

Inspection of Cavendish School

Lady Gomm House, 58 Hawkstone Road, London SE16 2PA

Inspection dates: 7 to 9 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Nearly all pupils enjoy coming to Cavendish School. They find Cavendish provides a safe space where they can develop their social and emotional skills to help them cope with challenges. For example, many pupils attend school more regularly and some improve their behaviour. Pupils feel safe in school and know that occasional bullying is dealt with well by leaders.

Pupils' well-being is the school's highest priority. Staff give pupils the care they need and the opportunity to move on in their lives confidently. Leaders pull out all the stops to provide pupils with expert support, working closely with external agencies. Through leaders' efforts, all pupils go on to further education, apprenticeships or jobs.

Pupils' educational experiences are less positive. Although many gain external qualifications, including at GCSE level, the overall quality of education is inconsistent. Pupils' learning is hampered by the way the curriculum is organised. Leaders have not thought carefully enough about the essential knowledge that pupils need to know. As a result, pupils' experience of the curriculum is, at times, disjointed.

Leaders and staff work hard to maintain an orderly atmosphere around the school. However, it is not uncommon for pupils' learning to be disrupted by unacceptable behaviour. In some cases, this is dealt with well but at other times, disruptive behaviour is not challenged as effectively as it needs to be.

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

Many pupils have been out of full-time education for some time before joining the school. All have missed significant chunks of their education. The school's strengths lie in the way leaders and staff put their all into finding the right social and emotional support for pupils. This can sometimes take months, but leaders are persistent. Their single-mindedness means that pupils typically receive the care and support that they need.

While leaders and staff are committed to helping all pupils to learn successfully, they have not ensured that the curriculum is well thought out. For example, the opportunities for pupils to read widely are limited. This means that leaders' ambition to raise pupils' literacy levels is compromised.

Across the subjects, not enough emphasis is given to what is taught and why it is taught. In some cases, teachers emphasise the final piece of work or the task rather than the fundamental knowledge that they want pupils to learn. In art, for example, pupils produce some strong final pieces of work. However, the curriculum does not enable pupils to develop a secure understanding of the techniques they use or the history of art. This makes it difficult for pupils to make connections between one piece of knowledge and another.

Leaders have given some consideration to the order in which knowledge is taught. For example, in humanities, the plans show what pupils will learn and in what order they will learn it. In mathematics, there is an understanding that pupils need to learn the basics before tackling more complex work. However, in practice, the sequencing of work is not entirely logical because leaders have not identified clearly what content is to be taught.

The way pupils' learning is assessed adds to the lack of coherence in the organisation of the curriculum. For example, leaders and staff use the previous national curriculum level descriptors to check pupils' learning. When they deem a particular level to be achieved, pupils move on to the next. However, these outdated descriptors do not reflect the current national curriculum. Nor do they identify exactly what subject content pupils will learn. As a result, the curriculum is not as ambitious as it needs to be.

Although some staff are experts in their subjects, this is not consistent across the school. In English, for example, a lack of expertise limits the focus on reading. This means that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, do not have sufficiently rich experience of different types of literature.

Leaders and staff put a great deal of effort into promoting pupils' physical and mental health. The personal, social and health education programme covers an appropriate range of topics. It supports pupils' awareness of life in Britain, including the rule of law, equality and different cultures. Careers education is suitable, and includes, for example, visits to jobs fairs, visits from emergency services and work experience. Leaders have consulted with parents and carers on the relationships and sex education and health education curriculum and their right to withdraw their children from some aspects. Statutory guidance is followed effectively.

Despite this work, pupils' behaviour is not consistently good. Although pupils behave well in many lessons, there are instances where rudeness or shouting disrupts learning. Some loud and disorderly behaviour also affects the corridors and means that the atmosphere around the school is not as calm and respectful as it should be. Pupils said that behaviour in classrooms was not consistently good.

The proprietor and leaders fulfil their statutory duties effectively. The proprietor meets regularly with leaders to check the provision the school offers, especially in relation to the care and well-being of pupils. The independent school standards are met in full. The proprietor ensures that the school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders support teachers well, including ensuring their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff place a priority on safeguarding and ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. The procedures vetting staff to ensure that they are suitable follow government guidance and cover the required areas. Safeguarding training and record-keeping are up to date. As a result, all staff are aware of the safeguarding risks to pupils and know what to look out for.

Arrangements for identifying pupils at risk are especially strong. Leaders and staff, including teaching assistants, know the pupils well. They are quick to identify where a pupil needs additional support or intervention. Leaders' strong relationships with external agencies such as social services, early help and therapists ensure that pupils receive appropriate support. Leaders follow up on referrals consistently and make sure that, where possible, support is available.

The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and reflects current government guidance.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is coherently organised. Staff identify the tasks they want to cover but not the fundamental learning that sits behind them. In some cases, work is not sequenced logically to enable pupils to build their knowledge and make connections. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum defines clearly what is to be taught, and in what order it is to be taught. To achieve this, leaders need to identify the fundamental knowledge that they want all pupils to learn in each subject and that these expectations are consistently ambitious
- The way pupils' learning is assessed contributes to the lack of coherence in the organisation of the curriculum. Leaders need to work with staff to break down what they want pupils to know into small, easily learned steps. These steps can then be used to assess pupils' learning and whether there are still gaps or misconceptions in their knowledge. This information should be used to adapt teaching to make sure that all pupils learn well.
- In some cases, staff do not have the necessary subject knowledge and expertise to deliver the curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that teachers have suitable professional development opportunities to extend their subject and teaching expertise. This should be supported by the work to identify the fundamental knowledge that all pupils need to learn and how to assess learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is not consistently good and there remain instances where unacceptable behaviour disrupts learning. The atmosphere around the school is not as calm and respectful as it should be. Leaders need to ensure that unacceptable behaviour in the classroom is dealt with promptly so that it does not disrupt learning.

How can I feed back my views?

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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

Unique reference number	131237
DfE registration number	210/6391
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	10226777
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	46
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cheryl Stepton
Headteacher	Sara Craggs
Annual fees (day pupils)	£28,000
Telephone number	0207 394 0088
Website	www.cavendish-school.org
Email address	info@cavendish-school.net
Date of previous inspection	1 to 3 May 2018

Information about this school

- Cavendish School is an independent special day school in the London Borough of Southwark.
- The school's previous standard inspection was in May 2018.
- The school caters for boys and girls aged from 11 to 16 with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many pupils have additional and complex needs, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism spectrum disorder.
- All pupils are placed by local authorities and have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses a range of alternative provision, all of which is registered with the Department for Education.

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 meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, humanities and art. They talked to pupils about their learning in these subjects and looked at their work. They met with subject leaders and teachers. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors also met with groups of pupils to discuss their views about the school, behaviour and safety.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, who are also the school's safeguarding leads. Inspectors also met with the proprietor of the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of policies and documents, including curriculum plans. They also checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation and safeguarding records and held discussions with leaders and staff.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alison Moore

Ofsted Inspector

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