

# Southbank International School

63–65 Portland Place, London W1B 1QR

## Inspection date

3 March 2016

## Overall outcome

**Independent school standards met**

## Context of the inspection

- This inspection was undertaken at the request of the Department for Education in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan.
- This third progress monitoring visit follows an emergency inspection undertaken by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors at the request of Department for Education in May 2014. All the visits have focused on the Westminster campus.
- Inspectors found at the time of the emergency inspection 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 ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- The first follow-up progress monitoring inspection took place in October 2014. This inspection found that, while the school had made some progress in addressing the shortcomings identified in the May 2014 inspection, two of the standards in relation to pupils' welfare, health and safety remained unmet.
- The second progress monitoring inspection took place on 3 June 2015. This found that, while the health and safety standard was met, the school's arrangements for safeguarding continued not to meet the requirements. This inspection also identified further failings in the arrangements for pupils to play outside, the information provided for parents and carers and the new independent school standards for leadership and management.
- The school submitted an action plan to the Department for Education in November 2015 which was evaluated in December 2015 and found to require improvement. The school subsequently modified its action plan, which was then approved by the Department for Education on 22 January 2016.
- This visit focused on the independent school standards identified as unmet in the June 2015 inspection. During the inspection, the inspector met the Executive Principal and Principal of the Westminster campus, the two designated safeguarding leaders for the Westminster campus, the Chair of the school board, the Cognita Regional Director of Education, members of staff and a group of secondary-aged pupils. The inspector also scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including that for safeguarding, and observed the school's new arrangements for an outside play space.
- In January 2016 the serious case review into issues of child abuse at the school was published.

## Main findings

### Welfare, health and safety

- At the time of the June progress monitoring inspection there were omissions in the school's safeguarding policy and procedures, including guidance for staff on the management of children missing from education. Further, there was no guidance on how senior leaders would evaluate or report on the effectiveness of safeguarding. It was also reported that leaders had placed too much reliance on their confidence in staff to recognise and report all safeguarding concerns.
- The school has fully implemented its action plan. All of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures have been revised and now underpin the comprehensive and robust arrangements

for the safeguarding of pupils. The Executive Principal and Westminster Principal developed an open culture across the school and made full use of the support offered by local authority officers. Additional training for staff, such as in 'Prevent' and online safety, means staff are better placed to recognise concerns and answer questions from pupils, for example on the use of mobile phones. New programmes of digital literacy and for personal, social, health and economic education are ensuring high-quality learning for pupils on how to stay safe. These are well structured and provide comprehensive age-appropriate learning for pupils in grades six to 10 (Key Stages 3 and 4), covering key topics such as online safety, radicalisation and well-being. The programmes are delivered through specialist lessons, as well as in adviser time, assemblies and subject teaching.

- The status of the designated leads has been raised. They have confidence in their expertise. They have fully audited the safeguarding arrangements and are taking the lead in developing awareness and knowledge of safeguarding issues for both themselves and staff. The weak aspects of record-keeping identified at the last visit have been addressed. There is now early identification of vulnerable pupils with targeted support and monitoring. Pupils and staff alike have confidence in the new arrangements and that any concerns will be fully dealt with.
- A culture of monitoring and improvement is now in place. Both leaders within the school and the proprietors, Cognita Schools Ltd (CSL), are now making use of lessons learned to ensure the best possible arrangements for safeguarding pupils. The new independent safeguarding chair and safeguarding governance committee are already having an impact in monitoring the effectiveness of arrangements and in driving improvement. Parent members of the school board have undergone basic training in safeguarding and the new Chair of the school board has undertaken a thorough review of safeguarding arrangements. As a result of these and the other actions taken the standards for the safeguarding arrangements are now met.

### **Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- In the June 2015 inspection it was judged that the school's arrangements for outdoor play did not meet requirements because pupils in Years 7 to 11 did not have the opportunity for outdoor play, which involved visiting a local park each day. In line with the planned actions, arrangements are now in place for this, with appropriate supervision, although the facility is mainly used by younger pupils. Consequently, the independent school standards for outside play are now met.

