

Inspection of Side By Side School

9 Big Hill, London E5 9HH

Inspection dates: 12 to 14 July 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Side by Side School gives children and pupils the highest quality of care and support. The school changes pupils' lives for the better. Staff's dedication to pupils' well-being is powerful. It ensures that every pupil, from the little ones to the oldest students, are treated as individuals. Staff understand each pupil's different challenges to learning and celebrate their unique achievements. As a result, pupils develop their knowledge and skills well and their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are met effectively.

Staff know pupils and their families extremely well. They keep parents and carers up to date with their children's work and development. Pupils' attendance is high and staff always know why pupils are absent. Parents speak highly of the school's provision and the care their children receive.

Staff manage pupils' behaviour with sensitivity. Pupils' needs are dealt with patiently and calmly. Teachers and learning support staff are quick to step in and help pupils and each other. Bullying is rare. The safety of pupils is of the utmost importance. Pupils learn in a secure and welcoming environment.

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

Senior leaders have established a school in which pupils are at the centre, where achievements are celebrated and professionalism valued. Leaders and staff take nothing for granted. They take full account of pupils' individual needs to ensure that everything they do makes as much impact as possible to learning. All staff, including learning support assistants and therapists, work effectively to develop pupils' physical and emotional skills. Everyone strives to ensure that pupils have a rich and wide-ranging experience adapted to their individual needs.

The curriculum is suitably broad and ambitious. It is structured carefully so that it meets pupils' individual needs effectively. The curriculum is purposeful, and pupils develop their learning successfully whatever their particular need. In the early years, the planned programmes of learning are especially rich and aspirational. There is a strong focus on helping children work with others and understand routines.

Older pupils take a range of appropriate qualifications. Pupils achieve well in all aspects of their learning and development. For example, one group of pupils were learning how to run the school library, each taking different roles. They explained how books are signed in and out. This type of 'in-house' work experience helps to broaden pupils' experiences about the world outside school and future careers.

While the curriculum is strong overall, in Years 1 to 13, there are a few areas that need to be better. Leaders have developed the teaching of early reading. They have introduced a new phonics programme. However, not all staff are trained fully in how to use this to best effect. This results in occasional variation in the way the programme is put into practice. Similarly, the use of assessment to check learning is

not as consistently strong as it could be. While staff check pupils' learning at the end of the term or unit of work, other checks on pupils' learning and development are not used consistently across the school. Leaders have already identified the need to strengthen consistency in reading and assessment. They have clear plans to tackle these quickly.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is excellent. Opportunities to promote pupils' personal, social and emotional skills are woven through the curriculum. Pupils get many opportunities to grow and mature at a level right for them. Older pupils learn about the world outside school through activities such as working with a local care home, visits to the zoo and work experience.

Promoting pupils' physical and mental health are central pillars of the school's work. A range of therapists are employed by the school, from speech and language therapy to music and occupational therapy. Therapists work closely with teachers and support assistants, helping them to provide the best support they can for pupils. This way of working together, of supporting each other, is one of the unique features of the school. This balance between high-quality care and a strong focus on education is what makes the school successful.

Staff welcome the support they get from leaders. Many said that their careers had been enhanced considerably by the way leaders have supported their professional development. Staff workload and well-being feature highly on leaders' agenda.

Governors have a secure understanding of their role. They visit regularly, observe the school at work and discuss their perceptions with leaders. This, and the information they get from leaders, ensures that governors support and challenge leaders in equal measure. Governors have ensured that the school meets the independent school standards and the early years foundation stage framework in full. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders ensure that the school implements the statutory guidance on relationships and sex education (RSE).

As everyone says, the new building is a 'dream'. The tenacity of governors and leaders to get the accommodation built, and its high quality, is a testament to their vision and ambition for pupils and the community. Great thought has been put into the facilities to ensure that they cater for the full range of pupils' needs and disabilities.

The new building is suitable for 150 pupils aged from 2 to 19. It is likely to meet all of the independent school standards if the Department for Education (DfE) approves the material change.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors put pupils' safety and well-being at the top of their priorities. Staff know the pupils and their families well and use their insights to provide specialised support to each pupil. The school's therapists help to ensure that this support is both timely and well-focused.

The vetting checks for staff are detailed, up to date and take account of the latest guidance. All staff receive regular training about safeguarding and this is topped up during the year in response to pupils' needs.

Leaders maintain strong links with the local authorities to ensure that they work in partnership with social workers and community health staff. This provides an additional layer of support for pupils and their families.

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)

- Some staff have not been fully trained to use the new phonics programme. Occasionally, this affects how well some pupils are taught to read using phonics. Leaders should continue their existing work to ensure that staff have the training they need to deliver the programme to best effect.
- The use of assessment is variable. Sometimes, it is used well but occasionally, staff do not check pupils' learning and development as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that assessment is used consistently to check how well pupils are learning throughout the school.

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

Unique reference number	133439
DfE registration number	204/6409
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10210836
Type of school	Other Independent Special School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	10
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Side By Side (Children Ltd)
Chair	Jacob Sorotzkin
Headteacher	Gerald Lebrett
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,971 to £35,683
Telephone number	0208 880 8300
Website	http://www.sidebyside.org.uk
Email address	school@sidebyside.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 to 8 March 2018

Information about this school

- Side By Side School is an independent special day school serving the Jewish community in Stamford Hill, North London.
- The school was previously inspected in March 2018.
- Pupils experience a wide range of difficulties, ranging from profound and multiple to moderate learning difficulties. Many have additional complex medical needs.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan and stay on roll to the age of 16 or 19. However, the school does not offer separate sixth-form provision.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds. These children are taught 'side by side' those in the Nursery Year and attend full time.
- The school 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.

- 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 considered early reading, personal, social and health education, and literacy in Years 7 to 13 as part of this inspection. Where possible, they talked to pupils about their learning in these subjects and looked at their work. They met with subject and phase leaders, and teachers. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school, behaviour and safety.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the nursery manager, who are also the school's safeguarding leads. Inspectors held discussions with governors, including the directors of the proprietor body.
- 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.

The school's proposed change to its premises

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school is likely meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change relating to the school provision is implemented.**

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gary Pocock

Ofsted Inspector

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