

Side by Side Kids School

9 Big Hill, London, E5 9HH

Inspection dates 9–11 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Under the leadership of a committed headteacher, staff members at all levels work together to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The headteacher has established an effective team of leaders who have a range of skills and experiences. As a result, the school has good capacity to improve further.
- Young children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because they benefit from learning and playing alongside those without additional needs.
- Pupils behave well. They enjoy coming to school, and engage well in their learning.
- A strong emphasis is placed on safety issues within the school. Policies are robust and regularly updated. All staff members apply safety procedures consistently.
- Governors know the school well and are involved in setting priorities for further improvements.
- Pupils make very good progress in learning about their spirituality and heritage because concepts are presented in a context they can understand. Strong links are made between everyday life and spiritual teachings.
- Pupils with complex needs learn how to interact appropriately with each other and with adults. They learn the difference between right and wrong.
- As a result of effective teaching, pupils make good progress from very low starting points.
- Good teaching, alongside access to therapies and a focus on life skills, results in pupils leaving the school well prepared for life in the local community.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not of a consistently high enough standard. At times, pupils receive too much visual and auditory information for them to fully access learning.
- School plans are not sharply focused on what will improve for pupils, and when.
- Pupils' experiences of the broad range of cultures represented in the wider community are limited.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place at the request of the Department for Education. Alongside inspecting the school, the inspector was asked to consider the school's request to extend the age range of pupils catered for, from 2-16 years to 2-19 years.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in seven lessons, jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also made short visits to lessons, and observed physiotherapy and occupational therapy sessions.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a local authority officer responsible for placing pupils in the school.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including curriculum plans, information about pupils' progress, school policies, health and safety documentation and minutes from governing body meetings.
- The inspector looked at plans for the proposed provision for 16-19 year olds, and discussed these with senior leaders.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for these to be taken into account. The school arranged for paper copies of the questionnaire to be sent to parents, and 40 responses were considered. The inspector also considered 46 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Gaynor Roberts, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Side by Side Kids School is an independent day special school serving the Jewish community in North London.
- Pupils experience a wide range of difficulties, ranging from profound and multiple to moderate learning difficulties. Many have additional complex medical needs.
- Currently, there are 70 pupils on roll. 39 pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. The remaining 31 pupils are taught in registered childcare provision, which is also part of the school but inspected separately. Pupils with special educational needs currently stay on roll to the age of 16. Those without special educational needs move into mainstream education prior to their fifth birthday. Children in the nursery years are taught 'side by side', regardless of their ability or needs. They attend full time.
- The school caters for both boys and girls to the age of 11. There are currently no girls on roll over the age of 11. The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- There are seven classes in total. Two are integrated nursery classes, one is a nursery class for children with complex needs, and four are older classes for mixed year groups.
- Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. A small proportion of pupils speaks English as an additional language. Some are bi-lingual, speaking English and Yiddish at home. Most pupils are from an Orthodox Jewish background.
- The school was last inspected alongside the childcare provision in September 2011, and judged to be satisfactory.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that information displayed on walls is clear and devoid of clutter
 - ensuring that verbal communication from adults is concise and fully supports pupils' understanding
 - improving the teaching of reading for older pupils, so that their progress accelerates
 - ensuring that the recording of pupils' progress and annotation of work is sharply focused on what pupils can do, and what support they need, if any, in order to do so.
- Extend the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils by broadening the range of cultural experiences they experience at first hand within the wider community.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - sharpening school action plans to ensure that they focus on improvement in outcomes for pupils within specified timescales
 - ensuring that a personalised system for performance management of the headteacher is put in place.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Under the guidance of a dedicated and hard-working headteacher, the school has developed and improved its practice since the last inspection. The leadership team has been extended and robust appraisal systems introduced for all staff members. Parents, staff and pupils alike are unstinting in their praise of the school.
- Senior and middle leaders have clearly defined roles and responsibilities which they fulfil effectively. They are developing their skills further as leadership is devolved more extensively. For example, leaders other than the headteacher are becoming involved in the appraisal of staff members. Middle leaders ensure that pupils make good progress by checking that plans to improve learning and behaviour are effective.
- The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate. Leaders identify appropriate strengths and relative weaknesses in teaching. However, they are over reliant on information from their observations in lessons, and do not take evidence from other sources fully into account.
- Pupils experience a broad range of activities which promotes their learning in all curriculum areas. Pupils are taught Jewish studies as a core part of the curriculum. Leaders ensure that these lessons are related closely to real life contexts and prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. For example, a lesson based on the biblical story of Joseph being put into prison involved teaching pupils strategies to use if they come across criminal behaviour. Pupils were taught to be assertive, how to make a 999 call, and about the role of the police in keeping the community safe.
- The school focuses on the development of communication, literacy, numeracy and life skills, as those which are most important in taking an active part in adult life. Older students study a range of courses which is focused on work-related learning and preparing them for employment. They learn about the importance of punctuality, and how to contact an employer if they are unavoidably delayed, for example.
- Leaders have prioritised the provision of a range of therapies within the school. These include: physiotherapy; occupational therapy; speech and language therapy; and music therapy. Therapists work alongside teachers and support staff in terms of both planning and delivery, in order to ensure that all pupils receive a dovetailed educational and therapeutic experience.
- The school has detailed plans for a curriculum to support older students. These plans include opportunities to access local community facilities and businesses in order to prepare them further for adult life. Additional accredited courses, appropriate for the age and aptitude of students, are planned.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the school's provision are good. Pupils are explicitly taught about right and wrong. Pupils experience the work of famous artists such as Picasso, Leonardo da Vinci and Holbein through exploration of similar media. They listen and respond to music, such as *Peter and the Wolf*.
- Pupils' spiritual development is very well supported through meaningful opportunities to learn about and participate in their own faith. School leaders actively promote the inclusion of pupils in their local community through enabling them to access religious events appropriately. Pupils learn about, and demonstrate, tolerance and respect for all. However, opportunities for pupils to experience a wide range of other cultures at first hand have not been fully exploited.
- The school ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed within the context of their complex needs. For example, therapists ensure pupils have access to appropriate standing frames so they can access break time alongside their peers.
- The school makes good use of the accommodation available. Leaders ensure that space is used well, with therapy rooms and classroom areas well-organised. Plans to complete minor alterations in order to cater for older students are appropriate.
- The school's plans for further improvement identify appropriate priorities for development. However, they do not include timescales, or a measure of the impact expected once actions have been completed. Therefore, it is difficult for governors to judge whether the school is on track to achieve its goals, or whether there is sufficient impact on pupil outcomes.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Leaders ensure that all necessary checks are completed before new members of staff start working within the school.
- **The governance of the school:**

