

Southbank International School Westminster

63–65 Portland Place, London W1B 1QR

Inspection dates

3–5 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Sixth form provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The principal, supported by governors and senior staff, has secured excellent teaching, learning and assessment that enables pupils to achieve extremely well.
- The principal's determined leadership has been the driving force in raising the expectations of both staff and pupils.
- Pupils make rapid progress and reach standards that are above world averages for the International Baccalaureate (IB).
- The lower-ability pupils, those who need additional support with their learning and those at the early stages of learning English make exceptionally fast progress.
- In 2016, all Year 13 students continued their education at prestigious universities, in the UK and across the world.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and excellent subject knowledge. They enable pupils of all abilities to make rapid progress.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive. They are polite, mature and respectful in their behaviour.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a wide variety of situations. They know who to contact if they have any concerns.
- Governance is outstanding. Governors have a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- Sixth form provision is outstanding. Excellent leadership and teaching have secured the best outcomes for students.
- Safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding and vigilance where the safety of pupils is given top priority. Staff provide a safe and caring environment in which pupils feel comfortable about sharing any anxieties.
- Staff and governors do not always have full information on the progress of different groups of pupils on which to base their decisions.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide staff and governors with information summarising the progress of different groups of pupils, to inform their discussions and decisions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The principal, senior leaders and governors have taken robust and successful steps to improve significantly the provision, outcomes and safeguarding arrangements for pupils over the last two years.
- The principal, together with senior leaders, has made clear her high expectations of both staff and pupils. This has been achieved through the relentless focus on improving teaching and ensuring pupils' safety and welfare.
- The coaching and mentoring of staff are highly effective and have made a strong contribution to the excellent teaching and outcomes for pupils. The principal has a deep understanding of the process of learning and is committed to bringing about continuing improvements. She has given high priority to enhancing teachers' subject knowledge through further study and research programmes.
- The curriculum reflects very well the requirements of the International Baccalaureate (IB), both in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. It is carefully matched to pupils' needs and enriched with a stimulating out-of-hours programme, often supported by experts from outside the school. In line with the school's aims, this prepares pupils exceptionally well to be global citizens. The programme for careers education and guidance is progressively structured and ensures that pupils are well informed and prepared for the next stage of their education. All students continue to higher education, either in the United Kingdom or abroad. The rich arts and sports programmes develop excellent performances at both individual and team levels.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils are respectful and tolerant and have a mature appreciation of people who have different beliefs or different lifestyles from their own. Festivals from different religions around the world are regularly celebrated in assemblies, and pupils have many opportunities to reflect on their feelings and behaviour.
- Pupils play their part in voluntary activities, showing their concern for others in practical ways. For example, pupils visit Tanzania every year, and work with a group of schools to support those in need. Pupils assist in sustaining the school's thriving community by taking on leadership roles. They develop a mature approach because of the school's high expectations of how they should fulfil these roles. Pupils reflect on and exemplify fundamental British values as they grow in their understanding of British institutions and of how people from different cultures, lifestyles and backgrounds contribute to life in modern Britain.
- There is a very strong partnership between families and the school. Of those parents and carers who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's questionnaire for parents, almost all would recommend the school to another parent. The thriving parents' association gives families opportunities to raise concerns as well as to give praise.
- The highly effective support from Cognita has enabled the school to move forward strongly from a previously difficult period. The high aspirations and commitment of the proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards and other requirements are met.

- The school's assessment system is valuable in enabling leaders to see how well individual pupils are achieving. However, it provides less detail and analysis about the progress being made by different groups of pupils. Leaders and governors have rightly judged that they have less information summarising pupils' achievement by different groups than they would wish to inform their discussions and decisions.

