

Inspection of Ampleforth College

Ampleforth, York, North Yorkshire YO62 4ER

Inspection dates: 30 November to 3 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Does the school meet the independent
school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

The arrangements to safeguard pupils, including the most vulnerable, at Ampleforth College remain ineffective.

There have been some improvements to the school's safeguarding arrangements since the previous inspection in March 2021. Most, but not all, pupils say that they feel safe. However, pupils are at risk of harm. Inspectors became aware of serious safeguarding incidents before, during and after the inspection. Leaders do not accept responsibility readily for the harm experienced by pupils in their care.

Teachers have high expectations of all pupils academically. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well at Ampleforth College. Pupils study for a wide range of qualifications, including in the sixth form.

During the school day, there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere in classrooms, corridors and outdoors. The vast majority of pupils behave well. Pupils know which repeated actions constitute bullying. As part of Anti-Bullying Week, they organised a charitable 'bake sale', heard from the school's monitors about the impact of bullying and took part in Odd Socks Day. Pupils were immersed in anti-bullying activities all week long.

Pupils enjoy a wide and diverse range of enrichment opportunities. For example, they can join the combined cadet force, take part in equestrian events and carry out investigations in science club. The school's extensive co-curricular offer provides pupils with a range of rich experiences in the arts, music, debating, sports and much more. The Christian Living curriculum enables pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, both online and offline. Recently, the Christian Living curriculum has included workshops for pupils on harmful sexual behaviour and harassment.

Pupils have access to independent and impartial careers advice. Careers education is planned for and delivered to Years 7 to 13. The school's careers programme helps pupils to make well-informed choices about their next steps in education, employment or training.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge. The curriculum is sequenced well to ensure that pupils build knowledge over time. Teachers check that pupils have understood what they have been taught. There are opportunities for pupils to revisit what they have been taught previously. Pupils apply prior knowledge to more complex tasks successfully. Leaders have considered any gaps in pupils' learning in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have adapted curriculum plans accordingly. However, in subjects such as history and geography, curriculum plans lack focus on how pupils' disciplinary knowledge builds over time.

Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported. For example, in science lessons, the glossary of key terms is available in at least five different languages.

Staff have received training to make sure that pupils' additional learning needs are understood and that lessons are adapted to meet their needs. As a result, pupils with SEND are learning increasingly well.

Staff understand the specific reading needs of pupils. Teachers ensure effective support for the weaker readers who find reading with fluency and for comprehension more challenging. Reading sits at the very heart of the curriculum in many subjects. The extensive and well-stocked library is very well used.

Pupils are polite and respectful to visitors. Most pupils engage well in learning and are keen to contribute. Older pupils take their mentoring responsibilities, in relation to younger pupils, seriously. Most pupils attend well and are punctual to lessons.

There are a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills in school. There is a strong focus on 'service' and contributing to the local and wider communities. In Christian Living lessons, pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. The Christian Living curriculum is responsive to issues that arise both locally and nationally. Pupils can recall what they have been taught about consent. They have a much less secure understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

The school's extensive co-curricular programme takes pupils' interests and needs into account. Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, leaders have ensured that a wide variety of enrichment opportunities are available.

Sixth-form leaders are ambitious for all sixth-form students. These leaders have a clear and principled vision for nurturing young scholars. Sixth-form students are positive about the support that they receive. Students are well prepared for their next stage in education, employment or training. For the very large majority, this entails commencing undergraduate studies at university. There is a wide and extensive range of co-curricular opportunities in subjects to stretch and challenge students as they prepare for university. These include, for example, an art scholars' group, a medical society and an Arcadia society for classicists.

Sixth-form students' wider readiness is supported through the enrichment curriculum, including tutorials. They engage willingly in wide-ranging discussions about matters such as Black History Month, harmful sexual behaviour and politics. Students enjoy listening to visiting speakers, including former students, in the headmaster's lecture series. Sixth-form students attend well. However, they are not always punctual to lessons. Leaders started to address this life skill at the beginning of this term.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Most staff feel well supported by leaders, including staff new to teaching. The majority of staff enjoy working at the school.

Leaders and trustees ensure that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Several new trustees have been appointed recently. Many new trustees have no former connection to the school. The new trustees have a wide range of relevant skills and experience. However, it is too early to judge the impact of the new trustees.

Trustees have challenged leaders to improve the arrangements for safeguarding. Although improvements have been made, there is still much work to do to ensure that the independent school standards are consistently met over time.

