

## **TOWER COLLEGE**

Mill Lane, Rainhill, Prescot, Merseyside, L35 6NE

**23<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY 2017**

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Tower College is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from 3 to 16. It was founded in 1948 by the parents of the current principal. The school, situated in Rainhill, Merseyside, is accommodated within a nineteenth century house and adjacent buildings. Pupils come from Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside and reflect the local diversity of the area. The school is a charitable trust and operates as a limited company which is the registered proprietorial body. A board of governors oversees the work of the school.

There were 325 pupils in the school at the time of the visit, 171 boys and 154 girls. The school includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) with 47 children. There is a second EYFS (Tower Tots) within the school grounds, overseen by the school's trustees but this is a distinct and separate entity not inspected during this visit. The school has identified 43 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 31 of whom receive specialist support for a range of learning difficulties including dyslexia and dyscalculia. There are two pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL): neither pupil receives support from the school.

### **PURPOSE OF THE VISIT**

This was an unannounced visit at the request of the Department for Education to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the progress monitoring visit on 14 March 2016. The focus of the visit was on the welfare, health and safety of pupils – specifically covering safeguarding, behaviour, bullying, health and safety, first aid, supervision and risk assessment; the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors; provision of information; complaints and leadership and management.

### **INSPECTION FINDINGS**

#### **Welfare, health and safety – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7(a) and (b), and EYFS 3.4 to 3.8]**

The school meets the regulations and requirements.

The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school, and has full regard to the latest government guidance. The school dealt with relatively minor concerns relating to the wording of the policy during the visit and published the amended policy on its website following approval by the governors.

Safeguarding procedures are implemented consistently to ensure the welfare of pupils, including children in the EYFS. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSL have appropriate levels of safeguarding training for their roles, which includes working with external agencies. The school liaises closely with St Helens children's services and other child protection officials in the school's catchment area. They participate in early interventions for children in need and case conferences relating to children at risk, ensuring that children receive the right help to minimise risks. Suitable procedures are in place to deal with any disclosures from pupils and with any allegations

against members of staff. Child protection records are detailed, held securely and demonstrate that any concerns or necessary referrals are promptly addressed and where appropriate reported to local agencies. The school liaises appropriately with parents in relation to safeguarding concerns and ensures that parental wishes do not override the best interests of the child.

All members of staff, including those with EYFS roles, have received appropriate safeguarding training, including for Prevent and e-safety, which is regularly updated and in line with locally agreed procedures. Staff induction is well-planned and includes all required safeguarding elements, ensuring that all new staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Training records are held by the leadership in the form of a database register of safeguarding training, which includes confirmation that all members of staff have read *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Part 1* and *Annex A (September 2016)* as required. Staff interviewed demonstrated familiarity with both KCSIE and the school's safeguarding policy and, although almost all had a very clear understanding of the procedures to follow in the event of a child protection concern, one required clarification of the detailed procedures for handling allegations.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to monitor on-line activity by the pupils. The pupils interviewed affirmed that they feel safe at school, receive appropriate guidance as to how to keep safe including on the internet, and feel able to speak to a member of staff should they have any concerns about their safety.

The school has not followed in every respect, in the cases of two recent appointments, the statutory guidance given to schools in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* with regard to required pre-appointment checks; however, the necessary barring list and prohibition checks were carried out at the time of the visit and were found to be satisfactory. The school has adjusted its approach to making and recording checks in the light of this non-material failing.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – the promotion of good behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9, and EYFS 3.51]**

The school meets the regulation and requirement.

The school's written behaviour policy encourages good conduct and sets out the sanctions for misconduct. In discussion, pupils showed a clear understanding of the school's rules and regulations and the range of sanctions which would be imposed for a breach of these. The log of sanctions for misconduct is monitored by tutors and both the principal and vice-principal. Scrutiny of the log shows that the school policy for detentions and other sanctions is properly applied. Parents may be invited to come in to discuss the matter with the principal. In the case of a serious breach of rules or of unacceptable behaviour the principal, having in most cases, consulted relevant staff, deals with the incident immediately. Appropriate records are kept of all serious sanctions.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10]**

The school meets the regulation.