Governance

- Governance is outstanding. The salaried governors work closely with leaders to ensure that the school continues to improve rapidly. Membership is drawn from a wide field of professional expertise and experience, which includes education, finance, governance, human resources, law and safeguarding. Governors provide excellent challenge to senior leaders and hold them to account. They are confident in interpreting information generated by the school's new assessment system and welcome the school's intention to provide greater detail about the progress of different groups of pupils. They know that this is an area for improvement and they are also well aware of the school's many strengths.
- Governors are particularly diligent at checking the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding responsibilities. For example, a safeguarding committee meets twice a year and is chaired by an independent and external professional. All governors have completed child protection training.
- The chair of governors monitors the work of the school effectively by visiting regularly. She feeds back her findings to leaders and produces short, helpful reports, which are shared with governors. This ensures that governors have an accurate view of the school's performance.
- Governors and the executive principal oversee the school's system for performance management effectively. They scrutinise information and are actively involved in ensuring that decisions are based on secure evidence that is firmly linked to pupils' progress.
- The school's finances are carefully monitored and externally audited to ensure value for money.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The principal, together with the governors and senior staff, has established a strong culture of safeguarding and vigilance, in which the safety of pupils is given the highest priority.
- The school's comprehensive and effective safeguarding policy reflects the Secretary of State's most recent guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2016), and 'Working together to safeguard children' (March 2015). It contains helpful references to, and contact details for, a range of external agencies, including the local authority's safeguarding officers. The policy is published on the school's website.
- High levels of staff supervision around both sites and during outings and visits help to keep pupils safe. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are suitable. Records are detailed and of high quality. The school provides a safe and caring environment in which pupils report that they feel comfortable about sharing their

concerns. Through the highly effective curriculum pupils learn about risks and how to keep themselves safe in different situations.

- All staff training, including that for the designated and deputy safeguarding leads, is up to date. Staff are able to demonstrate the impact of training. For example, in discussion with inspectors, they described how they would spot the signs that pupils may need early help. They are familiar with the school's procedures and practice, including those regarding the reporting of female genital mutilation and extremism.
- The school has forged a strong partnership with the local authority. Its leaders regularly contribute to safeguarding conferences and training. For example, school leaders have given a presentation to representatives from over 100 schools, both maintained and independent, about the lessons learned from their experience of an historic safeguarding incident.
- Leaders have enhanced the school's culture of vigilance and safeguarding. This has been achieved by regular staff training and giving priority to what pupils say in relation to any concerns and policies. Also, leaders with safeguarding responsibilities have been given additional time to devote to pupils' safekeeping and welfare. School leaders regularly check the understanding and practice of staff in relation to safeguarding. Leaders have established a clear policy and procedures for parents to follow should they have any concerns or wish to raise issues about any aspect of the school's work.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching is typically outstanding and enables pupils and students in the sixth form to achieve exceptionally well from their generally average starting points. Pupils in all year groups make rapid progress, achieving excellent examination outcomes.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects. This leads to inventive lessons that deepen pupils' knowledge and challenge them consistently. A collaborative, scholarly ethos and warm working relationships motivate pupils to learn and achieve at their best.
- Pupils and staff use new technologies particularly well across the school to further learning. Staff are developing exciting activities through which to engage pupils in discussion, further exploration and acquiring a love of the subject in hand.
- Teachers' probing questioning and the development of pupils' communication skills are impressive, particularly for the most able pupils, those with additional needs, and those at the early stages of learning English. Through highly effective questioning, teachers carefully tease out what is securely known and what aspects of learning need further practice and consolidation. Pupils are given helpful guidance on their work that identifies strengths and areas for improvement. This is having a very positive impact on pupils' learning and progress over time.
- As pupils get older, the range of activities used in classrooms supports them in being able to organise their own learning. This is a great strength of Southbank International School and prepares pupils exceptionally well for higher education.
- Sixth form students' imaginative responses to tasks are extremely well used in their extended sixth form projects. Across the range of subjects, growing technical skills, a strengthening ability to examine materials critically and high-quality research enable the

students to work very productively.

