



Additional Inspection Report

The Hammond

December 2023

School's details

School	The Hammond		
DfE number	896/6016		
Registered charity number	1022427		
Address	The Hammond Mannings Lane Hoole Village Chester Cheshire CH2 4ES		
Telephone number	01244 305350		
Email address	contact@thehammond.co.uk		
Principal	Ms Jennifer Roscoe		
Chair of directors	Mrs Kathrine Cowell OBE		
Proprietor	The Hammond School Ltd		
Age range	11 to 19		
Number of pupils on roll	238		
	Day pupils	111	Boarders 127
	Juniors	133	Seniors 105
Date of inspection	5 December 2023		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 The Hammond is a co-educational day and boarding school situated a short distance from the centre of Chester. The school specialises in the performing arts and is organised into two sections: the juniors for pupils aged 11 to 16 years and the seniors for those aged 16 to 19. The school is a charitable trust and is overseen by a board of directors who are also trustees of the charity.
- 1.2 There are three boarding houses which are located approximately two miles from the main school site. They are all co-educational. One house is for pupils in Years 7 to 10; a second, smaller house is for pupils in Year 11; and a third is for boarders in the sixth form.
- 1.3 The school has 15 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Three pupils have an education, health and care plan. Fifteen pupils speak English as an additional language. The school's previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in September 2021, followed by an additional inspection in July 2023.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.4 This was an unannounced additional inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) which 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 8	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 and 19 (suitability of staff and supply staff); NMS 19	Met
Part 5, paragraph 30 (boarding accommodation); NMS 4	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management); NMS 2	Met
NMS 5 (boarders' possessions) and 6 (provision and preparation of food and drink)	Met
NMS 7 (boarders' health and wellbeing), 9 (safety of boarders) and 10 (fire precautions and drills)	Met
NMS 14 (complaints)	Met
NMS 20 (staffing and supervision)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding and safeguarding of boarders [ISSR Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 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 implements its safeguarding policy effectively to ensure that pupils, including boarders, are safe. Pupils, including boarders, say that there are trusted adults to whom they can report concerns and that they would do so without hesitation, confident of receiving a response. Records of safeguarding confirm that this happens in practice, and that suitable action is taken where needed. Pupils say they are well supported by school staff, including boarding staff, especially in managing their busy schedules of performing arts which entail long days of physical activity. Discussions with pupils and staff indicated that the school takes its responsibilities for pupils' welfare with due seriousness and is alert to the needs of any vulnerable pupils. Such pupils have suitable welfare plans which are implemented effectively. Pupils are well educated about online safety. The school ensures suitable monitoring of technology and pupils are supportive of the school's recent policy which means they have no access to mobile phones during the school day.
- 2.5 The newly appointed designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies are suitably trained at the advanced level and provide effective leadership of safeguarding in boarding. They train staff at induction and then regularly through annual updates and informal reminders throughout the year. Staff confirmed that they understand how to report any concerns about pupils or their colleagues, including those which do not meet the threshold for referral, and that they would do so readily. In discussion they described an effective culture of safeguarding in the school and were clear that vigilance is of the utmost importance. Records relating to pupils of concern are kept effectively and confidentially in a digital system which is carefully monitored by the DSL and the safeguarding team. They ensure that an effective summary of meetings, contacts with parents/carers and any referrals, is kept for each pupil. The school liaises effectively with children's services in the local authority and also with authorities located where boarding pupils live.
- 2.6 The directors provide effective support and challenge to school leaders with regard to safeguarding. A director with designated responsibility for oversight of safeguarding has regular contact with the DSL, with staff, and with pupils, both day and boarding. This role includes oversight of boarding. This ensures that directors have good knowledge and understanding of the boarding environment in the school, including through regular visits to the school. A safeguarding committee of directors carries out a suitable annual audit of the school's safeguarding policy and practice. The safeguarding policy is also interrogated and ratified by the whole board annually. All directors have appropriate training in safeguarding.

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

- 2.7 The school meets the standards.

- 2.8 The school operates effective safer recruitment procedures and several senior staff have been trained in safer recruitment. All boarding staff have undergone all the necessary recruitment checks before appointment and these are suitably recorded on the single central record of appointments. Likewise, any agency supply staff used in boarding have the necessary checks in place. There are no resident partners or family members of boarding staff living on site. Any visitors to boarding are required to sign in and are kept under staff supervision. There is no unsupervised access to boarders.

Premises and accommodation – boarding accommodation [ISSR Part 5, paragraph 30; NMS 4]

- 2.9 The school meets the standards.
- 2.10 The school changed its boarding provision over the summer and re-allocated boarding pupils to different houses. The new configurations are effective. The two houses for pupils up to Year 11 were refurbished prior to the start of this academic year. The school acknowledges that, at the beginning of the year, not all the internal work and furnishing had been completed and that this resulted in some concerns from pupils and parents at that time. However, following appropriate completion of planned work, the furnishings and fittings are now all in place and, in each case, the accommodation is suitable. Boarders commented positively on the recent improvements in boarding arrangements. Each boarding house has a suitable risk assessment in place.
- 2.11 Each bedroom has sufficient space for the number of boarders it accommodates. Bedrooms vary in size and accommodate between two and eight boarders. Beds are mostly single beds and there are a few bunk beds in use for the younger boarders. Bedding is warm, clean and comfortable. Each boarder has wardrobe space, either in a single wardrobe or in half of a double one, a suitably large and lockable drawer and desk space. Some beds are cabin style with a desk below and other desks are separate. Not all pupils work at these desks as there are also tables downstairs which they can use. In some cases, pupils use their desks to store personal items. Pupils can personalise their adjacent wall spaces as they wish. Pupils can express preferences about pupils they would like to share with although such choices can be limited by numbers in each year group. Sleeping accommodation for male and female pupils is appropriately separate.
- 2.12 In each house there are sufficient recently refurbished bathrooms, appropriately designated for male or female pupils. These include shower cubicles, individual toilet cubicles and wash basins. Bathrooms are clean and well maintained. Each house has a number of communal spaces for relaxing which are well furnished and homely. All areas are well lit, heated, ventilated and clean. Problems with an internet provider at the beginning of the year which created an issue with internet accessibility have been successfully resolved.
- 2.13 All boarding accommodation is reserved for the pupils who use it. Entry is only by keypads, thus ensuring no access from unauthorised persons. Outside areas are well maintained. There is no CCTV in use.

