

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
www.gov.uk/ofsted



15 October 2025

Sarah Roberts and Martha Hawes
Co-Headteachers
Didcot Girls' School
Manor Crescent
Didcot
Oxfordshire
OX11 7AJ

Dear Miss Roberts and Ms Hawes

Urgent inspection of Didcot Girls' School

Following my visit with Louise Walker, His Majesty's Inspector, Catherine Old, His Majesty's Inspector, and Tim Hill, His Majesty's Inspector to the school on 23 and 24 September 2025, I write on behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and the time you took to discuss the school.

This inspection was conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for urgent inspections. The inspection was carried out because His Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school as concerns had been raised with Ofsted.

We do not give graded judgements on urgent inspections. However, if we find some evidence that overall standards may be declining, but where no serious concerns have been identified, then the next inspection will normally be a graded inspection, which will be carried out under section 5 of the Act and be brought forward. If we have serious concerns, we will deem the urgent inspection as a graded inspection immediately.

Evidence

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding and child protection arrangements. We met with the co-headteachers, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust, other leaders at the school, representatives of the local governing body, including the chair, the chair of the board of trustees and three other trustees. Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils and staff. We also considered the views of staff and pupils through their responses to Ofsted's surveys. We had discussions with representatives of the local authority and the Department for Education.

Inspectors spoke to pupils informally throughout the school day and observed pupils' behaviour. We scrutinised minutes of trustees' meetings and meetings of the local governing body. We reviewed attendance records and information about the school's personal development provision.

Having considered the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time:

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Main findings

Leaders have strengthened safeguarding processes and practices further since the last inspection. They reflect deeply when key safeguarding incidents occur and take appropriate action to make any necessary improvements to safeguarding arrangements. Leaders consider carefully when referrals to other agencies are appropriate and needed, including to the police and to the local authority. Senior leaders handle any allegations about adults effectively, liaising closely with the local authority designated officer and applying the right thresholds for referral. The school fulfils statutory requirements to ensure staff are suitable to work with young people, although the organisation of the single central record could be sharpened further.

Trustees and members of the local governing body maintain a secure oversight of safeguarding at the school. They are well trained and knowledgeable. They discuss relevant issues appropriately and regularly, challenging leaders when necessary. They ensure that leaders act effectively when any learning is identified. They also ensure that policies and risk assessments are up to date and compliant.

Staff have a good understanding of their roles in safeguarding pupils because of the regular and targeted training that they receive. This includes all aspects of safeguarding, including their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty. They refer any safeguarding issues appropriately and quickly. They know that any serious concerns need to be reported immediately and verbally to the appropriate leaders, in line with the most recent statutory guidance. More recent training for staff has further strengthened their understanding about how and when to report concerns about other adults.

Pupils are confident about raising any worries or issues that they have. This is founded on highly positive relationships between pupils and with staff. Staff work hard to make sure that pupils experience a strong sense of belonging. The ethos of the school is characterised by respect for others, whatever their backgrounds. Pupils trust that when they raise any concerns, appropriate action will be taken by the school. As one pupil said, expressing the views of the vast majority, staff 'help you find solutions' to problems. Pupils feel safe at school.

The school's records relating to safeguarding demonstrate diligence and vigilance. Concerns are extensively documented, along with the actions that the school takes in

response, including how parents and carers and external agencies are involved and communicated with. Leaders have, therefore, detailed knowledge of any vulnerabilities that pupils have and the potential risks that they might experience. While staff are informed of these in careful, sensitive, appropriate ways, this is an aspect that the school rightly continues to work on. The school ensures that support for pupils is arranged and closely monitored.

Leaders make appropriate checks when pupils are absent from school as well as on the safety of any pupils who attend alternative provision. This is particularly important in relation to a proportion of more vulnerable pupils whose attendance is lower than that of the majority of pupils. Leaders use a range of robust approaches to improve attendance, based on in-depth knowledge of individual pupils. The school liaises closely with pupils' parents and other agencies to remove any barriers to attending school. Although often complex factors are involved, leaders demonstrate how their actions have an impact on improving these pupils' attendance.

The school's personal development programme furnishes pupils with a wide range of knowledge about how to keep themselves safe. They learn about potential risks that they might face and how they could tackle them. Pupils are well informed, for example, about internet safety and the dangers associated with drugs and gambling. They learn, in an age-appropriate way, about how to form and maintain healthy relationships. They understand the importance of consent in relationships and about the risks of harmful sexual behaviours, including online. There are some aspects of this curriculum that could be further developed, which leaders have already rightly identified, for example pupils' understanding of radicalisation and extremism.

Additional support

Ridgeway Education Trust ensures that the chief executive officer has dedicated time to support the school's senior leaders regularly, including with the school's arrangements for safeguarding. The trust provides resources to support staff training about safeguarding and the development of the personal development programme for pupils. Safeguarding practice is shared across schools in the trust in pursuit of consistency and to facilitate learning from good practice. The school has participated fully in the local authority's reviews of safeguarding at the school, valuing and acting on the outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the board of trustees and the CEO of Ridgeway Education Trust, the Department for Education's regional director and the director of children's services for Oxfordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted reports website.

Yours sincerely

Matthew Haynes
His Majesty's Inspector