



26 January 2018

Dear Parents,

Re: The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) Regulatory Compliance Inspection (RCI) Report on Heritage School

Overview

Further to the ISI inspection of Heritage School on 4-5 May 2017, the report has been published and it is now a public document. Out of perhaps 150 specific points inspectors check, the report identifies two points of non-compliance. We wanted to explain them to you and assure you that we took immediate steps to address them. In fact, they were rectified by the end of the first day of the inspection.

The two points of non-compliance concerned background checks upon prospective employees. Please be assured that we take the vetting of our staff and the safety of your children extremely seriously. The points identified are small ones in the context of our complex safer recruitment and child protection system, about which no other concerns were raised. That said, we are happy to have those points identified for us by inspectors – it is the inspection system doing what it should – and to ensure our procedures conform to best practice.

More detailed explanation

The nature of an RCI Report

The summary evaluation on p.1 of the report seems rather blunt. That is because an RCI must report on each regulation as 'met' or 'not met', and if any regulations are 'not met' the summary must reflect this without qualification. It is also important to note that an RCI does not evaluate the quality of education provided at a school; it uses the same formulaic language for all schools. We can expect an Educational Quality Inspection (EQI) in 2020.

Points of non-compliance explained

As you look at the first seven parts, you will see that we had 'met' all regulations in six of them. In Part 3 we were considered non-compliant with respect to two points, and on a third point we were considered to have insufficient evidence to demonstrate compliance. As noted above, these three points concerned background checks prior to a staff member commencing employment.

First, the report says Heritage School 'cannot show that it has always obtained references'. I would emphasise the word 'show', since we have always taken references for employees, but we had not systematically retained hard copies on file where they were taken by email or by phone, an approach which was not questioned in any previous inspection. Our personnel filing system had been improved prior to the inspection so that we did keep hard copies of references for new employees on file. We were considered non-compliant on this issue because of historic gaps in our personnel files. We now have two references on file for all employees so we can unambiguously demonstrate compliance in the future.

Second, due to a change in the system since our last inspection in 2014 we had not checked our employees against a list of persons prohibited by the Secretary of State for Education from teaching and/or from management in schools. Let me emphasise that we have always undertaken criminal record checks and various other background checks that are part of our safer recruitment system. On the first day it took us 10 minutes to check all employees against this list and I'm pleased to report that none of us is on it! This additional background check is now part of our pre-employment vetting system.

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Third, staff who supervise children who are in the Early Years must make a declaration that they are not 'disqualified by association' from supervising children of that age. The somewhat contentious idea is that you could be disqualified from supervising children of this age if you lived with someone who has a criminal record. All of our teachers in the Infant and Junior Schools had made the declaration that they are not disqualified by association prior to the inspection, but two support staff had not yet done so. All relevant staff signed the declaration by the end of the first day of the inspection.

You will then see in Part 8 that two standards relating to leadership and management responsibilities are considered 'not met'. This is automatically triggered by the three points noted above because school leaders were considered insufficiently aware of regulations to ensure that all standards were met.

Let me reiterate that we take the safety of your children extremely seriously and that the points of non-compliance identified by inspectors were immediately rectified.

If you have any questions about the report, please do not hesitate to speak to me.

Yours sincerely,



J Fletcher
Headmaster