

# The Sybil Elgar School

Havelock Road, Southall UB2 4NY and Mill Hill Road, Acton W3 8RR

## Inspection dates

29 November – 1 December 2017

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Sixth form provision                         | <b>Outstanding</b> |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good               |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- Leadership is exceptional. The school's multi-disciplinary team share and realise the principal's vision to provide an outstanding education to pupils on the autistic spectrum.
- The curriculum is creative, innovative and progressive. Pupils love learning and make outstanding progress.
- The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers skilfully balance care, patience and nurture with uncompromisingly high expectations of pupils' learning and personal development.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's systems keep pupils, many of whom are non-verbal and especially vulnerable, as safe as possible.
- Parents speak exceptionally positively about the school. For many, the school has transformed their child's life.
- Staff work tirelessly, creatively and effectively to meet pupils' needs, however complex these may be.
- The sixth-form provision is outstanding. Leadership is exceptionally strong in facilitating bespoke learning pathways for students. They are very well prepared for their next steps.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Pupils are very well prepared for their lives in modern London and Britain thanks to the wide range of therapeutic activities, enrichment trips and community events.
- Governance is effective. The school's link trustee has a detailed understanding of the school. She effectively and ambitiously supports the principal in facilitating continuous improvement.
- Training and support for staff is highly effective. However, leaders are reviewing the way they recruit and reward support staff to improve further the consistency of provision for pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

### 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?**

- Review and improve the process for recruiting and rewarding support staff to increase the consistency of provision for pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The Sybil Elgar School's leadership team is highly effective. Leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are met. Leaders, teachers, therapists and support staff work as one to provide an exceptional quality of education that innovatively and creatively meets the complex needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum.
- The school's curriculum is carefully designed to meet pupils' complex needs. It very successfully engages pupils in learning and develops their communication and social skills. Education and therapy are seamlessly integrated. This ensures that the curriculum is accessible and enables pupils to feel comfortable and ready to learn. Pupils love the creative approach which threads through the entire curriculum and includes very regular opportunities for learning and enjoyment of music, art, yoga and dance.
- Pupils' learning in the primary phase is based on the early years foundation stage framework. This pupil-led design is highly effective in supporting learning. Older pupils learn all the subjects of the national curriculum and work towards an increasing range of relevant qualifications. As a result of the highly effective curriculum and excellent teaching, pupils make outstanding progress over time, including in English and mathematics.
- Leaders prioritise pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; it permeates all areas of the curriculum. Events and celebrations so far this year have included Eid, Diwali, Remembrance Sunday, Black History Week, visits to museums, world kindness day and anti-bullying week. In addition, bespoke therapy programmes, weekly personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons and the 'student committee' all help to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. An especial hallmark of the school's success is the belief in equality for all, regardless of pupils' special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. For example, though many have extremely complex needs and challenging behaviours, pupils are able to attend school discos, sports days and residential trips as a matter of course.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school. They repeatedly told the inspector that the school's work is transformational. For example, comments typical of those made to the inspector included: 'I just can't believe the difference in my child' and 'If only you could see where they were and where they are now.'
- Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. Leaders closely monitor teaching and securely link their findings to teachers' performance targets and salary progression. Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths in teaching and are not complacent; they are always considering how to make further improvements and are not afraid to change things or take risks. However, while teaching and personal support for pupils is consistently very strong, leaders are reviewing the process for recruiting and suitably rewarding support staff. This is to minimise the impact of staff turnover, to recognise the professional expectations and efforts of support staff, and to ensure consistency for pupils.
- The inspection considered the school's application to make a material change to its registration agreement with the Department for Education. The inspector discussed with

leaders the request to increase the age range from 4–20 to 4–22. The curriculum, premises and resources are all appropriate in meeting the needs of students aged up to 22. As a result, the independent school standards are likely to continue to be met if this change to the school's registration is implemented.

## **Governance**

- Governance is effective.
- The proprietorial organisation, the National Autistic Society, delegates governance to its education and quality committee. In turn, the committee provides a link trustee to oversee daily governance. As a 'critical friend', the link trustee provides sharply focused support and challenge to the school's principal. As a previous parent of a pupil, she has a secure knowledge of the school and is fully committed to its ongoing development.
- Deployment of internal and external consultants provides additional monitoring of the school. This regular monitoring provides effective challenge to leaders; the link trustee uses it both to validate leaders' success and to challenge them to do even more.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils feel safe in school, attend very well and learn effectively about how to keep themselves safe, including online and outside school. Parents trust the school to keep their children safe.
- The school's senior designated safeguarding leader is highly effective. She facilitates a deeply caring and vigilant culture. Staff at all levels share a commitment to safeguard pupils from harm and receive ongoing training to recognise signs that pupils are at risk and how to refer concerns. Leaders record any referrals or investigations meticulously and follow them up tenaciously.
- The school's safeguarding policy is based on the latest statutory guidance and is available online, alongside all other required policies and information.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

## **Outstanding**

- Teaching is highly effective. It is typically creative and exciting; pupils enjoy learning through play, music, art and drama.
- Teachers meticulously plan learning tasks which effectively consider each pupil's individual needs. They effectively develop pupils' thinking, social and reading skills.
- Teachers, therapists and support staff are highly skilled professionals and work cohesively for the benefit of pupils. As a result, pupils make excellent personal and academic progress over time.
- Teaching includes highly effective practice in all subjects, including English and mathematics. Teachers skilfully balance the necessary care of pupils with very high expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils' complex needs are never an excuse for lowering expectations of what they are capable of learning. Regardless of how complex a pupil's starting points may be, teachers plan effective, bespoke lessons that fully

challenge pupils, including the most able. As a result, pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress over time.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

