

# Carmel Christian School

Response to Ofsted's Progress Monitoring Inspection, 17 March 2022



The proprietor, governors and staff at Carmel Christian School remain committed to providing an excellent standard of education to all of our pupils in a safe and secure environment in which everyone is accepted and valued.

We are pleased that our recent progress monitoring inspection noted the many positive improvements that have been made since our full inspection in June 2021. In person, the inspector recognised and praised our efforts, commenting that we are on the right trajectory for sustainable change. We recognise that an Ofsted report is not necessarily the place to record such an acknowledgement, which is why we have chosen to give this response in order to give a fuller picture of the inspection findings. Furthermore, it is an opportunity for us to give context to the outcomes.

The inspection report records that we have now met most of the Independent School Standards that were unmet at the June 2021 inspection. Additionally, it recorded a couple of standards that remained unmet. We will now outline the reasons Ofsted gave for the unmet standards and provide our responses:

## Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

### Standards 7, 7(a) and 7(b)

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#### ***Safeguarding recording systems***

In regards to our safeguarding recording systems, the report states that *'at times record-keeping is not consistently robust.'*

However, what the report doesn't say is that this refers to one singular very recent incident of a hand-written record that was about to be officially typed up. We feel that this finding was unfair considering the context. All other incidents were recorded using a proforma, and this one was about to follow suit.

#### ***Safeguarding Policies***

Regarding our policies, the report states that *'some other policies relating to safeguarding arrangements are not updated as soon as new statutory safeguarding legislation comes into place.'*

However, it was only one policy (not 'some') that had not been updated – and that was because it had not yet expired. It was due for review and updating on 31 March 2022, just two weeks after the inspection took place. While we appreciate that new legislation had already come into place, we believe this judgement to be unfair. After all, we could have changed the date of the legislation on the policy as a mindless

exercise rather than taking the time to consider the policy as a whole – the latter was always our intention, and it is what we subsequently did.

### ***Safer Recruitment***

Regarding safer recruitment, the report states: *‘The selection process as set out in current legislation has not been followed. The interview processes and records are not sufficient.’*

In context, we had hired a volunteer to a full-time position. At the time of appointment, we had a change in HR personnel and, unfortunately, the recruitment process did not happen as it should have done – we did not advertise the position because we wanted to recruit in-house, and although an informal interview took place, a formal one did not. The individual who was hired has been well known to the setting for many years and had already completed all the necessary safeguarding checks. Retrospectively, we realised our mistake in the recruitment process, but since the person was already appointed, we could not go back in time to advertise or conduct a formal interview.

When we received a visit from a local supporting safeguarding agency in January 2022, they, too, realised that a mistake had been made, and they advised us as follows: *“All new staff to go through the safer recruitment procedure, as documented, including staff who are already volunteers or involved with Carmel Christian [School].”* In other words, we were told to ensure that correct procedures were followed in future, which we already had every intention of doing. However, we were not given any guidance from this agency about how to deal with the mistake that had already happened. The inspector, though, expected that we would have conducted a risk assessment following the recruitment.

We are understandably disappointed that the expectations from Ofsted did not match the external input we received. Additionally, with the measures we had taken, we are confident that we did not jeopardise any of our children’s or staff’s safety or welfare by recruiting this individual.

## **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

### **Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)**

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Regarding our leadership and management, the report states: *‘The proprietor has not ensured that the school meets the independent school standards in full ... Additional training is taking place to increase governors’ and leaders’ knowledge and understanding of the independent school standards. However, this is recent and its impact is not yet widespread.’*

Since the inspection found the safeguarding standards 7, 7(a) and 7(b) unmet (as above), it reflects on the leadership of the school. Therefore, by stating that we have not met the standards in full and that the impact of training is not yet widespread,

the inspector was referring to the aforementioned unmet standards. However, as we have endeavoured to explain, we believe that the context of those three findings show that the judgements were unfair.

### **Our Ofsted status**

Since this inspection was a progress monitoring inspection, not a full inspection, the inspector only inspected us in light of the previously unmet standards. It is Ofsted's procedure to reassess a school's status only at a full inspection. Therefore, at present, our Ofsted rating remains unchanged. We are, however, positive that the changes we have incorporated into our everyday practice will secure us an improved rating at our next full inspection.