- For those pupils who require additional support in their learning, provision is excellent. Personalised tasks and resources enable them to make significant progress and overcome any barriers to their learning.
- The vast majority of staff and pupils are skilled at assessing, understanding and identifying what needs to be improved. This was very clearly seen in a Year 12 history lesson where students were effectively considering different ways in which to structure an examination essay in order to achieve the highest marks.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff have established a welcoming ethos where pupils feel at ease with one another and with staff. Pupils are very secure in their knowledge that there is always an adult to help them should the need arise.
- Staff seek pupils' views regularly. The overwhelming majority of the pupils consider that adults respect and care for them effectively, both academically and in their personal development. Staff actively maintain these excellent working relationships including through effective induction processes for new pupils and academic review days attended by parents. Pupils benefit from high-quality careers advice from university staff. Dedicated staff and counsellors make a strong contribution to the well-being and self-confidence of the pupils.
- Leaders have established strong partnerships with external agencies, both locally and internationally, to support pupils' mental and physical well-being. Pupils have many opportunities to develop effective ways of enhancing their well-being and resilience. From sporting pursuits to one-to-one meetings with the school counsellor, pupils learn effective strategies to cope in times of stress and difficulty.
- Excellent partnership work with parents and other agencies ensures that pupils are well informed about behaviours that might put them at risk and cause them harm.
- Pupils feel safe and secure and are confident that the adults in the school will support them as needed. They also very much appreciate the improvements made to the security of both sites over the last two years. In discussion with inspectors, pupils reported that they know how to stay safe online and while travelling around London. They are aware that staff are always there to help and care for them. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that bullying is very rare.
- Risk assessments are thorough for local visits, outward-bound activities and international school journeys. All staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and undertake regular training to keep up to date, for example in first aid. In discussion with inspectors, one pupil typically confirmed the views of others: 'here everything is risk-assessed to help keep us safe'.
- The student council and student senate actively support democracy and are forces for change. For example, following a suggestion from council members, leaders re-organised the schedule for coursework deadlines so that they are more evenly spread throughout the year and reduce pressure on pupils and their families.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Exceptionally warm and respectful relationships between pupils and staff form the basis on which the pupils make excellent academic progress. The trust between pupils and staff enables pupils to feel confident and to be unembarrassed about making mistakes. Pupils realise that making mistakes is one of the quickest and most effective ways to learn.
- Pupils display high levels of respect and cooperate extremely well with each other, both in and out of lessons. They thoroughly enjoy school, attend regularly and display an infectious enthusiasm for learning. They are also mindful of the need to care for and support those who are not so fortunate. Pupils attending off-site training are checked regularly for their attendance, punctuality and progress. Safety procedures and risk assessments for the supervision of pupils' travel from the school to the different sporting venues that the school uses are rigorous. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary.
- Of those parents who responded to Parent View, almost all are confident that the school manages behaviour very well.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils in all year groups make rapid progress in acquiring knowledge and skills, culminating in very successful examination outcomes at the end of both Year 11 and of the sixth form. Standards are high across the range of subjects, with the very large majority being above world averages for the IB, and have been so for several years.
- Each pupil's skills and aptitudes are checked after their first four weeks at the school. The results of these checks are discussed with staff and pupils so that an academic starting point is clearly established. Teachers are then able to plan interesting activities that are carefully tailored to pupils' needs.
- Evidence from looking at learning over time in pupils' books and the school's information shows that current pupils in all year groups make excellent progress across all subject areas. Those who attend off-site training make rapid and sustained progress in their courses, often taking part in national and international competitions.
- The most able pupils achieve exceptionally well, as a result of the excellent teaching they receive. Those pupils who require additional support in their learning and those at the early stages of learning English make rapid progress. This is because of the highly focused support for their English language and personal development.
- Pupils studying for the Middle Years IB award achieve outstandingly well in all areas. This programme enables pupils to hone their basic skills and lay firm foundations on which to build their successful post-16 experience. There is a significant breadth of excellent achievement at the school, not only in the highly prized academic areas but also in the fields of the arts and physical education. The quality of learning in classrooms ensures that the pupils achieve the necessary outcomes to gain places in their first choices of university. Their positive academic experiences in school prepare them well for higher education, not only in the United Kingdom but across the world.

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

- The coordinated drive of senior leaders' actions ensures that the sixth form provision is excellent. Checks on students' progress and the quality of teaching follow the same procedures as in the main school. Students make exceptional progress in English and mathematics. This is as a result of a strong focus on developing students' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects.
- Teachers are highly skilled subject specialists who are passionate about their subjects and enable their students to work in great depth. As a result of excellent teaching, students are highly motivated and challenged consistently, so that they make rapid progress and reach standards that are well above the IB world average.
- The most able students achieve extremely well because of the high-quality teaching. In 2016, 22% of the school's sixth form IB entrants achieved the very highest grades, placing them in the top 7% of students on their programme worldwide. One young person scored 44 out of 45 points, a feat achieved by less than 1% of students globally.
- Students thoroughly enjoy their time in the sixth form, partly because of their positive experiences earlier in the school. They develop excellent academic and personal skills, which enable them to learn both individually and cooperatively. They engage purposefully in learning activities and extended projects, and are determined to do well. They appreciate their teachers' passion for their subjects and their careful preparation for lessons. Students' satisfaction with the sixth form provision is shown by the fact that over three quarters of Year 11 pupils move on to Year 12. In 2016, the proportion of students staying in school to move up from Year 12 into Year 13 was above average and has improved still further this year.
- Students make excellent use of new technologies to complete their research assignments. The extended projects make a major contribution to their success in gaining places at prestigious universities. Teachers provide excellent ongoing guidance on students' work.
- Students' conduct around the school and in lessons is exemplary. Relationships between staff and students and among themselves are exceptionally positive. Older students are excellent role models for younger pupils, taking a lead role in organising fund-raising events for the school's charities and leading assemblies. These activities enable students to gain a deeper appreciation of those who are less fortunate than themselves and their responsibilities to their fellow global citizens.
- The carefully planned personal development programme gives students an excellent understanding of how to stay safe in a variety of situations. Visits from the police and other outside speakers inform students about age-related laws, the dangers of pornography, teenage mental health issues, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. In lessons, topics such as 'sexting' and 'grooming' help students to keep safe while online and using social media. The school is very diligent in ensuring that no extremist views are promoted among students.
- The school's extensive programme of enrichment activities plays a significant part in developing students' confidence, leadership and employability skills. For example, all Year 12 and 13 students are assigned a well-qualified mentor to support their applications to university.
- The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent. Leaders and staff are