The governing body has ensured that those who are responsible for monitoring the school's performance have the appropriate skills and experience to do so. The governors also commission reports from independent consultants in order to check that the school's work is robust. As a result, they are able to hold the headteacher effectively to account for the work of the school

Governors receive information regarding pupil achievement and the appraisal of staff from the headteacher. His own performance is assessed through evaluation of the school development plan. As a result, the system for performance management of the headteacher is not as personalised as it could be.

Governors have supported the headteacher in improving the quality of teaching through the recruitment of appropriately qualified teachers and a comprehensive professional development programme.

Governors are involved in the creation of the school's development plans, which are discussed in detail prior to being finalised.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are interested in visitors to their classroom, and demonstrate curiosity about who they are and the purpose of their visit. More able pupils demonstrate good manners, such as holding doors open for others.
- Pupils show an awareness of their peers, and a developing understanding of the needs of others. One pupil with very complex needs, including visual impairment, is supported each morning in greeting each of her classmates through a touch on the arm. This enables her to develop relationships with her peers, who return her greeting as part of their routine.
- Pupils attend well to their learning because they are provided with tasks that interest them, and they are supported in accessing these activities well.
- Any pupils who display difficult behaviour as a result of their special education needs are very well supported through the implementation of detailed plans which are applied consistently by classroom staff. As a result, pupils make good progress in this regard and there are very few incidents of challenging behaviour.
- Parents are very confident that their children are safe whilst in school, and that behaviour is good. No concerns were raised with inspectors or through the school's own consultation processes.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Robust policies regarding health and safety, and the welfare of pupils are rigorously applied and updated regularly.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe at home, at school and in the local community. One pupil could talk at length about what he had learnt about fire safety.
- More-able pupils are able to say that they are kept safe at school, and that they get on well with their peers. These pupils meet regularly with the headteacher to discuss any ideas they have for the school. Recently, they have discussed with him their thoughts regarding differences of opinion that occur between pupils, particularly at break times.
- School leaders check the school environment regularly to ensure the safety of all. Robust systems are in place to ensure safety when on educational trips or visits.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is good because staff members use a range of strategies and resources to engage and motivate pupils, dependent on their needs, interests and aptitudes. As a result, pupils participate well in learning, and make good progress.
- Literacy and numeracy activities are well-planned and closely aligned to the next steps in learning for each individual pupil. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching areas, particularly for primary-aged pupils, are well-resourced and attractive. Clear labelling and pictorial information support pupils' understanding. However, in some classrooms, there is too much information for staff displayed on the walls, clouding the clarity of the displays provided for pupils.
- Teachers and support staff work closely with therapists to ensure that each pupil receives a consistent programme of activities that is finely matched to their needs. Therapists work in the classroom, and support staff join therapy sessions to fine tune this work even further. The cohesive nature of this work is a strong element of the school's practice.
- Staff use effective visual systems to support pupils' understanding of their work. In most classes this is consistently applied, enabling pupils to remain calm and relaxed as they know what is expected of them, and what is going to happen next. In other classes, systems are applied less consistently and pupils are

unsure what to do as they have insufficient information in a format they can understand.

