

# Inspection of The Bridge SEN School

148–150 & 167 Old Kent Road, London SE1 5TY

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Inspection dates: 24 to 26 November 2021

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

**No**

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The vulnerable pupils at The Bridge have complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They face many challenges, including in communicating verbally. Leaders do not have effective systems and processes to safeguard these pupils. This is because staff have been trained in safeguarding adults, but they are not trained to safeguard children under 18, or to physically intervene and restrain pupils if necessary. Additional failings relate to recruitment, policies, premises and risk assessment.

Pupils have positive relationships with the school's caring staff, who provide structure, routine and predictability. Pupils' attendance is very high. Incidents, including any bullying, are dealt with effectively.

The curriculum helps pupils to develop their communication and social skills, keep themselves safe, and feel successful. Pupils particularly enjoy their weekly swimming and bowling sessions. Pupils are starting to achieve well, including in literacy and numeracy.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leadership, management and governance are weak. The proprietor is failing to meet their obligations. Some statutory requirements, including the independent school standards, are not met. The most serious failings relate to safeguarding. Policies were found to be out-of-date, including those on the school's website. The health and safety policy is a poorly edited template for a different setting. The admission register is not compliant with the requirements as it does not include the names and addresses of schools previously attended by pupils. Documentation, such as certificates and records of fire safety checks, is disorganised. The school uses shared premises on both sides of a very busy main road. There are no written risk assessments of these premises. There are no medical room, changing or shower facilities at the 167 Old Kent Road premises. The site also does not have outdoor lighting. The proprietor acknowledges that the premises are not fit for purpose and is in the process of finding a new building. The school is not compliant with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. This is because the school's accessibility plan does not sufficiently consider what leaders plan to do to make the curriculum and information more accessible.

The school's curriculum includes all the required areas of learning. As well as literacy and numeracy lessons, pupils have sessions in art, music, cooking, 'people and places', and computing skills. Pupils will soon be working towards some qualifications. Most teachers have joined the school recently. They said they have no concerns about their workload and feel supported by leaders. They are specialists in teaching pupils with SEND. In each subject, teachers plan in line with pupils' personal education plans. These are based on pupils' targets from their education, health and care (EHC) plans. However, though the school also has well-sequenced curriculum

plans in all subjects, teachers do not know this. Therefore, teachers do not typically teach in line with the school's curriculum. They do not receive sufficient training and development. The assessment system is new. Photographs of pupils' learning are beginning to build a picture of their achievement.

Pupils receive support from occupational and speech and language therapists, as well as an educational psychologist. The curriculum includes weekly sessions in the local community, such as visits to the shops and leisure centre. These all help to develop pupils' social skills, and to prepare them for being part of the community. Pupils are increasingly able to use Makaton, communication boards and some words to express how they feel and what they like. However, sometimes pupils are not ready to learn. When this is the case, including when their behaviour is especially challenging, staff support pupils in the school's relaxation room. Activities such as singing, 'sensory exploration' and relaxation sessions help pupils to improve their behaviour. A programme of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education helps to teach pupils to take care of themselves. They learn about British values, the differences people have, and how to stay safe. For example, the inspector saw pupils learning what to do if the fire alarm sounds. The requirements for relationships and sex education are met.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Staff have completed recent training in safeguarding adults, but not children. Staff at all levels have a poor understanding of the latest statutory guidance. The school's safeguarding policy is available on the school's website. It did not reflect the latest national guidance and was updated during the inspection.

Staff work with extremely vulnerable pupils who can present challenging and violent behaviour. However, they have not completed recent, suitable physical intervention training. There is no consistent, agreed approach to de-escalation and physical intervention.

The school's system for recruiting staff does not pay regard to government guidance. Candidates do not complete application forms. The recording of the interview and decision-making process is too limited. The process for gaining references is not sufficiently rigorous. Some staff are working in the school without all of the required checks being correctly completed and/or recorded.