highly effective in securing the best outcomes for students. High-quality careers education and guidance, together with personalised support and excellent teaching, prepare students extremely well for their futures.

School details

Unique reference number	143530
DfE registration number	213/6003
Inspection number	10033540

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	353
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	111
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd
Chair	Danuta Tomasz
Principal	Justine Oliver
Annual fees (day pupils)	£26,415–£28,755
Telephone number	0207 436 9699
Website	www.southbank.org
Email address	westminster@southbank.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

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 Limited, a worldwide organisation of 70 schools across Europe, Latin America and South-East Asia.
- The Southbank International School, Westminster campus, opened in Portland Place in 2003, with additional premises for sixth form students in nearby Conway Street. The

school is based in the heart of central London and offers the Middle Years and Diploma programmes of the International Baccalaureate.

- There are currently 353 boys and girls on roll at the Westminster campus, of whom 111 are in the sixth form.
- Pupils are from a very wide range of nationalities and cultures, the majority being children from families involved in international business or diplomatic assignments. Most pupils do not stay longer than four years.
- Many pupils are multilingual and, while proficient in English, they speak at least one other language fluently. Around 70 nationalities are represented among the pupils and students.
- There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Fewer than one in 10 pupils have been identified as needing ongoing learning support.
- Off-site training is made available for pupils to extend their learning experience. The school offers the following sporting activities:
 - softball, track & field activities at The Hub, Regents Park
 - basketball at Charteris Sports Centre, Kilburn
 - tennis, track & field activities at Paddington Recreation Ground, Paddington
 - climbing at Seymour Leisure Centre, Marylebone.
- Pupils are not entered early for examinations.
- In June 2016, the school board was disbanded and Cognita took over direct governance of the school. In August 2016, the assistant director of education for Cognita was appointed to oversee governance, acting as the chair of governors.
- The school's last full inspection was conducted by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in May 2013, when it was judged to be good. In May 2014, Ofsted conducted an emergency inspection to check Parts 3 and 4 of the independent school standards, including the safeguarding policy and procedures. Inspectors found at the time of the emergency inspection that several standards were not met in relation to ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- The school then received three progress monitoring inspections in October 2014, June 2015 and March 2016. The progress monitoring inspection in March 2016 judged that all the independent school standards were met. This is the school's first full standard inspection conducted by Ofsted.
- The school's website meets all the requirements of the independent school standards.
- The school's stated aim is to provide 'a liberal ethos, academic excellence and the values of the International Baccalaureate'. The school is committed to ensuring that 'the school community has a global outlook which seeks to develop a culture of creativity, responsibility and to make use of London as its classroom'.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school. They made 24 visits to classrooms, all of them jointly with senior and middle leaders. They held informal discussions with two groups of pupils.
- There were 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View. Inspectors spoke with several parents by telephone and considered the school's own analysis of its own survey of the views of pupils and parents.
- There were 51 responses to the questionnaires for staff. Inspectors held discussions with the director of education for Cognita, the executive principal, the principal, senior and middle leaders, other staff, the chair of governors, and the local authority's head of safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed key documents and policies, including those related to safeguarding to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. They scrutinised pupils' books and learning files and the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection team

David Scott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Brian Oppenheim	Her Majesty's Inspector
Avtar Sherri	Ofsted Inspector

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