

SMS Changing lives School

Ferranti House, Wickentree Lane, Failsworth, Manchester, Greater Manchester M35 9AY

Inspection date

3 February 2022

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(a), 2(1)(b), 2(1)(b)(i), 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i)

- The proprietor body has a suitable curriculum policy in place. Leaders have supported this with appropriate schemes of work. The curriculum covers the range of subjects prescribed by the independent school standards (the standards). These include linguistic, mathematical, and aesthetic and creative education. The plans that leaders have relate appropriately to pupils' ages and aptitudes.

Paragraphs 2(2)(d), 2(2)(d)(i), 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(e), 2(2)(e)(i), 2(2)(e)(ii), 2(2)(e)(iii)

- There is an appropriate policy and scheme of work that gives pupils experience of personal, social, health and economic education. Pupils have suitable opportunities to learn about a wide range of themes, including developing respect for different faiths and an appreciation of the full range of protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.
- Leaders have ensured that they have impartial careers advice in place which relates to pupils' interests and strengths, including attending local colleges. Leaders have also organised various activities, such as events for pupils who are interested in joining the armed forces.

Paragraphs 2A(1), 2A(1)(b), 2A(1)(c), 2A(1)(d), 2A(1)(e), 2A(1)(f), 2A(1)(g), 2A(2), 2A(3)

- Leaders have ensured that there are suitable arrangements to provide relationships and sex education for pupils. There is an appropriate policy and a written statement of that policy, which are published on the school's website. Leaders have consulted with parents and carers about the policy. They have also informed parents of their right to withdraw their children from the sex education element of the programme.

Paragraphs 3, 3(a), 3(b), 3(c), 3(d), 3(e), 3(f), 3(g), 3(h), 3(i), 3(j), 4

- Teaching strategies and resources are suitable and enable pupils to make good progress. Leaders have matched schemes of work to pupils' ages and abilities. Staff manage pupils' behaviour in class effectively.
- There are suitable assessment arrangements in place. Documents seen include information about the points at which teachers assess pupils formally and refer to an appropriate range of assessment strategies.
- There are no issues arising from the concerns raised with the Department for Education (DfE) in this part of the standards. Leaders have ensured that there are sufficient resources and schemes of work to enable pupils to gain experience of the required range of subject areas and learn effectively.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in this part are met.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b), 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The proprietor body has a suitable safeguarding policy in place. This is up to date and leaders have published it on the school's website. The policy makes reference to current guidance from the government.
- Leaders have ensured that staff have received thorough training in safeguarding matters. The proprietor body has an efficient system in place for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns about pupils. Leaders respond promptly and give pupils the help that they need. This includes making referrals to other agencies, such as children's social care, when required.
- Leaders have a secure knowledge of how they must respond to allegations of safeguarding concerns about members of staff. Leaders have clear expectations of staff conduct, which they have summarised in a suitable staff conduct policy. Leaders understand the procedures that they will follow in the event of breaches of this policy. Staff fully understand the processes involved.
- Pupils who spoke with the inspector said that they feel safe in school and that staff look after them well. They said that they feel comfortable to approach staff to report any worries that they may have. They are confident that staff will respond in a supportive way.
- Leaders liaise with the local authority with increasing regularity. For example, leaders have recently submitted a safeguarding audit to the local authority. Safeguarding officers from the local authority had provided this to help school leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding systems.

Paragraph 9, 9(a), 9(b), 9(c)

- The proprietor body has an appropriate behaviour policy in place. It contains relevant information, such as responsibilities among staff, rewards and sanctions. It also contains information about the school's approach to bullying. There is clear information about the school's approach to restrictive physical interventions. Leaders train staff in suitable techniques.

- Evidence from discussions with staff and pupils, coupled with observation of behaviour around school and in classes, demonstrated that staff implement the behaviour policy effectively.
- Leaders keep detailed records of incidents of pupils' serious misbehaviour, including, for example, those related to unacceptable use of sexual or misogynistic language. They evaluate incidents effectively and take appropriate action to prevent further incidents.