The process to separate the administration of the school from the abbey remains in progress. Information technology and telephony systems are still in the process of separation. During the inspection, leaders updated the school's closed-circuit television (CCTV) registration with the information commissioner's office and removed Ampleforth Abbey Trust as the data controller. Discussions about turning the symbolic, low-level boundary marker between the school and the abbey into an effective physical boundary continue.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

At the time of the last inspection, in March 2021, the headteacher had a veto over which monks could/could not reside at the abbey. This agreement is no longer in place. This means that there is now little that leaders can do if the abbot decides to admit monks of concern onto the Ampleforth Abbey site. Monks of concern would include those who have been accused of child sexual abuse, including any found guilty and any who are currently under investigation of child sexual abuse in the past and any who are under investigation currently. Leaders indicated that monks found guilty of child sexual abuse would be laicised and therefore could not reside at the Abbey. The terms of a draft information-sharing protocol required residing monks to be risk assessed and allowed the school to make representations about any proposal for a monk of concern to reside at the Abbey. However, at the time of this inspection, there was no such agreement in place, which limited the school's ability to ensure that no adults who may pose a potential safeguarding risk to children can gain access to the site.

All visitors to the school, including the nine monks who are chaplains and/or teachers, must sign in and wear a lanyard. The colour of the lanyard indicates whether the visitor must be accompanied or not while on the school's site, depending on the level of risk posed. Unfortunately, some younger pupils do not know what to do if a monk who should be accompanied is unaccompanied on the

school site. These younger pupils described all monks as 'trusted' adults. During this inspection, leaders said that they would clarify the school's safeguarding systems and procedures to these pupils immediately.

Whistle-blowers, who are worried that pupils are not safe, contacted Ofsted before and after the inspection about the following serious safeguarding incident. On their last day of school, 81 Year 13 students left their individual boarding houses at 2.30am. Leaders told inspectors that students were frustrated because they were unable to have a graduation party due to COVID-19 restrictions. Having disabled locks and alarms, they took a pre-planned route, carefully avoiding CCTV cameras, to an agreed destination. These unsupervised students consumed alcohol that had been brought onto site in secret. One student was found alone in an orchard, uncertain of how they had got there. Another student was hospitalised because of excess alcohol consumption. At the same time, leaders located, and alerted police to, Class A drugs found on the school's site. Staff, who were alert to the possibility of end-of-term celebrations, were not sufficiently vigilant. They did not take action to prevent these dangerous behaviours. Since this incident, leaders have started to use sniffer dogs and thermal-imaging cameras to prevent any recurrences.

On another occasion, very recently, some younger pupils with identified SEND engaged in sexual activity during the school day while not supervised sufficiently well. This sexual activity was witnessed by one of their peers. The school's staff knew of risk factors in relation to these children. They did not take proper account of the information they had when organising changing facilities for physical education lessons. Their risk assessments and subsequent actions were insufficient to prevent harmful behaviour. They remain unsure about how to protect vulnerable children who show overly sexualised behaviours. Senior leaders have not ensured that the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is sufficiently involved in safeguarding decisions for pupils with SEND when they use the boarding provision during the school day.

Leaders do not always follow statutory guidance when a member of staff is dismissed. This term, for instance, they did not act in accordance with 'Keeping children safe in education 2021'. Leaders do not make referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in a timely manner.

Despite these significant failings, there have been some improvements to the arrangements for safeguarding since the previous inspection in March 2021. The school's safeguarding team has been strengthened with the appointment of a new designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and two new deputy designated safeguarding leads. The DSL continues to test out staff's understanding of safeguarding training with five-a-week quizzes. When serious incidents occur, the DSL and his team make referrals to appropriate external agencies, such as the police and the local authority. The school continues to commission and rely on external support for safeguarding.

At the time of the progress monitoring inspection in March 2021, 599 online records relating to pupils who have left the school had not been checked to ascertain the extent of poor recording and misreporting of safeguarding incidents. The DSL has

now checked these historical entries and, as a result, made several safeguarding referrals to the appropriate agencies.