### **Provision of information**

- At the last inspection it was found that the school had not published the reports of the May 2014 emergency and October 2014 progress monitoring inspections on the school website. It was also found that there were omissions in the publication of the school's safeguarding policies, notably that for the safe use of information and communication technology. These two reports together with the one from the June 2015 inspection and all of the revised policies relating to safeguarding are now published on the school's website. Consequently, the standards for publishing inspection reports and the school's safeguarding arrangements are now met.

### **Quality of leadership and management**

- In June 2015 it was found that the school's senior leaders, the school board and the proprietors, had focused too narrowly on addressing the issues raised in the previous inspection. They had not fully implemented their action plan, firmly established systems for monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding or ensured that the requirements of the January 2015 independent school standards were met.
- The new Executive Principal and Westminster Principal have relentlessly driven improvement and implemented the school's action plan within the stated timescales. They have successfully re-energised staff, built a sense of community and palpably changed the culture of the school. They have focused on both the original and modified action plans to bring rigour to ensuring that the statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.

- The new Chair, supported by the Executive Principal and strengthened proprietorial representation, has brought more focus to the work of the school board. Formal reports from across the three schools and attendance of their Principals is ensuring members are better informed, as reflected in the minutes of meetings. Nonetheless, in line with the school's action plan, the school board will be dissolved at the end of the school year. Sound transition arrangements are in place with CSL now fulfilling their proprietorial responsibilities in managing the oversight and operation of the school. This includes use of specialist CSL staff and leaders to ensure the independent school standards, including those for safeguarding, are met across all three schools.
- The school has given careful attention to their original and modified action plans. Actions are either completed or underway and on target. Consequently, the standards for leadership and management are now met.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

**The school meets the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements**

## Inspection team

Angela Corbett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's 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. It offers the three International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes: Primary Years, Middle Years and Diploma.
- 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.
- There are currently 365 pupils on roll at the Westminster campus, of whom 118 are in the sixth form, with 206 pupils aged three to 11 at the Kensington campus and 202 at Hampstead.
- Pupils are from a very wide range of nationalities, with the majority being children of parents who are in London on business or diplomatic assignments, and most pupils do not stay longer than four to five years.
- An Executive Principal has oversight of all three schools within the group. At end of the summer term 2015 the Principal, Executive Principal and one of two Deputy Principals at the Westminster campus left. The Kensington primary campus Principal is now the Executive Principal and a Deputy Principal at the Westminster campus has taken over as its Principal. Three new Deputy Principals have been appointed, all from within the school.
- A new Chair of the school board has been in post since the beginning of September 2015.
- The school's last full inspection was conducted by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in May 2013.
- At the request of the Department for Education, an emergency inspection to the school was undertaken by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors in May 2014, with follow-up progress monitoring inspections, led by the same inspector, in October 2014 and June 2015. All three reports are published on the school and Ofsted websites.

## School details

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 100542   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 10012700 |
| <b>DfE registration number</b> | 207/6383 |

This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

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|---|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                               | Independent   |
| <b>School status</b>                                | Independent school  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                          | 3–19 years  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                             | Mixed   |
| <b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>           | Mixed   |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>          | 571, with 365 at the Westminster campus   |
| <b>Of which, number of pupils in the sixth form</b> | 118   |
| <b>Number of part-time pupils</b>                   | 0   |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                                   | Cognita Schools Ltd.  |
| <b>Chair</b>  | Ralph Kugler (Cognita Schools Ltd)<br>David Smellie (School Board)                    |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                                  | Siobhan McGrath (Executive Principal)<br>Justine Oliver (Principal Westminster)       |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>           | 30 April–2 May 2013 (full inspection)<br>3 June 2015 (progress monitoring inspection) |
| <b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>                     | (Grades 1–5) UK £23,595<br>(Grades 6–10) UK £25,410<br>(Grades 11–12) UK £27,660      |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                             | 020 7436 9699   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                                   | 020 7436 9699   |
| <b>Email address</b>                                | <a href="mailto:admin@southbank.org">admin@southbank.org</a>                          |

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