

School inspection report

1 to 3 October 2024

Southbank International School Kensington

36-38 Kensington Park Road

London

W11 3BU

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders consistently promote the school's inclusive ethos alongside its pursuit of academic excellence within a global context. They have a deep understanding of the specific context of the school and of the needs of its pupils. Leaders use their thorough skills and knowledge to evaluate the success of the school's provision in achieving its aims. Leaders actively seek the views of staff, pupils and parents as part of this process so that decisions are well-informed by perspectives across the whole school community.
2. Leaders implement the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum effectively, with careful consideration for the needs of the pupils. Pupils of all ages and aptitudes make good progress. Teachers enable pupils to recognise and explain their progress and achievements and understand how they can improve their work further. Leaders have recently identified the need to improve pupils' skills in relating letters to the sounds they represent. A new phonics scheme of work has been implemented alongside a new mathematics scheme, although these have not yet been embedded for sufficient time for their impact to be assessed.
3. Leaders communicate clearly the importance that they put on every pupil feeling that they belong in the school community, through their actions, displays and individual support so that pupils are both supported and supportive of their peers. Leaders shape provision to reflect their understanding that pupils' pastoral wellbeing is an essential pre-requisite for learning. They prioritise this from the start when new children and pupils join the school so that they can engage in learning immediately with a considerable sense of security. Pupils' personal development and confidence continue to be nurtured extremely well throughout their time at the school. Leaders promote values of inclusivity, consideration and respect consistently and successfully. They have established a community in which pupils feel safe and secure, knowing that they are accepted, valued and cared for, regardless of the challenges they may be facing. This is a significant strength of the school.
4. Leaders promote staff and pupils' mutual understanding that everyone is to be made welcome and included. Pupils appreciate the celebration and consideration of diversity within the school and the reassurance that this brings when they first arrive. Children in the early years learn to work and play alongside their peers and to take an interest in their lives. The curriculum and daily activities of the school enable older pupils to develop a wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of the diverse cultures which make up their own community and that of the wider world. As a result, pupils acquire a mature appreciation of the ways in which they can benefit from learning about each other's cultures and faiths. They engage with empathy in the opportunities which leaders provided for them to contribute to their school and wider society and actively seek out ways in which they can do so. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in British society and the international community.
5. Leaders have established a culture in which both staff and pupils understand the importance of sharing and acting on safeguarding concerns. Pupils are well versed in the means by which they can protect themselves online and in school. Staff are vigilant in identifying and reporting concerns, which leaders swiftly record and address. The proprietor exercises close oversight of safeguarding and staff recruitment procedures, playing an active role in improving policy and procedures when required.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- enable pupils of all ages to acquire a secure understanding of the sounds that letters make through the implementation of the newly introduced phonics programme.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

6. Leaders actively promote the importance of pupils' sense of belonging to an inclusive school community alongside a rigorous academic curriculum which prepares them for their future lives. The IB values and principles of knowledge, personal responsibility and open-mindedness towards others are embedded throughout the school. Staff promote these in lessons and throughout the day whilst fostering individual pupils' pastoral wellbeing through bespoke strategies and care.
7. Leaders continually seek the opinions of all groups within the school community. As a result, pupils, staff and parents are confident that their concerns and ideas are given serious and informed consideration within the process of evaluation and improvement.
8. Leaders work collaboratively with the proprietor to update policies and procedures regularly and ensure that these comply with current statutory guidance. Staff implement the school's policies and procedures fairly and consistently and understand their responsibility to do so. Pupils understand school procedures well and play their part well in their implementation.
9. Leaders use their good knowledge and skills effectively to evaluate provision and identify areas for improvement. They follow this up with diligent research and consultation with staff and pupils before identifying the precise actions which need to be taken. New initiatives are implemented carefully and with robust monitoring and support systems in place to ensure they are effective. As a result, the wellbeing of pupils is promoted by increasingly effective provision which is tailored to their needs.
10. Leaders have drawn up a suitable accessibility plan which identifies the actions taken to improve pupils' access to the premises, curriculum and information. Leaders ensure that the school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 through implementation of the plan, alongside their promotion of respect for individuals' cultures, beliefs, sexual orientation and any disabilities.
11. The proprietor maintains effective oversight of how well leaders succeed in fulfilling their responsibilities. Leaders provide regular reports to the proprietor about the means by which the school fulfils its statutory obligations. They share details of areas for development and progress towards these goals. The proprietor reviews these reports regularly, alongside information gleaned from visits to the school.
12. Leaders demonstrate a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities and have the knowledge they need to fulfil these effectively. They liaise as required with external agencies and make appropriate use of the advice provided by external advisors in health and safety and in safeguarding.
13. Leaders have a strategic and effective approach to the identification and mitigation of risks associated with the safety, safeguarding and pastoral wellbeing of pupils. Risks associated with the school premises are identified and suitably mitigated. Pastoral leaders regularly assess and review risks to pupils who are undergoing challenges in their lives and how these may be minimised. Leaders have a carefully considered understanding of the contextual risks specific to the school and implement effective measures in response to these.
14. A suitable procedure for parental complaints is implemented effectively. Leaders respond swiftly to informal complaints so that there have been no formal complaints lodged in recent years.

