

Statement by Ampleforth College

Ofsted has published an inspection report on Ampleforth College today. We welcome Ofsted's conclusions on the good quality of education, behaviours and attitudes, our sixth form provision, personal development and pastoral care. We are deeply disappointed by their conclusions on safeguarding and consequently on leadership and management. The College welcomes the guidance of Ofsted and maintains a strong desire for a constructive working relationship with the regulator. We have always accepted its recommendations and worked to correct any failings identified and will continue to do so. However, in this case, the College and those advising us, have been obliged to conclude that Ofsted's report contains substantive factual inaccuracies which undermine its conclusions about our safeguarding and leadership.

Ampleforth College has been on a relentless drive to transform safeguarding policies, practices and culture. Since the end of 2020 we have commissioned the support of external safeguarding experts to help us put sector-leading procedures in place. We recruited three experienced safeguarding staff (from the Police, Social Services, and another school); strengthened our Trustees through the appointments which increased safeguarding expertise and reinforced independence, and commissioned four external audits by safeguarding professionals over this period. We were also inspected by Ofsted four times and accepted their recommendations on each occasion.

Importantly, the independent audits found us to be open and transparent with a strong safeguarding culture. Two Ofsted surveys found 100% of our parents felt their child to be safe and happy in the school. Their survey of students found 99.6% felt safe. The statutory safeguarding agencies we work with locally - Police, Children's Services, and Health - are happy with what we are doing to safeguard and promote the welfare of our students. Ofsted itself has acknowledged the progress we have made. Other, leading boarding schools have visited us to learn from our safeguarding practices. It is deeply regrettable that Ofsted has reached different conclusions.

We have used and are continuing to use Ofsted's procedures to demonstrate that the information relied upon to underpin their conclusions is factually inaccurate. Unfortunately, our steps to ensure accuracy have been received by Ofsted as a failure on our part to accept responsibility. It is with great reluctance and regret that we find ourselves compelled into this response but we cannot stand publicly behind a report containing ill-founded conclusions and we will continue to do everything in our power to demonstrate to Ofsted the need to revisit their assessment in the light of the evidence already in their possession.

Factual inaccuracies

Ofsted's conclusions rest on four cases or issues. In each instance, Ofsted's report contains factual inaccuracies and draws judgements which are not substantiated by the evidence base.

Case 1

Ofsted describe a case of two students who engaged in 'penetrative' sexual activity, despite being contrary to the statements of those involved and a witness. The police report states '*no implication of penetration*' and '*No further action for Police*'. The witness described '*a 3 second incident in which both [students] were laughing*'. A third student was in the room.

Ofsted states that students were not supervised sufficiently well. They were getting changed for sport and in line with usual safeguarding procedures staff are not allowed in a room while students change. Staff were on duty in the corridor outside the changing room.

Ofsted also says the school knew the risk factors around these children and that our risk assessments were insufficient. However, nothing in the previous behaviour of the students known to

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the school suggested there was a risk of physical sexual behaviour. There was, as it happens, relevant information in the hands of the statutory agencies which was not shared with the school until *after* the event.

Ofsted say the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is not sufficiently involved in safeguarding decisions. The College provided Ofsted with many examples of expert input from our Special Educational Needs (SEN) team on safeguarding issues concerning pupils with SEN.

Case 2

In the case of the Year 13 incident, Ofsted implies this was brought to their attention by whistle-blowers whereas the school fully reported to the appropriate agency that same day and immediately undertook an exercise to learn lessons. Ofsted's assertion that a student was missing for an hour and was unconscious in an orchard is simply incorrect. A logged phone call with the student and other evidence demonstrate that they were absent for a total of 15 minutes and were not unconscious. A trace of class A drugs was found in one student's room but there was no evidence of drugs being consumed.

In recognition that this was the Year 13 students' last night at school and there had been some frustrations about Covid restrictions, boarding House staff stayed up until 1.30am and were on duty all night. Established and maintained security procedures were in place including on-site security personnel, CCTV alarm systems, security stays on windows and other security devices. The students planned and co-ordinated their departure from the boarding houses after 2am, and damaged or disabled the security systems in order to evade detection. This is a matter of great regret and they were disciplined in a manner which reflected the seriousness of the incident. Long before Ofsted's inspection, the school commissioned and had implemented additional security measures.

Case 3

The Ofsted report implies there have been multiple cases where the school has failed to follow statutory guidance when a member of staff is dismissed. This is not correct. This is founded on a single case. In line with statutory and local authority guidance, the senior leadership team consulted the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and, with the LADO's support, decided not to refer the member of staff to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) until the relevant employment related process was complete. There was no question of the member of staff in question applying for another job in education in the meantime as this would require a reference and full disclosure from the College. Ofsted disagrees with the school and the LADO's assessment. The College had consulted the LADO for external specialist statutory guidance so they could responsibly discharge their safeguarding obligations. It is hard to reconcile this with Ofsted's criticism of senior leaders not accepting responsibility for safeguarding.

Case 4

Ofsted say that the College safeguarding is inadequate because the arrangements agreed between the College and the nearby Ampleforth Abbey had changed. They conclude that this means monks found guilty of child sexual abuse could live in the neighbouring monastery. This is incorrect.

In line with arrangements put in place in recent years, the School and the Abbey have become two separate institutions with delineated sites and marked boundaries. This separation is monitored and controlled by CCTV, fences, risk assessments, a robust Visitor Policy, and security personnel. The monastic community is subject to regulatory oversight and concerns about any person implicated in misconduct is a matter for determination between the monastic community, its Charitable Trustees

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and statutory regulators. All resident monks have enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service clearance (a requirement of the Catholic Church for any monk in ministry). Nine of the monks at Ampleforth Abbey work in the College as Chaplains. They have gone through all the usual checks for staff required by safer recruitment regulations. Like all other visitors to the school, monks who are not members of staff must register at Reception, wear a specifically coloured lanyard and be accompanied by an authorised member of staff at all times.

The College has no right to control who lives in the nearby monastic community. However, to make safeguarding as robust as possible, the College has agreed a draft Safeguarding Protocol with the Abbey and enlisted the support of local statutory agencies to maximise the effectiveness of these measures. The draft Protocol, which is in operation and was at the time of the inspection, sets out that both the school and North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NYSCP) will be informed of any possibility of a monk about whom there is a safeguarding concern living in the Abbey and will be able to make representations before any decision is made. Decisions will also be informed by external professional advice and risk assessments. This places the College in a far more informed and influential position than any other school where there is a risk of adults of concern residing or working nearby. Through this Protocol, we know there are no monks currently subject to a police investigation or without a current enhanced DBS check in place living at Ampleforth Abbey.

It would not be possible for any monks found guilty of child sexual abuse to return to the Abbey. First, the consequence of such a finding is that they would be laicised and are no longer monks. Second, the protocol requires any returning monk to be risk assessed. No person convicted of child sexual abuse would receive a positive risk assessment. In addition, the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) process enables the Police, Probation Service and others to assess and manage risks posed by MAPPA eligible offenders.

Conclusion

Commenting on the report's publication, Robin Dyer, Head of Ampleforth said "We are deeply disappointed that Ofsted should have produced a report based on a number of incorrect assumptions and factual inaccuracies regarding our safeguarding. We have made repeated attempts to correct the facts before the report was published. We do not lightly stand up to our regulator but in this instance the injustice cannot be allowed to stand. Ampleforth is a safe school. Our students know it and our parents and staff know it too."

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