## **Outstanding**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The effective safeguarding arrangements ensure that pupils feel safe and are safe in their school. This is especially important in ensuring that pupils are secure and comfortable and so ready to learn and make progress.
- The school develops pupils' social skills and emotional well-being very effectively. As well as through the provision of therapies, the school's creative curriculum helps pupils to grow in confidence and flourish in their personal skills. As a result, pupils with complex needs and vulnerabilities are very well prepared to live safely and productively in modern Britain.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff are highly effective in managing challenging behaviour and reinforcing positive attitudes. Records of behavioural incidents and physical interventions, as well as other 'high alerts', are meticulous and effectively used to analyse trends over time. Staff then take effective action to tailor support and teaching accordingly. Pupils make excellent progress in managing their emotions and their behaviours. Incidents typically decrease significantly for individual pupils over time.
- Training for staff is thorough, regular and highly effective, including in relation to physical intervention. Adults fully understand pupils' SEN and/or disabilities and follow the school's policies and procedures consistently.
- Attendance is very good overall. The overwhelming majority of pupils attend very regularly. A very few pupils with medical needs have higher levels of authorised absence.
- The school does not exclude pupils. Leaders are committed to 'never giving up', however challenging a pupil's needs may be.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

## **Outstanding**

- Despite the complex nature of pupils' needs and their histories of disrupted education, pupils' outcomes are typically outstanding.
- When they join the school, many pupils understandably take significant time to be ready to learn. Superb collaborative input from the school's multidisciplinary therapy and psychology team helps to ensure that pupils make outstanding progress in their engagement with education. Over time, pupils' communication skills, emotional well-being and self-esteem dramatically improve. This, in turn, enables them to make academic progress.
- Teachers plan for pupils individually. They identify pupils' learning needs, including those

of the most able, from the outset. The outstanding quality of bespoke teaching facilitates pupils' rapid progress from their typically very low starting points. The school's meticulous assessment information shows that current pupils from key stage 2 to key stage 4 generally make good progress across the curriculum. Progress is especially impressive in art, computing, science, mathematics, humanities and physical education.

- The school's curriculum includes an increasing number of qualifications that pupils can work towards. Pupils are successful in completing functional skills qualifications, GCSEs in English and mathematics and accredited learning in music, physical skills, art, independent living skills, dance, catering and drama. As a result, they are very well prepared for their next steps.
- Last year, all leavers proceeded successfully to further education. The majority transfer to the school's outstanding sixth form provision.

### **Sixth form provision**

### **Outstanding**

- The sixth form provision is highly effective.
- Outstanding leadership of the sixth form has successfully created a provision in which students successfully learn together and make excellent personal progress.
- The sixth-form curriculum is relevant, well resourced and taught exceptionally well. In addition to the wide range of subjects offered, daily events support students' development. These include well-planned lunchtimes in the students' café to teach students about menus, serving, turn-taking and social etiquette, for example. Students also take part in bespoke work experience placements and receive high-quality careers education.
- Students successfully complete a range of accredited courses, depending on their personal interests and destinations, as identified on their 'pathway to adulthood'. In the past two years, staff are proud that students have achieved high grades at GCSE in citizenship, history and music. Many have also achieved functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. Current students have begun to study at A level.
- As a result of the excellent sixth form provision, students are very well prepared for life in society. Students typically proceed successfully to further education, supported living placements or residential care settings.

## School details

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 101953   |
| DfE registration number | 307/6064 |
| Inspection number       | 10038156 |

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.

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|--|--|
| Type of school                         | Independent special day school   |
| School category                        | Independent school   |
| Age range of pupils                    | 4 to 20  |
| Gender of pupils                       | Mixed  |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form     | Mixed  |
| Number of pupils on the school roll    | 75   |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 28   |
| Number of part-time pupils             | None   |
| Proprietor                             | National Autistic Society  |
| Link trustee                           | Felicity Chadwick-Histed   |
| Principal                              | Chloe Phillips   |
| Annual fees (day pupils)               | £40,074–63,443   |
| Telephone number                       | 020 8813 9168  |
| Website                                | <a href="http://www.autism.org.uk/sybilelgar">www.autism.org.uk/sybilelgar</a> |
| Email address                          | <a href="mailto:sybil.elgarschool@nas.org.uk">sybil.elgarschool@nas.org.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection            | 7–9 October 2014   |

## Information about this school

- The Sybil Elgar School is an independent special day school for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder and other complex needs. It is situated on two sites in the London borough of Ealing.
- All pupils have education, health and care plans and are placed by a wide range of local authorities.

- The school does not operate separate early years provision. At the time of the inspection, there were two children of below compulsory school age.
- The previous inspection was in 2014, when the school was judged to be good.
- The school makes no use of alternative provision.



## Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector jointly observed a range of teaching with the deputy principals at both sites. He met pupils informally and with one pupil formally, and observed pupils practising for their Christmas production.
- The inspector jointly scrutinised the school's information about pupils' progress, attendance and incidents.
- The inspector had several meetings with staff including the principal, deputy principals, therapists and the school's link trustee. He also met with all staff, observed staff briefings and considered the 46 responses to the staff survey.
- The inspector spoke with two representatives from placing local authorities.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including school policies, logs, evidence of staff training and information related to safeguarding and health and safety.
- There were not enough contributions to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to produce an analysis. However, the inspector met with five parents during parents' evening and spoke with one parent by telephone.
- The inspector toured both premises and considered a range of additional information and evidence in relation to the independent school standards.
- The inspector also considered the school's application to change its registration with the Department for Education. The request was to increase the school's age range from 4–20 to 4–22.

## Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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