15. Information about the school and its policies and procedures is available on the school website and provided to parents. Detailed annual reports are provided to parents of pupils throughout the school.
16. Staff in the early years work closely with parents, sharing information about the setting and their children's pastoral and educational wellbeing. Leaders in the setting provide effective support for staff to help them to continually develop their skills and support the children in their care.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

- 17. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Pupils follow the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme for primary aged pupils. Children in the early years follow the related programme for their age group. Leaders adapt and enhance the programme effectively in response to the needs of individual pupils and larger cohorts. They incorporate a wide range of educational visits into the curriculum, encouraging pupils to view London as an extension of their classroom. These strategies enable pupils to make good progress in acquiring skills and knowledge in all areas of learning and IB units of inquiry.
19. Pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) receive personalised support which enables them to make good progress in acquiring English language skills. They engage in their learning at an appropriate level because they are well supported through teachers' effective use of a wide range of well-chosen resources to develop their English skills and comprehension.
20. Leaders have established a structured programme of monitoring of teaching and learning alongside a thorough assessment process. The information gained from both sources is used effectively with teachers to assess the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and to identify areas for development.
21. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and of IB teaching approaches. They implement the curriculum effectively, including the expectation that pupils will take responsibility for their learning and behaviour in class. Teachers provide guidance for pupils so that they develop the ability to reflect on their work and develop their knowledge and skills through independent research and investigations. As a result, pupils are self-motivated and interested in their work.
22. Teachers plan their lessons well, including activities which allow pupils to pursue their learning to a high level through a combination of independent and guided learning. Teachers make effective use of assessment data and observations to identify pupils' individual learning needs and determine how best to adapt their teaching, using the wide range of resources available to support them. Lessons are well paced so that pupils are focused and make good progress. Teachers make effective use of their knowledge of pupils' pastoral needs when supporting pupils to manage their behaviour in the classroom.
23. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well in response to targeted support both in and outside lessons. Leaders allocate time and resources as appropriate to meet the needs of pupils, including specialised reading and mathematics programmes, assistive technology and time spent in the garden or library. Teachers make effective use of the guidance and resources provided by external professionals to support these pupils. They implement individual strategies in the classroom and work closely with leaders to monitor pupils' progress and adapt goals and activities when needed.
24. Teachers provide pupils with constructive feedback on their work. Pupils use this and their own self-assessment to identify the means by which they can improve their knowledge and understanding. Pupils see self-review as an integral part of their learning and relate this to the key IB learning attributes of being principled and open-minded.
25. Pupils acquire mature skills, knowledge and understanding in their units of inquiry, which incorporate language and communication alongside science, technology and humanities. Children in the early years adopt this method of learning from the start, learning about the world around them whilst acquiring good mathematical and language skills. Staff assess their responses and outcomes

on a daily basis, adapting teaching and activities in response to children's needs and interests. Children make good progress in readiness for their transition to Year 1.

26. Pupils in the lower primary years continue to make good progress in acquiring new skills and knowledge. However, their understanding of the sounds that letters make when reading and writing is not as well developed as in other areas of their learning. Leaders have identified this as an area for improvement and have put a new phonics programme in place to develop these skills consistently. This is in its early stages of implementation.
27. Teachers provide older pupils with challenging goals which enable them to develop a mature ability to express themselves orally and in writing. Pupils use sophisticated language in poetry and storytelling and write clear explanations of their projects. Teachers encourage a love of number and of mathematical exploration through activities which prompt pupils to experiment with different methods. As a result, pupils develop advanced mathematical skills, applying these confidently to real life contexts within other units of study.
28. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is designed around pupils' interests. Activities are well attended and contribute to pupils' development of skills in related subject areas. These include computing, scientific and artistic skills and opportunities to take part in performances and sporting fixtures.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