In discussions, pupils demonstrated a clear understanding of what constitutes cases of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and are confident that any incident that is reported will be dealt with quickly and sensitively. Pupils say that cases of bullying are rare. They maintain that relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are very good and that there is always someone for them to talk to when necessary. The few incidents of bullying are recorded in a dedicated log which is monitored by the member of the senior staff with overall responsibility for pastoral care. Members of staff interviewed understood that bullying is potentially a safeguarding matter and were aware of the threshold for reporting bullying as a child protection concern. PHSE topics, including bullying, are covered effectively in assembly, form periods and through the curriculum.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety policy [ISSR paragraph 11, and EYFS 3.53]**

The school meets the regulation.

The written policy sets out clearly the school's responsibilities and includes appropriate references to the need for effective risk assessment. The school's bursar has overall operational responsibility for health and safety matters and keeps detailed and suitable records of any health and safety concerns. The governing body is notified of significant health and safety concerns which are reported to it through the school's health and safety committee which meets at least termly and ensures that appropriate action is taken to remedy such concerns.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – first aid [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 13, and EYFS 3.33]**

The school meets the regulation.

A suitable first-aid policy is in place and effectively implemented. Although there is no school nurse, suitably qualified first aiders including paediatric first aiders with up-to-date certification deal with cases of illness, injury and accidents. Parents are contacted to collect their children when any such case requires parental care at home. The emergency medical services are summoned in any situation which requires more expert attention. The records of illness, accidents and injuries is maintained in four folders, one for each section of the school, with individual sheets recording each instance of illness, injury or accident for a child during the school day. There is no clear order to the record thus making it extremely hard to pinpoint any specific incident in the past or to identify overall trends and instances involving any particular child. The school is aware of this non-material failing and maintains that it will institute a system to improve its record keeping in this area.

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

The school meets the regulation.

Members of staff were observed ensuring the safety of pupils as they moved around the site. Members of staff are on duty as the pupils are dropped off and picked up by parents or by buses in the school car park. Access to the school premises is protected by key codes. Outdoor areas are monitored by electronic and other means. The playground areas are not directly accessible from the public areas of the school and are supervised by members of staff at breaks and lunchtimes.

**Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessments [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16 and EYFS 3.56]**

The school meets the regulation.

The school has a suitable written risk assessment policy. Suitable risk assessments are made for trips and visits: risks are identified and members of staff accompanying the pupils are advised on how best to minimise the risks to those in their care. The school has risk assessments for fire and other health and safety concerns and for off-site activities including for the EYFS.

**Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, [ISSR Part 4: paragraphs 18, 19, 20 and 21]**

The school meets the regulations.

Although most of the required pre-appointment checks made had been recorded in the SCR, there was a small number of omissions with regard to entries for barred list and prohibition from teaching checks for two members of staff appointed since the previous visit. These were corrected and any checks not already made by the school were made during the course of the visit. No member of the school staff is barred or prohibited from regulated activity or teaching children. As noted above, the school has adjusted its approach to making and recording checks in the light of this non-material failing and the recruitment process is now deemed to be rigorous.

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

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 published on the school's website.

**Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33]**

The school meets the regulation.

There is a suitable complaints procedure which meets the regulatory requirements. It sets out clearly the three-stage procedure for complainants to follow. Informal (Stage 1) concerns are recorded in the pupil's file. A central log of formal complaints is maintained. The log shows that there has been one formal complaint since the previous inspection and this was resolved by the school at Stage 2, without recourse to the appeal panel specified for Stage 3 complaints. The school dealt with relatively minor concerns relating to the wording of the procedure during the visit and published the amended policy on its website following approval by the governors.

**Quality of leadership in and management of schools [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]**

The school meets the regulation.

The leadership and management of the school demonstrate a good understanding of their safeguarding and related responsibilities. The governance of the school provides suitable support and challenge to the leadership on safeguarding matters and other welfare, health and safety matters. The governors review policies regularly and, in the case of the safeguarding policy, at least annually, and monitor their effective implementation.

**REGULATORY ACTION POINTS**

The school meets all of the relevant requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.