



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Progress Monitoring Inspection Report
with Material Change Inspection**

Red Balloon Norwich

June 2023

School's details

School	Red Balloon Norwich
DfE number	926/6158
Registered charity number	1117092
Address	Red Balloon Norwich 289 Drayton Road Norwich Norfolk NR3 2PW
Telephone number	01603 622288
Email address	Redballoon.norwich@gmail.com
Interim head of centre	Miss Gemma Crane
Chair of trustees	Mr Daniel Kelly
Proprietor	Red Balloon Norwich
Age range	11 to 17
Number of pupils on roll	25
Date of inspection	30 June 2023

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Red Balloon Norwich is an independent co-educational day school. It is one of four members of the association of Red Balloon Learner Centres. The school was established in 2006, originally in a church hall, and recently moved to its current premises in a residential suburb near Norwich city. Some pupils initially start their education at the school remotely as ‘Red balloon of the air’ participants, before attending the school on site. The chair and board of trustees of Red Balloon Norwich oversee the educational, welfare and financial arrangements of the school. All pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, social anxiety and mental health issues, and all receive additional specialist help. All pupils have an education, health and care plan. No pupils have English as an additional language. The school’s previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in September 2022.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced progress monitoring inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the focused compliance and educational quality inspection on 21–23 September 2022. The inspection focused on the school’s compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs).
- 1.3 Additionally, this inspection serves as a material change inspection to assess the school’s proposal to change the address of Red Balloon Norwich to 289 Drayton Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR3 2PW.

Regulations which are the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 11 (health and safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety)	Not met
Part 3, paragraph 13 (first aid)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 15 (admission and attendance registers)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Not met
Part 4, paragraphs 18–21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and the proprietor)	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23–29 (premises and accommodation)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met

Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints procedure)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Not met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

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 does not meet the standard.
- 2.4 Implementation of most aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures is effective. However, the proprietor does not ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 so that pupils' welfare, health and safety is safeguarded in the event of a fire in the school.
- 2.5 Safeguarding procedures are implemented to safeguard children at risk and those in need. Staff show effective understanding of their responsibilities, including with regard to child-on-child abuse and any such abuse linked to respect for those with protected characteristics. This includes pupils with SEND. Staff show appropriate awareness of the staff code of conduct, whistleblowing policy and safeguarding procedures. They have a suitable knowledge of the thresholds for reporting issues. Staff are aware of who to go to if they have a concern or receive a disclosure. They understand that they can make a direct referral to children's services if necessary. They take appropriate action when required. The safeguarding policy gives contact details for local safeguarding partners.
- 2.6 The safeguarding policy includes suitable definitions of abuse and has been reviewed effectively in line with both the latest statutory guidance and advice from local safeguarding partners. It provides appropriate guidance regarding possible abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil. Discussion with the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) for the school confirmed that pupils receive help to address risks and prevent issues escalating. The DSL acts on and refers the early signs of risk or need. They monitor for any potential radicalisation and ensure the school listens to pupils, as required by *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. Pupils say they feel safe in school, that they have adults to whom they can talk if they have concerns, that they receive a response and that action is taken where necessary. That this happens in practice is confirmed in written evidence from safeguarding records. Effective and regular communication is maintained with parents. Pupils show an understanding of what they have been taught, including in relation to e-safety. Monitoring and filtering of technology is effective.
- 2.7 Suitable recruitment procedures for staff are outlined within the safeguarding policy and detailed in a separate recruitment policy. Staff responsible for recruitment show a suitable understanding of the procedures. All relevant recruitment checks are carried out on all staff before commencement of employment. In particular, the school now obtains two satisfactory references and carries out medical checks. Staff records and files now contain sufficient, accurate information to evidence the required recruitment checks.
- 2.8 The training for those with specific safeguarding responsibilities is in line with local requirements and statutory advice and is up to date. Training in safeguarding for teaching and non-teaching staff, and for governors, is of sufficient quality and frequency.
- 2.9 Suitable arrangements for handling allegations against staff, senior leaders, governors and trustees, and potential misconduct, are included in safeguarding procedures. They include seeking immediate

advice from the local authority designated officer (LADO). The school understands its role in reporting any person to regulatory bodies if circumstances require it.

- 2.10 The proprietor and trustees are suitably trained in safeguarding. The proprietor undertakes an annual review of safeguarding. However, this has not been sufficiently effective in ensuring that pupils' welfare is fully safeguarded because weaknesses in fire prevention measures have not been rectified.

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

- 2.11 The school meets the standard.
- 2.12 The proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy. Records show that testing of electrical, water and other utilities is regularly undertaken. Staff are suitably trained in health and safety matters. They deal promptly with accidents if they occur. Systematic records ensure trends are identified and steps taken to mitigate reoccurrence of any health and safety risks.

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

- 2.13 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.14 The school has a fire risk (prevention policy) which includes the elimination or reduction of risks from dangerous substances. Fire procedures are understood by, and training provided for staff. Pupils know what to do in the event of a fire. However, there is no suitably trained competent person appointed to oversee fire safety. There is no current fire risk assessment of the building and checking of alarms and the provision of equipment such as fire extinguishers is inadequate. There is no member of staff designated as a fire marshal. Practice evacuation drills are too infrequent and inadequately recorded and evaluated. There were no fire extinguishers in place at the time of the inspection but these were installed subsequently.

