ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

Material change inspection report

8 November 2024

Argyle House School

19-20 Thornhill Park

Sunderland

Tyne and Wear

SR2 7LA

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Inspection outcome

The school has requested a material change to increase the maximum number of pupils on roll from 229 to 250 and extend the age range of children in the Nursery to admit children from the age of 2 years.

The school is likely to continue to meet the relevant independent school Standards if the material change is implemented.

It is recommended that the material change be approved.

Inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

ISSR Paragraphs 7(a) and 7(b), 11, 12, 14 and 16(a) and 16(b)

1. The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and are implemented well across the school, including in the early years. Safeguarding leaders are members of the school's senior management team. They have been appropriately trained, are suitably knowledgeable and coordinate their work effectively. Safeguarding leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training, including at induction, and are provided with regular updates about safeguarding issues and procedures.
2. Governors provide effective oversight of the school's safeguarding processes and are appropriately trained. A governor reviews policy implementation with the safeguarding leadership team every term. She maintains close oversight of safeguarding matters, including about attendance. Governors review the safeguarding policy each year and receive an annual report on safeguarding and child protection from the school leaders.
3. Staff know how to report concerns that a child may be at risk of harm. Staff act promptly to ensure that pupils are appropriately supported. Leaders liaise effectively with external agencies so that pupils and families can access the help they need.
4. Leaders ensure appropriate filtering and monitoring of the school's internet is in place. Pupils learn how to stay safe online. They can raise concerns with trusted adults who respond promptly and supportively.
5. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with the relevant health and safety laws by drawing up and implementing effectively a suitable health and safety policy. Systematically maintained records show that appropriate checks are conducted regularly.
6. There is a suitable fire risk policy. An appropriately qualified person conducts a fire risk assessment of the premises and any recommendations are implemented in a timely manner. Fire safety equipment is properly maintained and termly fire drills are carried out and recorded.
7. Leaders deploy staff effectively to ensure that pupils are appropriately supervised, including in the early years. Current systems for pupil supervision are effective throughout the school and the school has suitable plans for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
8. The school's health and safety policy requires that there is rigorous assessment of risk and planned mitigations. Leaders ensure risk assessment training is provided for staff. Appropriate and suitably thorough risk assessments are drawn up for the site, school activities and educational visits. Leaders check all risk assessments are suitable, including those in the early years.
9. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

ISSR Paragraphs 18-21

10. Leaders provide a suitable policy which addresses the required recruitment checks and procedures and ensure it is implemented effectively. All required pre-employment checks are completed before any adult begins work at the school. An appropriate record of appointments is accurately maintained.

11. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

ISSR Paragraphs 23-29

12. Leaders ensure that suitable toilet, changing and shower facilities are provided and that appropriate accommodation is available for pupils' medical and therapy needs. Acoustics, lighting and water provision are appropriate. Pupils benefit from suitable outdoor space for physical education and outdoor play. The premises and accommodation are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety requirements.

13. Leaders have extended the school premises to accommodate the proposed increase in the age range and number of children in the early years. This includes a dedicated sleeping area and room in the Nursery for the youngest children. Work is underway to develop the Nursery's outdoor provision.

14. Leaders have also constructed a learning resource centre and have planned an outdoor covered eating area for use by older pupils.

15. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 6. Provision of information

ISSR paragraph 32(1)(c)

16. Leaders publish particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding, which meet current statutory requirements, on the school's website

17. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership and management of schools

ISSR paragraphs 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c), 34(2)

18. The proprietor and school leaders, including those with specific responsibility for safeguarding, demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the independent school standards are consistently met, and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted. Leaders have carefully considered the expansion of the school to accommodate the increased number of children in the early years and to extend the age range of children admitted to the Nursery from the age of 2 years, so that the school continues to promote the wellbeing of all pupils.

19. The school is likely to continue to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented.

School details

School	Argyle House School
Department for Education number	394/6003
Address	Argyle House School 19-20 Thornhill Park Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR2 7LA
Phone number	0191 510 0726
Email address	office@argylehouseschool.co.uk
Website	www.argylehouse.co.uk
Proprietor	Argyle House Holdings Limited
Chair	John Forsyth
Headteacher	Christopher Johnson
Age range	2 to 16
Number of pupils	211
Date of previous inspection	26 to 29 April 2022

Information about the school

21. Argyle House is a co-educational day school located in Sunderland, Tyne and Wear. The school comprises a senior and junior school. The school is part of the Forfar Education Group, which is responsible for governance oversight.
22. There are 20 children in the early years comprising a Nursery and a Reception class.
23. The school has identified 62 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care plan.
24. No pupils speak English is an additional language.
25. The school states that its aims are to offer pupils the facilities of a large school but with small class sizes and provide opportunities for individuals to develop their abilities academically, socially, emotionally and physically.

Purpose of the material change inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002 following an application made by the school to the DfE to make a material change to the school's provision. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about whether the school is likely to meet the Independent School Standards if the material change is implemented.