Paragraph 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 16(a), 16(b)

- There is a range of suitable policies to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils at the school. Leaders implement them effectively. There is a health and safety policy which refers to relevant government guidance and legislation. Risk assessments across a wide range of activities, including off-site visits, are thorough and ensure that pupils are as safe as possible.
- Fire safety is assured through a specific risk assessment. Leaders see to it that they or external specialists carry out all the required checks, including, for example, on fire extinguishers and evacuation procedures. The first-aid policy is fit for purpose. Leaders keep detailed records of any incidents requiring first aid.
- Leaders have made sure that the ratio of staff to pupils secures effective supervision of pupils at the school.
- There are no issues arising from the concerns raised with the DfE in this part of the standards. Leaders have effective safeguarding procedures in place and pupils said that they feel safe. Leaders' expectations of staff's conduct are clear and the systems for the management of pupils' behaviour are suitable.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards that were inspected in this part are met.

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

Paragraph 18(2), 18(2)(a), 18(2)(b), 18(2)(c), 18(2)(c)(i), 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c)(iii), 18(2)(c)(iv), 18(2)(d), 18(3)

- The proprietor body has ensured that all the required checks are carried out before appointment to ensure that staff are suitable to work with pupils.
- Leaders record all the necessary information in the school's single central record.

Paragraph 19(2), 19(2)(a)(i), 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), 19(2)(a)(i)(bb), 19(2)(a)(i)(cc), 19(2)(a)(ii), 19(2)(b), 19(2)(c), 19(2)(d), 19(2)(d)(i), 19(2)(d)(ii), 19(3)

- The school does not currently employ supply staff. The proprietor body is aware of the checks that it must carry out on supply staff if it were to employ such staff in the future.

Paragraph 20(6), 20(6)(a), 20(6)(a)(i), 20(6)(a)(ii), 20(6)(b), 20(6)(b)(i), 20(6)(b)(ii), 20(6)(c)

- The chair of the proprietor body has carried out and recorded all the required checks on other members of the proprietor body.

Paragraph 21(1), 21(2), 21(3), 21(3)(a), 21(3)(a)(i), 21(3)(a)(ii), 21(3)(a)(iii), 21(3)(a)(iv), 21(3)(a)(v), 21(3)(a)(vi), 21(3)(a)(vii), 21(3)(b), 21(5), 21(5)(a), 21(5)(a)(i), 21(5)(a)(ii), 21(5)(b), 21(5)(c), 21(6), 21(7), 21(7)(a), 21(7)(b)

- The school keeps legible, electronically stored records of the checks that they have carried out on staff.
- There are no issues arising from the concerns raised with the DfE in this part of the standards. Leaders make thorough checks on staff and adults at the school. The school's single central record of those checks is up to date and compliant.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in this part are met.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraph 23(1), 23(1)(a), 23(1)(b), 23(1)(c)

- The school is located on two sites. The main site is in Failsworth and there is a smaller building situated on Greek Street in Stockport. Suitable washing and toilet facilities are available at both sites. There are also changing and showering facilities at both sites.

Paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(a), 24(1)(b), 24(2)

- The proprietor body has ensured that a suitable medical room is in place at each site to treat any sick or injured pupils. The rooms are suitably equipped with a bed, bedclothes, and washing facilities with hot and cold running water. A toilet is available nearby to each medical room in each building.

Paragraphs 25, 26, 27, 27(a), 27(b), 28(1), 28(1)(a), 28(1)(b), 28(1)(c), 28(1)(d), 28(2), 28(2)(a), 28(2)(b)

- Leaders maintain the premises at both locations appropriately. Pupils' health, safety and welfare are ensured. The inspector's tour of the premises demonstrated that the school's policies on health and safety, fire safety and risk assessment are implemented effectively.
- Classrooms and other areas have enough space for the number of pupils for which the school is registered. There are suitable lighting and acoustic conditions in all rooms.
- The water temperature for handwashing does not present a scalding risk. Drinking water is readily available and the source is suitably labelled and is separate from the toilet areas.