The school's safeguarding policy is in line with statutory guidance and is available on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- The arrangements to safeguard pupils are not effective. Leaders are not alert to a build-up of concerns about individual pupils. They do not take sufficient action to keep pupils safe from harm. In relation to pupils requiring additional support, leaders must act on warning signs. They must join the dots.
- Pastoral staff are aware of the general needs of pupils with SEND. However, they are not all alert to the additional vulnerabilities of pupils with complex needs. The role of the school's SENCo in safeguarding decisions is underdeveloped. To manage safeguarding risks more effectively, leaders should ensure that the school's SENCo is involved in safeguarding decisions and plans for pupils with SEND.
- The school is situated on the same site as Ampleforth Abbey. The abbot decides which monks can/cannot live on site. As a result, there is a risk that monks of concern could come to be on the Ampleforth site without the knowledge of the headteacher. Leaders indicated that monks found guilty of child sexual abuse would be laicised and therefore could not reside at the Abbey. The draft protocol required residing monks to be risk assessed and allowed the school to make representations about any proposal for a monk of concern to reside at the Abbey, but at the time of this inspection, there was no such agreement in place. Some pupils think that all monks are trusted adults. Leaders must ensure that pupils are adequately protected from contact with monks with a history of sexual abuse of children or who are under investigation for sexual offences.
- Leaders had not ensured that the statutory guidance is followed when a member of staff is dismissed from the school. Leaders must ensure that statutory guidance is followed and that the relevant authorities, including the DBS, are informed in a timely manner.
- In some of the foundation subjects, such as history and geography, curriculum leaders have not thought carefully enough about the disciplinary knowledge that pupils should be taught. Curriculum plans in these subjects are unclear about how disciplinary knowledge should be taught. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans are clear about how pupils' disciplinary knowledge builds over time.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	121735
DfE registration number	815/6006
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10193501
Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	456
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	215
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	St Laurence Education Trust
Chair	Edward Sparrow
Headteacher	Robin Dyer
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,370
Telephone number	01439 766000
Website	www.ampleforth.org.uk/college
Email address	head@ampleforth.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Additional inspection, 23 to 25 March 2021

Information about this school

- Ampleforth College is a Roman Catholic co-educational boarding and day school. It is situated within the grounds of the Benedictine Ampleforth Abbey. The main school building adjoins the abbey.
- Nine new trustees have been appointed since the progress monitoring inspection in March 2021. Five of the nine have no prior connection with Ampleforth College.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.
- The Safeguarding Alliance continues to work with the school.
- There is a large proportion of Year 7 to Year 13 pupils, 37%, on the school's roll with SEND. Pupils with SEND at a formal support stage or with an education, health and care plan represent 19% of the whole school cohort. The remainder are supported through the graduated approach at the school.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This inspection is an aligned inspection. Aligned inspections are carried out by two inspection teams, education and social care. Two separate reports are published, education and boarding. A summary report is also published.
- This was Ofsted's fourth inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. As on the previous visits, inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation.
- Ampleforth College was previously inspected by Ofsted on 3 to 5 February 2021, 23 to 25 March 2021, and 24 to 25 September 2020. The 24 to 25 September inspection was an emergency inspection. The inspections of 3 to 5 February and 23 to 25 March were progress monitoring inspections. Prior to this, the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) carried out a progress monitoring inspection at Ampleforth College in January 2020. The last ISI integrated inspection of the school and boarding provision was on 22 to 25 January 2013. The last regulatory compliance inspection was conducted by ISI on 7 to 8 March 2018.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that a serious incident that occurred at the setting since the previous inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incident were

considered alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, history, English and personal, social and health education. Inspectors talked to pupils about their work, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to teachers.
- An inspector met with three trustees online, including the chair of trustees and the trustee with responsibility for safeguarding.
- Inspectors talked to a number of pupils, including sixth-form students, both formally and informally.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to the school's work to safeguard pupils. Inspectors spoke to staff about the impact of the safeguarding training they receive. The school's single central record, which includes the recruitment checks made on staff, was reviewed by an inspector. Inspectors met with the school's DSL and the school's deputy designated safeguarding leads.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, curriculum leaders, the school's SENCo and a number of staff, including some staff who are new to teaching.
- An inspector toured the school premises to check compliance with the independent school premises standards.
- The inspection team considered the views of 146 members of staff and 265 pupils who responded to Ofsted's surveys. Inspectors also considered the 325 responses from parents to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Michele Costello, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Shaw	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patricia Head	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Reeves	Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 8 Where section 87(1) of the 1989 Act[11] applies in relation to a school the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
 - 8(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders while they are accommodated at the school; and
 - 8(b) such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools or, where applicable, the National Minimum Standards for Residential Special Schools or the National Minimum Standards for Accommodation of Students under Eighteen by Further Education Colleges.
- 14 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that pupils are properly supervised through the appropriate deployment of school staff.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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