29. **All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

30. Leaders prioritise pupils' sense of belonging to the school community. This is evident in the words and actions of adults and pupils as well as the physical environment of the school. Leaders identify the means to support pupils' individual pastoral and learning needs. They provide activities and events which help pupils to understand how they can contribute to the school community and benefit from being part of it. This provides reassurance and comfort for the very large proportion of pupils who have undergone substantial upheaval or challenge in their lives. Pupils' confidence grows quickly as a result, enhanced by their academic successes, which they are able to achieve despite personal challenges.
31. Leaders work closely with parents to identify and meet pupils' needs. They tailor support for new and existing pupils, responding immediately and effectively to concerns. As a result, pupils feel safe, supported and happy in school. Pupils, both those who are established and those who have recently joined the school, are confident and self-possessed. They value the school's ethos of belonging and show empathy and sensitivity when discussing emotions.
32. Pupils who arrive with little or no knowledge of the English language, or whose arrival follows considerable disruption in their home or educational lives, receive highly effective support through a range of personalised and carefully judged strategies. These include support from pupils and staff who speak their home language and, when appropriate, a shorter school day. Leaders enable established pupils to develop their understanding of the needs of others through their involvement in supporting newer classmates.
33. Pupils have a mature understanding of the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships. This is fostered through the relationships education programme, delivered effectively and sensitively within personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Leaders have drawn up a programme with appropriate content. They communicate closely with parents when revisions are made about the content of specific topics. Leaders and teachers adapt lessons and incorporate additional sessions focused on specific themes into the school day when needed in response to pupils' needs and circumstances.
34. Leaders' promotion of an inclusive school community includes meaningful and effective communication of the importance of respect for others. The curriculum enables pupils to gain a mature understanding of the importance of respect for others' beliefs and personal characteristics. School events and resources such as library books further increase pupils' awareness of the varied experiences and perspectives of people within their school and the wider world. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to explore these themes further within historical and global units of study. As a result, older pupils are highly aware of the importance of respect and have a detailed knowledge of the protected characteristics, such as disability, race and belief, identified within the Equality Act 2010.
35. Staff in the early years are alert to the behaviour and responses of the children in their care. They support them well so that they learn to manage their emotions and develop resilience. Older pupils adhere well to the behaviour policy, which is implemented fairly and consistently by leaders and staff. This is reflected in the high standards of behaviour and support for others which are the norm

throughout the school. Leaders respond to concerns swiftly and effectively so that incidents of bullying are rare and quickly addressed.

36. The IB theme of 'who we are' enables pupils to learn how to sustain a healthy lifestyle both mentally and physically through curriculum units and the PSHE programme. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in physical activity through specialist-taught physical education (PE) lessons and in team sports. These, alongside extra-curricular activities, enable pupils to develop a wide range of physical skills well. Staff in the early years support children in maintaining good oral health. Older pupils understand the importance of making healthy choices from those on offer at lunchtimes.
37. Leaders implement suitable policies and procedures to maintain appropriate health and safety arrangements. These include regular review of policy implementation and appropriate staff training when required. Suitable procedures are in place to prevent risk from fire. First aid and medication are administered when required by appropriately trained adults in suitable accommodation. The premises are well maintained.
38. Leaders allocate sufficient adults to supervise pupils effectively on the premises and when on educational visits. Suitable numbers of appropriately qualified staff supervise children in the early years throughout the day. Appropriate supervision of pupils when travelling on transport arranged by the school is in place.
39. Leaders maintain admissions and attendance registers as required by current statutory guidance. They monitor attendance regularly and ensure that reasons for non-attendance are identified and recorded appropriately.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 40. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

41. Leaders foster a culture of inclusivity where every pupil is encouraged to play a part in contributing to the wellbeing of others. Adults model respect and acceptance for those around them, and pupils follow their example with much success, supported by the PSHE curriculum and the high expectations of leaders and staff.
42. Leaders actively promote the importance of what the IB curriculum refers to as 'international mindedness' and the benefits of learning about and from the cultures and customs of diverse cultures within the school community. Teachers successfully deliver units of study which enable pupils to develop knowledge and understanding of and respect for different cultures and cultural viewpoints. Pupils gain a clear understanding of the importance of combating discrimination and prejudice in their PSHE lessons and assemblies, including pupil-led assemblies conducted in a wide range of languages. As a result, pupils develop a mature appreciation of the value of diversity.
43. Leaders prepare pupils well for their future education and adult lives through a curriculum-wide focus on personal responsibility for learning. Staff in the early years model supportive relationships and help the children in their care to engage with their peers. From the early years onwards, pupils learn to routinely plan and execute their own projects and investigations, developing skills that are likely to stand them in good stead in the workplace. Teachers also plan lessons which help older pupils to develop and apply effective social skills and to identify how to fulfil different roles within a team. They employ these skills effectively when working together, investigating topics such as sustainable housing or equal rights and presenting their findings to others
44. Pupils engage in a wide range of educational visits and curriculum projects which nurture their understanding of the services and institutions of British society. These focus on topics such as the British justice system and the Houses of Parliament. Leaders make use of London as an extension of the classroom, ensuring that pupils develop their knowledge of the wider community in which they live.
45. Pupils learn about democracy within their school and the international community and develop their understanding how the electoral system works in Britain and abroad. They engage in the democratic process by voting for school council members. School councillors act on other pupils' behalf to help improve the school. The ideas that pupils raise, including those which centre around equality, are heard and considered by school leaders.
46. Leaders promote pupils' understanding of the importance of personal liberty and of rules and laws through units of study which focus on these themes. Teachers reinforce the importance of personal principles throughout the curriculum and daily life so that pupils understand the need to respect rules and expectations. Older pupils carry out project work on topics which centre around issues such as human rights, organisational corruption, and challenges experienced by people living in different circumstances across the world. As a result, pupils develop a mature understanding of such themes and sense of responsibility towards others.
47. Children in the early years engage in role-play activities that help them learn about how money is used in society. As they move through the school, pupils learn about the cost of living, budgeting and