- Staff members are careful in constructing their verbal instructions and questions, so that pupils can understand what they need to do. Occasionally, however, questions are rephrased or adults talk too much, resulting in pupils' understanding being weakened.
- Teachers ensure that opportunities to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills are utilised in other areas of the curriculum. For example, in a baking lesson, pupils were excited as they prepared ingredients and equipment to make muffins with their mothers, who were joining the session. Pupils were encouraged to count the number of bowls, spoons and aprons that were needed, and to collect the correct amount of equipment with minimal support. Literacy skills were reinforced through the use of a basic recipe, presented in simple photographs, words and symbols that could be accessed by all the pupils in the group.
- Pupils receive feedback on their work through verbal praise and small rewards such as stickers. Their achievements are reported daily to parents and carers through a link book. However, the written marking and annotation of work are inconsistent, especially in the older classes. It is not clear how much of the work has been done by the pupil, or how much support they have received in order to complete the work.
- Staff ensure a careful balance is maintained between supporting a pupil to access learning, and enabling them to develop independence and self-care skills. For example, pupils are encouraged to learn how to take off their coat, to choose a piece of equipment or wash their hands without help.
- The quality of teaching in the *Kodesh* (Jewish Studies) curriculum is equally strong as that in the *Chol* (secular) curriculum. Teachers ensure that the strategies used to involve pupils in learning are used across all areas of the pupils' experiences.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils placed at the school work at levels significantly below those that would usually be expected for their age. They have a wide range of difficulties, and experience a number of barriers to their learning. Many have additional complex medical needs. Throughout the school, clear routines have been established, enabling pupils to settle quickly and become familiar with their surroundings. As a result, they start to make progress soon after their arrival.
- When a pupil joins the school, teachers and therapists work together to establish an understanding of what the pupil can and cannot do, and set priorities for learning. In order to ensure that all the needs of each pupil are met, the school has recently revised its practice with regard to individual education plans. All younger pupils now have specific targets in terms of cognitive development, social skills, developmental play, self-care and attitude to learning. These are addressed throughout the curriculum, and progress is noted on a very regular basis. Leaders and teachers review targets at least termly. Initial results show that most pupils are meeting their targets and the system is to be extended to older pupils.
- In 2013, the headteacher revised systems for assessing pupils' attainment in speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics on a termly basis. This is recorded using National Curriculum levels or 'P' levels for those working below Level 1 of the National Curriculum. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are assessed in line with the prime areas of learning. The majority of pupils make at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their very low starting points. Progress in reading for older pupils slowed in 2014, however, with few making good progress in this area.
- The rate of progress made by pupils is considered on an individual basis. Currently, the school does not compare the achievement of groups of pupils, such as boys and girls, or those from differing ethnic backgrounds. From the information available, there does not seem to be any significant difference in the achievement of groups of pupils, other than that relating to their special educational needs.
- More-able pupils, within the context of this school, achieve as well as others with more profound needs.

The early years provision

is good

- A strong element of the school's ethos is to educate children with and without special educational needs 'side by side' during their pre-school education. Those with significant special educational needs benefit from playing and learning alongside more able peers in this very inclusive environment.
- Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is assessed termly in each of the prime areas of learning. Leaders have further broken down the bands of attainment so that very small steps of progress can be identified.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because they are offered a wide range of activities which engage their attention. They are well supported in learning through these activities. Teachers and other adults engage with children in their learning, providing support which enables them to extend their skills through exploration or experience.
- Children do not have free access to outdoor learning, as this area is not adjacent to the classroom. Teachers make sufficient daily provision for outdoor learning through a variety of activities. These promote the development of: gross and fine motor skills; personal and social skills; and literacy and numeracy skills in particular.
- A calm attitude towards anxiety or challenging behaviour, coupled with a structured approach to managing inappropriate behaviour, results in children making good progress. They develop positive relationships with staff and peers.
- Therapists assess pupils and implement programmes in conjunction with teaching staff. This work is highly effective in ensuring that any needs are identified early, and addressed swiftly. These programmes are then continued and adapted as the children enter Year 1.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are kept safe through rigorous and robust procedures and policies which are consistently applied by all staff, and checked regularly by leaders.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	133439
Inspection number	454266
DfE registration number	204/6409

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Day special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Number of part time pupils	1
Proprietor	Side by Side (Children) Ltd
Chair	Mr J Margulies
Headteacher	Mr G Lebrecht
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 November 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£24,000–£30,000
Telephone number	020 8880 8300
Email address	school@sidebyside.org.uk

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