated whistleblowing and safe recruitment policies, and the staff code of conduct, also have due regard to current requirements and pupils' needs. Changes to school practice and policy implementation reflect the new requirements of the September 2016 edition of KCSIE. Staff have received the most recent copy of Part 1 of the revised guidance, and relevant staff have been issued with Annex A. They have signed to confirm that they have received and read the documents, and the school has taken steps to ensure that staff understand the arrangements through staff meetings held at the start of the current term.

Since the previous annual safeguarding review in January 2016, the school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the nominated safeguarding governor have undertaken two quarterly audits of safeguarding procedures.

The higher-level training for the DSL and her deputy, carried out through the Torbay Safeguarding Children's Board, is up to date, and the DSL is aware of local referral thresholds. Induction training for new staff includes the issue of all the required documents. In addition, staff and governors have taken part in a range of additional

training opportunities, both on-line and face-to-face. These have covered aspects such as awareness of extremism and radicalisation issues, self-harm and eating disorders, safe recruitment and several courses on the care and management of boarders.

On-line safety continues to be a high priority and suitable guidance and training for staff and pupils provides an appropriate focus on both the safeguarding and technological aspects of the use and misuse of digital media, and suitable filtering systems are in place.

Welfare concerns raised by staff are efficiently logged by the DSL. Some of these are related to stress caused by over-ambitious academic expectations on the part of some overseas parents. Pupils interviewed confirmed the high level of support provided by school staff and the assigned guidance counsellors. Since the previous inspection, two pupils have been referred to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). No recent cases have required referral to children's social care. A pupil went missing in the previous term, and the school responded promptly and appropriately by contacting the police, local authority children's services and the UK border and visa service.

Welfare, health & safety - health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11 and NMS 6.1 and 6.2]

The school meets the Regulation and Standard.

Health and safety throughout the school are managed efficiently. A programme of auditing through appropriate check lists and visual inspections enables the new health and safety committee to exercise suitable monitoring of current practice, as well as identifying any action to be taken. Previous concerns over health and safety in two boarding residences have now been resolved, as these buildings are no longer used. The two boarding houses in use, both former hotels, provide en-suite twin and single rooms for all boarders, and the premises are maintained in good order.

Welfare, health & safety - fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12 and NMS 7.1 and 7.2]

The school meets the Regulation and Standard.

Recent health and safety committee minutes reveal that the school scrutinises fire safety closely, and the fire risk assessment is up to date. Previous concerns relate to the two boarding residences which are no longer used. Fire evacuation plans for the current boarding houses have been updated, and appropriate fire drills have been undertaken and carefully logged.

The suitability of staff [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18(2)(d) and (f), 18(3), 21(3)(a) & (b) and (4), and NMS 14.1, 14.2]

The school meets the Regulations and Standard.

The single central register (SCR) was checked and eight staff were found to have started work since the previous inspection. These include four teachers, two non-teaching staff, and two boarding houseparents. In addition, one new proprietor, a new independent listener, and three new host families were also included. Scrutiny of the register entries and personnel files indicates that the appointment procedure is secure, and all required checks have been carried out appropriately. Previous missed checks on host families have been remedied.

Premises and accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 24(1)(b), 25 and 30, and NMS 3.2 (boarders' medical and health care) and NMS 5.4 and 5.5 (boarders' accommodation)]

The school meets the Regulations and Standards.

A suitable sick bay has been created in the main school building, staffed and supervised by a newly appointed school nurse. This facility contains a washbasin and is close to a toilet. Additional sick bay areas have been created in the two current boarding residences used and provide suitable accommodation during the times boarders are in residence. As indicated above under health and safety, boarding accommodation has been rationalised with the closure of the two buildings giving rise to concern at the previous inspection. The two current boarding

residences provide appropriate en-suite accommodation for the boarders. New desks of an adequate size have been provided.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraphs 32(1)(a), (c), (d) and (e) and 32(2)(a), (c) and (d)]

The school meets the Regulation.

The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are up to date and published on the school's website.

The other details omitted at the time of the previous inspection have been provided via various written communications and handbooks, and are also on the school's website, on which the previous inspection report is now published.

Leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c), and NMS 13.1 to 13.6]

The school meets the Regulation and Standard.

Management arrangements have been strengthened since the previous inspection. The governing body has been restructured with the addition of UK-based members and a new principal took up post in August 2016. Documentary evidence shows that the school has been continually monitoring the implementation of its action plan, with assistance from external professional advisors.

Promotion of pupils' well-being has been strengthened by the appointment of a school nurse, and the developing role of the team of guidance counsellors. A student casework group identifies those at risk of welfare concerns, so that an early intervention can be made. Roles and responsibilities of senior managers, and the governing body, have been clarified and strengthened. Quarterly audit reports on regulatory compliance and other areas of the school's operation are submitted to the governors. These identify issues and risks and any action taken. The SCR is scrutinised regularly by the DSL.

A newly-appointed pastoral deputy head, who will assume the role of DSL and compliance officer, takes up post in January 2017. The recently-appointed head of boarding, already in post, visits the boarding residences and meets the houseparents each week.

NMS 1 Statement of boarding principles & practice

The school meets the Standard.

A suitable statement of boarding principles has been prepared. It is made known to staff and boarders in various ways, including publication on notice boards, and is effectively implemented in practice.

NMS 2.3 Boarders' induction & support

The school meets the Standard.

The school has appointed a suitable person to act as an independent listener to the boarders. They are aware of who this person is and how they can contact her. The school has provided a clear job description, has ensured that the person is aware of the school's expectations to safeguard and promote boarders' welfare, and has carried out appropriate pre-appointment checks.

NMS 3.4 Boarders' health and well-being

The school meets the Standard.

The school has successfully drawn up suitable protocols and procedures to ensure the appropriate assessment of risk for boarders who are self-medicating. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure patient confidentiality and enable them to give or withhold consent for treatment where deemed competent to do so.

NMS 8.3 Provision and preparation of food and drinks

The school meets the Standard.

In the two boarding residences now used, boarders have suitable kitchen areas, providing them with drinking water and the means to prepare hot and cold snacks and drinks.

NMS 9.3 Boarders' possessions

The school meets the Standard.

All boarders have now been provided with lockable safes in their rooms. Those interviewed report that these provide good protection for their valuable possessions.

NMS 15.3 and 15.9 Staffing and supervision

The school meets the Standard.

Due to the closure of two older boarding houses, all resident staff in the two current residences are provided with suitable self-contained accommodation, which does not result in any shared facilities with boarders. The head of boarding is undertaking professional training in boarding management and is ensuring that all houseparents are familiar with the National Minimum Standards (NMS). These are discussed at their regular meetings and boarding staff focus on the way these standards are implemented in the boarding provision. Staff report that these initiatives have been helpful.

NMS 17 Securing boarders' views

The school meets the Standard.

The school has initiated a number of measures to enable boarders' views and opinions to be sought and acted upon. Weekly house meetings are judged to be effective by the boarders interviewed, and they report that these occasions enable boarders and staff to discuss various boarding matters. Significant issues arising are shared with school leaders and managers. Arrangements for creating a student council are well advanced and the first meeting is imminent. On-line student satisfaction surveys are carried out from time to time and the results shared with boarders. The outcomes demonstrate that boarders are, in general, very satisfied with the standard of boarding provision and care, and this was confirmed by those spoken to.

NMS 20.5 and 20.6 Lodgings (Long stay)

The school meets the Standard.

The school has improved its procedures for checking the suitability of the 66 host families and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities to care for boarders and safeguard and promote their welfare and well-being. Previous missing criminal record checks have been carried out, and all recently appointed host families (including children over the age of 16 years) have undergone appropriate checks, including the additional checks carried out by the local authority for such home-stay placements, hosting students under the age of 16 years. Host families receive a detailed handbook covering their role and responsibilities and the school's expectations of them. They have received suitable briefing by the DSL on safeguarding and, later this term, will attend more comprehensive sessions in groups designed to further update their understanding of new requirements.

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 in those areas inspected on the visit, and no further action is required.