issues relating to economic inequality. Older pupils develop their economic awareness through setting up and running their own small businesses.

48. Leaders develop pupils' sense of responsibility towards others effectively, including by encouraging them to support other pupils in the school through carrying out roles such as buddies, supporters and translators. Leaders encourage pupils to support charities which are meaningful to them, many of which are selected by pupils themselves. These include national charities as well as those supporting vulnerable local groups and people who have suffered from natural disasters. Pupils make contributions to society locally through donations to foodbanks and organisations assisting homeless people and parents who lack support.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 49. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

50. Leaders maintain suitable arrangements to safeguard pupils in line with current statutory guidance. They promote a culture in which pupils' safeguarding needs are swiftly recognised and addressed. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that they can share their concerns with trusted adults who will act quickly and sensitively on their behalf.
51. Staff, governors and safeguarding leaders are suitably and regularly trained. Staff recognise the importance of adhering to the staff code of conduct. Regular and specific training means that staff are quick to identify and report any instances when the code of conduct has not been followed. Leaders follow suitable procedures in response to any allegations or concerns about adults in the school, seeking external guidance when required.
52. Staff have a secure understanding of their responsibilities. They are alert to signs of potential concern in their pupils, reporting these promptly and at an early stage. Safeguarding leaders manage and record concerns about pupils appropriately, including those which relate to allegations of child-on-child abuse. They provide suitable support for pupils affected by safeguarding issues, including any mental health concerns. Leaders work closely with parents to support pupils and liaise with external agencies when required, referring safeguarding concerns to them when appropriate.
53. Leaders have a clear awareness of the wider safeguarding risks to the pupils in the school. They have drawn up a suitable plan to mitigate these, including those associated with radicalisation and extremism. Leaders understand their responsibilities in ensuring children do not go missing in education. They inform the local authority of pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition points as required by current statutory guidance.
54. The proprietor maintains effective filtering systems to keep pupils safe when working online. Leaders monitor these diligently and systematically, taking immediate and appropriate action when alerted to attempted breaches. Teachers implement the curriculum effectively in computing and PSHE lessons to provide pupils with a detailed understanding of how they can promote their own online safety. As a result, pupils understand the means by which they can maintain their online privacy and how to respond when their safety is under threat.
55. Leaders implement rigorous procedures to ensure adults working in the school are appropriately checked before they commence employment. They maintain an accurate single central record of appointments.
56. The proprietor maintains effective oversight of safeguarding in the school, including through regular meetings with leaders, staff and adults, and an annual review of policy and procedures. They respond effectively to review procedures should any incidents occur and strengthen these when necessary.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 57. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	Southbank International School Kensington
Department for Education number	207/6383
Address	Southbank International School Kensington 36–38 Kensington Park Road London W11 3BU
Phone number	0207 243 3803
Email address	kensington@southbank.org
Website	www.southbank.org
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd
Chair	Mr Michael Drake
Principal	Mr David MacMorran
Age range	2 to 11
Number of pupils	152
Date of previous inspection	30 November to 3 December 2021

Information about the school

58. Southbank International School Kensington is a co-educational day school. It is one of a family of three Southbank International Schools, the other two being in Westminster and Hampstead. Originally founded as The American International School in 1979, it moved to its current site in Kensington in 1992. It is owned and governed by the Cognita Schools group. The school is divided into three sections: early childhood, for children aged to five years; lower primary for pupils aged five to eight years and upper primary for pupils aged eight to eleven years. Pupils follow the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme. The current principal took up his post in September 2023.
59. There are 16 children in the early years. The setting comprises a single class for children in Nursery and Reception. The school has been granted exemption from the learning and development requirements of the statutory framework for the early years foundation stage (EYFS).
60. The school has identified 30 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
61. English is an additional language for 70 pupils, of whom 46 receive support.
62. The school states its aims are to enable pupils to fulfil their potential by supporting their needs and developing their strengths. It seeks to promote academic excellence and enthusiasm for inquiry-based learning through a curriculum which features a global outlook. The school intends to promote the importance of academic reflection and open-mindedness alongside the development of communication skills.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

1 to 3 October 2024

63. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with members of the proprietorial body
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

65. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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