

Southbank International School, Westminster

63–65 Portland Place, London W1B 1QR

Inspection dates

8 October 2014

Overall outcome

Independent school standards not met

Context of the inspection

- This unannounced progress monitoring inspection was undertaken at the request of the Department for Education. The purpose of the inspection was to evaluate the progress made by the school in the implementation of its action plan.
- An emergency inspection was undertaken by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors at the request of the Department for Education in May 2014. They checked the school's compliance with all the independent school standards referenced in Part 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils) and Part 4 (suitability of proprietors and staff and supply staff). Inspectors found that while the school met all independent school standards for checking the suitability of proprietors and staff and supply staff, several standards were not met in relation to students' welfare, health and safety.
- In July 2014, the school submitted an action plan to the Department of Education. This plan described the steps the school would take to meet all of the independent school standards. This plan was evaluated by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The time scales were found to be generally acceptable. However, the action plan was judged to require improvement because it gave insufficient detail regarding the expected impact and effectiveness of the proposed actions.
- The school submitted a revised plan to the Department of Education on 18 September 2014; the revised plan was evaluated as part of this inspection.

Main findings

- The school has undertaken a significant number of actions to tackle the failings identified in the May 2014 inspection in relation to students' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. However, in practice, these have yet to become well established. Leaders at all levels are monitoring that the actions are being implemented by staff. Nonetheless, the two independent school standards that relate to pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety remain unmet.

Pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety

- The inspection of May 2014 found that the school's arrangements for safeguarding students were not sufficiently robust. In particular, the designated safeguarding leads were not demonstrating that they had sufficient status and authority in the school to influence its safeguarding policy and practice. It was also found that none of the senior leadership team showed any detailed awareness of newly published statutory guidance on safeguarding. As a result, they had not evaluated what aspects of the new guidance they might have to implement in the short term or what implications it might have for some of their recruitment practice.
- In its action plan the school indicated a number of actions for ensuring students' welfare, health and safety, including a review of the school's safeguarding policy and the job description of the designated leads for child protection.
- The school has implemented these actions within the stated time scales. One designated lead has remained in post. A member of the senior management team is acting as the senior lead.

Both have undergone higher-level training, as has the executive principal, who now has overall responsibility for safeguarding.

- Following consultation with local authority designated officers, a new safeguarding policy together with job descriptions for the designated leads are now in place. These provide a clear framework for safeguarding and make clear to staff their responsibilities for reporting concerns. The policy is linked to the new staff code of conduct and other key aspects of safeguarding such as the use of physical restraint. However, the policy has some omissions. These are:
 - no explicit reference to the 'acceptable use' policy relating to the safe use of information and communication technology
 - missing details about reporting any allegations against the most senior leaders and the school board in this policy or in the associated document for dealing with allegations against staff
 - no link or reference to the school's whistleblowing policy
 - no specific reference made to the attendance policy
 - no guidance for staff on the management of 'children missing from education'
 - no guidance on how the executive principal will evaluate or report on the effectiveness of safeguarding in line with part two of the *'Keeping children safe in education'* guidance.
- Good use is being made of the local authority officers and an adviser in providing advice to support senior leaders and training for staff.
- The extended tutorial time each day puts advisers and grade leaders at the heart of monitoring and supporting students' welfare. Staff and students are clear about who they should go to should they have any concerns. The profile of, and importance of, safeguarding have been significantly enhanced across the school.
- The revised arrangements for safeguarding are recent. The designated leads are using the dedicated time they have been given to fulfil their roles and develop practice. Accountability for the effectiveness of the impact of training and new arrangements is through line management meetings. It is not clear how any weaknesses in the system will be recognised and acted on to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust.
- Leaders say they are confident that staff at all levels will fulfil the safeguarding roles and that any reported concerns will be effectively managed. However, leaders place too much reliance on their confidence in staff that all concerns will be recognised and reported. Consequently, while much has been put in place, the new systems are not robust enough to meet safeguarding requirements.
- The inspection of May 2014 found that the school had not done enough to ensure that some key risks were assessed or monitored with sufficient rigour to safeguard pupils. Accident logs showed a number of incidents over time on the main stairs in the Portland Place site, including trips and falls. The relevant risk assessment was of poor quality and did not pay due attention to the actual or potential risks. There was no risk assessment for the journey that students frequently take as pedestrians between the Portland Place and the nearby Conway Street sites (a distance of about 0.4 miles). The school's written policy on education trips and visits made reference to 'unofficial visits'. In its action plan, the school indicated that it would revise the policy on education trips and visits, removing any reference to 'unofficial visits', and provide training for staff. They also undertook to put in place the required risk assessments and to improve the recording of accidents. When the initial action plan was evaluated it was found that it was not made clear how leaders would check on the effectiveness of the staff deployed to supervise students on the stairs. In its revised plan the school indicated that members of the senior management team will monitor the supervision arrangements.
- The school received external support including from employees of social services to help them improve the policy and practice; the reference to 'unofficial visits' has been removed. Risk assessments for the recent 'Discovery Week' residential trips were scrutinised. These covered travel, the activities, itinerary and sleeping arrangements and showed that the policy is being implemented effectively. The new trip evaluation forms were well used to review incidents, medications dispensed and itinerary changes, but no reference was made to child protection.
- The risk assessment for the use of the stairs and communal areas has been revised and acted