Boarders' possessions [NMS 5] and provision and preparation of food and drink [NMS 6]

- 2.14 The school meets the standards.
- 2.15 Each boarding house makes good provision for pupils' laundry. Each has several washing machines should pupils wish to wash items of clothing themselves. Pupils' uniforms, including dance attire for each pupil, are washed daily by residential staff and all laundered items are returned to the boarders via a system of named lockers. Boarders have access to personal and stationery items, they all have a lockable storage space, and can also hand in valuables and money to house staff for safekeeping.

- 2.16 During the week and on Saturdays, boarders eat in the main school dining room where good quality, nutritious meals are provided. On Sundays until recently, food was transported from the main school kitchen to the boarding houses and then re-heated. Although adequate, this provision has recently been improved effectively. The school has increased its catering provision to include a Sunday chef in one of the boarding houses so that the food provided for all boarders can be freshly cooked. Boarders are very positive about this change. In each house there are simple kitchen facilities including a kettle, microwave and toaster. Drinking water and snacks, including fresh fruit, are always available.

Boarders' health and wellbeing (NMS 7), safety of boarders (NMS 9) and fire precautions and drills (NMS 10)

- 2.17 The school meets the standards.
- 2.18 The school has appropriate policies for the care of boarders who are unwell, and these are effectively implemented. The medical officer is in overall charge and the central medical centre at the school includes a sick bay. Each boarding house has an additional, designated bedroom for any boarder who is unwell, with toilet and washing facilities, which is separate from other rooms. In a medical emergency there are sufficient staff in place in boarding time to ensure suitable cover should a boarder need hospital treatment. All medicines are safely stored in a locked cabinet and the school uses a central digital recording system to record any medications given at school or in boarding. No boarding pupils below the sixth form have access to their own medication. Boarders have access to local medical, dental and optometric services should they require them. Counselling services are available, and the school liaises with mental health services locally and, in some cases, in the boarders' home area.
- 2.19 The school has a suitable health and safety policy which is implemented effectively in boarding. Boarding staff understand the procedures by which to report any concerns they have. The school has a suitable critical incident policy which outlines measures to be taken and areas of responsibility. There are suitable risk assessments in place to ensure the safety of boarders while off-site.
- 2.20 The school has suitable measures for fire prevention. Boarders are very clear how to evacuate the buildings in the case of a fire. Clear evacuation plans are in place for each house. Boarders are well educated in the procedure and fire drills are held more than once a term in boarding time, including during the night. Fire signage is appropriate and emergency lighting is in place.

Complaints (NMS 14)

- 2.21 The school meets the standard.
- 2.22 The school has an appropriate complaints policy which is implemented effectively. The policy outlines suitable timescales which are followed by the school. Boarding pupils are able to raise any concerns which they have in good faith and these concerns are listened to and recorded by the student support team. Their most recent concerns about weekend food have been considered appropriately and suitable improvements introduced. Parental complaints about boarding provision are carefully identified and logged in the school's record of complaints, which is kept appropriately. In the first half of this term there were two formal complaints. Both were responded to quickly and effectively within the timescales identified in the school's published policy. Actions were taken by the school in response and both complaints were resolved without recourse to the third stage of the school's procedures.

Staffing and supervision (NMS 20)

- 2.23 The school meets the standard.

2.24 Boarding staff have sufficient training and experience for their roles. They have suitable job descriptions, have received induction training and have access to regular reviews of their practice by senior leaders and to suitable external courses to provide professional development. There are always at least two members of staff sleeping in each house every night and pupils understand how to contact them should they need to. Staffing during the evenings and weekends includes several non-residential staff so that boarders are well supported. Boarders confirmed that they know who the duty member of staff is at all times and that these figures are always accessible. Staff accommodation is adequate. Pupil accommodation and staff accommodation is appropriately separated and pupils have no access to staff living and sleeping accommodation. In one house the staff accommodation in which meals can be prepared serves also as the house office which can hinder privacy, although this can be ensured adequately.

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

2.25 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]

2.26 The school meets the standards.

2.27 The governing body includes directors who are sufficiently knowledgeable and experienced to ensure effective oversight of the school's policies and procedures. The leadership of boarding is currently in transition but the senior leader currently charged with strategic responsibility for boarding ensures clear leadership and management of the practice and development of boarding in the school. Senior leaders have a detailed self-evaluation in place for all aspects of boarding and a strong awareness of risk around any changes they make. School leaders and managers demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge to ensure that the standards are met and that the wellbeing of pupils, including boarders, is actively promoted.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the principal, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the director with responsibility for safeguarding and boarding. They visited different areas of the school, including boarding houses, and talked with groups of pupils, including boarders. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.