Paragraph 29(1), 29(1)(a), 29(1)(b)

- The school's Failsworth site has suitable outdoor space for recreation purposes. It is in a covered area beneath the school car park ramp. It is appropriately lit and spacious enough for small-sided games, for example. The site also has two indoor football pitches that can be used for recreation and physical education purposes.
- Leaders have created an outdoor space at the Greek Street site that is suitable for pupils' recreation time. It is enclosed by a high fence with a locking gate. It safely separates the space from the surrounding car park area. Leaders provide physical education (PE) at external venues or at the Failsworth site. Leaders have suitable risk assessments in place to ensure that pupils remain safe during PE activities.
- There are no issues arising from the concerns raised with the DfE in this part of the standards. Leaders have addressed the standards that were unmet during the

material change inspection in November 2020 in connection with the premises at Greek Street. The premises on both sites are well maintained. Leaders secure the welfare and safety of pupils effectively.

- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in this part are met.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33, 33(a), 33(b), 33(c), 33(d), 33(e), 33(f), 33(g), 33(h), 33(i), 33(i)(i), 33(i)(ii), 33(j), 33(j)(i), 33(j)(ii), 33(k)

- The school's complaints policy complies with requirements. For instance, the policy is in writing and contains suitable timescales for leaders to respond to complaints. Leaders will maintain confidentiality unless an official agency requires access to records of complaints. Leaders have published the policy on the school's website.
- There are no issues arising from the concerns raised with the DfE in this part of the standards. Leaders have a suitable complaints policy in place. They have recorded that they received no formal complaints from parents or others outside the school in the previous school year. Leaders provided evidence that they manage other complaints, such as those between staff, effectively.
- Leaders have ensured that all the standards in this part are met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor body and leaders have ensured that the school meets all of the standards that were checked during this inspection.
- There are no wider issues that arise from the concerns raised with the DfE.
- The proprietor body and other leaders have ensured that there are sufficient resources and schemes of work to enable pupils to gain experience of the required range of subject areas and learn effectively.
- Leaders have effective safeguarding procedures in place and pupils said that they feel safe. Leaders' expectations of staff's conduct are clear and the systems for the management of pupils' behaviour are suitable.
- Leaders make thorough checks on staff and adults at the school. The school's single central record of those checks is up to date and compliant.
- The premises on both sites are well maintained. Leaders secure the welfare and safety of pupils effectively.
- Leaders have a suitable complaints policy in place. They have recorded that they received no formal complaints from parents or others outside the school in the previous school year. Leaders provided evidence that they manage other complaints, such as those between staff, effectively.
- The chair of the proprietor body has a clear overview of the work of school leaders and staff. Leaders meet frequently with the chair of the proprietor body to provide information that enables the proprietor body to monitor the quality of the provision.
- The standards in this part are met.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- Leaders have a suitable accessibility plan in place. Actions to improve access for disabled pupils include: adapting resources to enable pupils to access the curriculum; the installation of ramps if wheelchair users need them; and the use of, for instance, different coloured paper for providing written information for pupils who would benefit from it.
- Leaders have ensured that this requirement is 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 that were checked during this inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

School details

Unique reference number	146646
DfE registration number	353/6004
Inspection number	10221031

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	Independent school
School status	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	SMS Coaching Ltd
Chair	Jonathan Davies
Headteacher	Ms Hecabe DuFraise
Annual fees (day pupils)	£38,000 to £58,000
Telephone number	0161 682 6462
Website	www.smsschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@smscoaching.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	4–6 February 2020

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection took place in February 2020.
- A material change inspection took place in November 2020. This inspection considered proposed changes to the school's age range and an increase to the maximum number of pupils on roll. The proposed changes were not implemented.
- An emergency inspection took place in May 2021. The DfE requested that the inspector report on the standards in respect of the welfare, health and safety of pupils; the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors; and leadership and management.

Information about this inspection

- This emergency inspection was commissioned by the DfE.
- The inspection was conducted without notice.
- The DfE requested that the inspector report on the standards in respect of the quality of education provided; the welfare, health and safety of pupils; the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors; the premises of and accommodation at the school; and the quality of leadership and management. This request was made because of concerns raised with the DfE.
- During this inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and other school leaders. The inspector also met with the chair of the proprietor body. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during the school day and visited lessons. He spoke formally with some pupils and spoke to a range of staff. The inspector scrutinised policies and other information relating to the curriculum; the welfare, health and safety of pupils; and the checks on the suitability of staff. The documents checked included the school's safeguarding policy. The inspector also conducted a tour of the premises on both sites.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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