on. This includes signage to advise students and the deployment of staff to supervise them. However, the risk assessment for travel between Portland Place and Conway Street is still not fit for purpose. The procedures for students signing in and out at each site are not made clear. No provision for the evaluation of supervision arrangements as students move between sites is included. A new accident form, which requires a more detailed account of any incident, is in place for staff to use. However, the recording of accidents is still not referenced in either of the two risk assessments.

- A written school policy for students leaving the site at lunchtimes is in place, which outlines the daily arrangements for each year group. There is a system of trust for students to sign in and out. Two contracted staff have the role of supervising the students at lunchtimes when they are offsite. New job descriptions have been written for these staff and they have been briefed. The school has not undertaken any risk assessments for the off-site time at lunchtime. Leaders say their work is monitored but there is no process in place by which the effectiveness of the arrangements is evaluated.
- Supervision both on the school site and in travelling between the sites in Portland Place and Conway Street is now formalised. On a rota basis staff now effectively supervise students using the stairs and communal areas. At lunchtimes, the school is employing staff to support students when they are off the site. Detailed job descriptions are now in place that make clear the expectations for the supervisory roles. Senior leaders have a rota in place to check how well staff are supervising students, although it is not clear how they are using this information to evaluate the effectiveness of the new systems. Nonetheless, the better arrangements for staff supervision of students mean that the requirements are now met.
- A recent audit of the risk assessments for physical education and extra-curricular activities identified that they lacked reference to individual students' medical conditions and possible vulnerabilities. While the school has taken some actions to address this issue, revised risk assessments are not yet in place.
- Leaders have focused their work on addressing the health and safety issues raised by the May 2014 inspection team and others who have visited the school. They have not undertaken a full review across all aspects of the school's activities to ensure comprehensive risk assessments and procedures are in place. Consequently this requirement remains unmet.
- The inspection of May 2013 found that the school used most of the recommended codes for recording students' presence or absence in the attendance registers. However, it did not use the recommended code for exclusion; this was coded as unauthorised absence rather than exclusion ('E'). In its action plan the school indicated that it would install a new management information system that would enable them to use the recommended codes. This system has been installed and is being used to accurately record students' presence or the reasons for any absence, including the use of 'E' for exclusions. This coding is being monitored by the Westminster principal. The school are now working to develop reporting and improve the way absence is monitored and followed up. The requirements for keeping attendance registers are now met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended, and associated requirements.

- Ensure that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and that such arrangements have full regard to the recent guidance issued by the Secretary of State, in particular to the management of safeguarding as set out in part two (paragraph 7).
- Ensure that the written policy on compliance with relevant health and safety laws is drawn up to reflect all areas, activities and age groups across the school and that it is effectively implemented through thorough risk assessments and the monitoring of effectiveness (paragraph 11).

Inspection team

Angela Corbett, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Gush

Additional inspector

Information about this school

- Southbank International School was founded in London in 1979 as the American International School. The school is owned by Cognita Schools Ltd.
- The Southbank International School, Westminster campus opened in Portland Place in 2003, with additional premises for Grades 11 and 12 (Years 11 and 12) in nearby Conway Street coming into use in 2007. The school also has primary campuses in Kensington and Hampstead.
- Southbank International School, Westminster offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme and the IB Diploma Programme.
- Students are from a very wide range of nationalities, with the majority being children of parents who are in London on business or diplomatic assignments.
- An executive principal has oversight of all three schools within the group.
- The Southbank International School, Westminster's last full inspection was conducted by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in May 2013. Since that inspection, new principals have been appointed to the Kensington and Westminster campuses.
- An emergency inspection of the school was undertaken by two of her Majesty's Inspectors in May 2014 at the request of Department for Education. A copy of the report was published on the Ofsted website.

School details

Unique reference number	100542
Inspection number	452225
DfE registration number	207/6383

This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Independent
School status	Independent secondary school
Age range of pupils	11–18 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	365
Of which, number of pupils in the sixth form	122
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd
Chair	Sir Christopher Woodhead
Headteacher	Mr Graham Lacey (executive principal) Mr Chris Greenhalgh (principal, Westminster)
Date of previous school inspection	30 April–2 May 2013 1–2 May 2014
Annual fees (day pupils)	(Grades 6–10) UK £23,940 (Grades 11–12) UK £26,100
Telephone number	020 7436 9699
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