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

- 2.15 The school meets the standard.
- 2.16 The school has a sufficient number of staff trained in first aid, and first aid resources are adequate. For those children with medical conditions, suitable health care plans are in place together with risk assessments regarding their medical requirements, including in an emergency. All staff are informed about children's medical risks and are trained appropriately in how to respond to their medical needs.

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

- 2.17 The school meets the standard.
- 2.18 Suitable arrangements are in place for the supervision of pupils. The ratio of staff to pupils is sufficient and allows close monitoring of pupils' whereabouts, ensuring that they are kept safe and feel supported at all times. The effective deployment of staff around the school, combined with pass code protected external doors and CCTV, means that pupils are unable to leave the school during the school day unless accompanied by staff. Supervision of pupils outside of school on trips is effectively planned and implemented as a result of appropriate risk assessment.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – admission and attendance registers [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 15]

- 2.19 The school meets the standard.
- 2.20 Admission and attendance registers are maintained to a suitable standard. Any unnotified or unexplained absences are checked immediately by the school's office staff who contact parents to establish the reason. Pupils' attendance at lessons and other activities is carefully monitored by staff throughout the day and any absence is followed up effectively. Admissions and transfers of pupils to other schools are managed appropriately.

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

- 2.21 The school does not meet the standard.
- 2.22 The school's risk assessment policy clearly describes appropriate lines of responsibility and the approach to be taken to identify and mitigate risks. There is an effective culture of assessing risk to pupils in some areas of school activity, but fire risk assessment is not adequate.
- 2.23 Due consideration is taken regarding pupils about whom mental health needs or safeguarding concerns have been identified. There are appropriate assessments of risk for in-school activities and for visits out of school. These are suitably detailed and appropriate action is taken to mitigate risks identified.

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

- 2.24 The school meets the standards.
- 2.25 All the required checks on staff are carried out and completed before they take up their posts. In particular, the school now carries out medical checks on all staff.
- 2.26 The school maintains correctly an accurate single central register of appointments which includes the dates on which all checks are completed.

Premises and accommodation – toilet, washing and changing facilities, medical facilities, maintenance, acoustics, lighting, water and outdoor space [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 23–29]

- 2.27 The school meets the standards.
- 2.28 Suitable toilet, washing and changing facilities, where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. In particular, a suitable showering facility has been installed for pupils' use. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety guidance and are secure; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

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.

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

2.30 The school meets the standard.

2.31 The school's complaints procedure is available on the school's website. It provides for concerns and complaints to be considered on an informal basis; the establishment of a formal procedure to be made in writing; for a hearing before a panel which includes an independent member and allows parents to be accompanied; for the panel to make findings and recommendations and for a confidential record to be kept of findings. Records of complaints show that the school follows its own procedures with suitable rigour, including encouraging parents with concerns to follow the statutory complaints procedures.

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

2.32 The school does not meet the standard.

2.33 The school has implemented most aspects of the action plan required at the time of the previous inspection successfully. However, requirements regarding leadership and management are not yet fully met. The proprietor does not ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 The school does not meet all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety – safeguarding, paragraph 7

- The proprietor must ensure that oversight of safeguarding is fully effective by ensuring full compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 [paragraph 7(a) and (b)].

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety – fire safety, paragraph 12

- The proprietor must ensure that there is a suitably trained competent person appointed to oversee fire safety; that there is a current fire risk assessment of the building; that alarms and the provision of equipment such as fire extinguishers are effectively checked; that at least one member of staff is designated and trained as a fire marshal; that there are suitably frequent practice evacuation drills that are adequately recorded and evaluated [paragraph 12].

ISSR Part 3, Welfare, health and safety – risk assessment, paragraph 16

- The proprietor must ensure that it fully implements its risk assessment procedures to create an effective culture of assessing risk to pupils in all areas of school activity, particularly regarding fire safety [paragraph 16(a) and (b)].

ISSR Part 8, Leadership and management, paragraph 34

- The school must ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities use their skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively to actively promote the wellbeing of pupils and so ensure that the independent school standards are met consistently [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].

4. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Summary of findings

- 4.1 Implementation of most aspects of the school's safeguarding procedures is effective. However, the proprietor does not ensure compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 so that pupils' welfare, health and safety is safeguarded in the event of a fire in the school.
- 4.2 Although there is an effective culture of assessing risk to pupils in some areas of school activity, the assessment of risk regarding fire safety is inadequate.
- 4.3 The proprietor does not ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.

Recommendation

- 4.4 It is recommended that the request to change the address of Red Balloon Norwich to 289 Drayton Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR3 2PW is not granted at the present time.

5. Summary of evidence

- 5.1 The inspectors held discussions with the deputy heads, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors and a trustee. They visited different areas of the school, and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.

Inspectors

Mr Andrew Farren

Reporting inspector

Mr Christopher Emmott

Assistant reporting inspector