Despite the lack of training, staff are vigilant. They know each pupil very well. They teach pupils to look after themselves, and how to ask for help.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and proprietor)**

- Safeguarding is not effective because staff are not trained in line with the latest 'Keeping children safe in education' statutory guidance. The safer recruitment process does not reflect government guidance. The single central record of checks on staff suitability is not compliant. Leaders and the proprietor should rapidly improve safeguarding arrangements and ensure they pay regard to the latest statutory guidance.
- There is no consistent approach to de-escalation, positive handling and restraint. Leaders and the proprietor should rapidly organise suitable training to ensure that staff are able to effectively and consistently de-escalate situations as necessary.
- There is a lack of coherence and consistency in the curriculum. Teachers do not typically teach in line with the school's plans in each area of learning. Leaders do not provide teachers with professional development on the curriculum. Leaders and teachers should agree a consistent approach to teaching in line with both the school's curriculum and pupils' EHC plan targets. They should introduce professional development to help improve the quality of education.
- Some independent school standards are not met. The school is not compliant with requirements relating to health and safety, risk assessment, the admission register and premises. These are listed in the annex to this report. The proprietor, governors and leaders should ensure that they know the independent school standards and take action to ensure that these are all met consistently. Leaders should also ensure that information, such as certificates of training and safety checks, is organised and readily available.
- The school's accessibility plan is incomplete. It does not comply with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders and the proprietor should revise their plan to ensure it includes actions to make the curriculum and information accessible.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147977
<b>DfE registration number</b>	210/6012
<b>Local authority</b>	Southwark
<b>Inspection number</b>	10204274
<b>Type of school</b>	Day special school
<b>School category</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	14 to 25
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	6
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	1
<b>Proprietor</b>	Edith Eneanya-Bonito
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Nuttall
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£35,000 to £95,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7703 8587
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thebridge-school.co.uk">www.thebridge-school.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@thebridge-school.co.uk">admin@thebridge-school.co.uk</a>

## Information about this school

- The Bridge SEN School is an independent special day school for boys and girls in the London Borough of Southwark. The school caters for pupils with EHC plans. Pupils have a range of complex needs, including autism spectrum disorder.
- The school caters for pupils of compulsory school age at its main premises at 148–150 Old Kent Road, SE1 5TY. Students aged 18 to 25 attend the premises opposite at 167 Old Kent Road, SE1 5TY. There is no separate sixth-form provision.
- The school has a sole proprietor, who delegates governance to a governing body.
- The school opened in September 2020. This was the school's first standard inspection.
- Leaders does not make use of alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in literacy and communication, computing skills, and PSHE education. He considered curriculum plans, visited lessons, and spoke with teachers. He also visited lessons in arts and crafts, and music.
- The inspector met with the headteacher regularly throughout the inspection. He also spoke by telephone with both the sole proprietor and the chair of governors.
- The inspector met with the school's safeguarding leaders and reviewed a range of related documentation, including vetting checks on staff and employee files.
- The inspector considered a range of evidence relating to pupils' safety, personal development and behaviour.
- There were no responses on Ofsted Parent View or to the online pupils' survey. The inspector considered the responses to the online survey for staff and met with a group of staff.

- The inspector reviewed a range of evidence to check compliance with the independent school standards.

### **Inspection team**

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school failed to meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 11 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that relevant health and safety laws are complied with by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written health and safety policy.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- 16 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 16(a) the welfare of pupils at the school is safeguarded and promoted by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written risk assessment policy; and
  - 16(b) appropriate action is taken to reduce risks that are identified.

#### **Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if–
  - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
  - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person–
    - 18(2)(c)(iii) the person's right to work in the United Kingdom.
- 18(3) The checks referred to in sub-paragraphs (2)(c) and (except where sub-paragraph (4) applies) (2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment.
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is–



- 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether–
- 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
- 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
- 21(3)(a)(v) an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S;
- 21(3)(a)(vi) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(d);
- 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made; and
- 21(3)(a)(viii) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(e),
- 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order,
- including the date on which such check was completed.

## **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 23(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), the standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 23(1)(c) suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education.
- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including–
  - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils; and
  - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.
- 27 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that–
  - 27(b) external lighting is provided in order to ensure that people can safely enter and leave the school premises.

## **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school–

- 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
- 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
- 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

### **Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010**

- The school is not compliant with this requirement because their accessibility plan only considers physical access.

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