

Inspection of Snowflake School

10–14 Crown Street, London W3 8SB

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 May 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Outstanding |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding |
| Does the school meet the independent school standards? | Yes |

What is it like to attend this school?

'My child loves going to school,' states one parent, whose views are shared by other parents and carers. Staff at Snowflake know pupils and their families very well. They build highly positive relationships with pupils, treating them with respect and dignity.

Leaders have high expectations. They place a strong focus on identifying the individual barriers that pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) may experience, for example in relation to their behaviour. They use this information to help build a curriculum that fully supports pupils to adapt their behaviour, and improve communication and social skills. Over time, pupils' confidence, resilience, and independence blossoms.

The therapist teams carefully use each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan when organising provision. They also work with other adults to ensure pupils' therapies are built into daily lesson activities. This helps pupils to achieve their targets quickly. Staff then set even more ambitious targets.

Pupils are happy at school. They are kept safe from harm, for example bullying is not tolerated. Leaders also make sure that pupils access their local community, such as through visits and the use of local facilities for swimming.

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

Leaders identify pupils' needs extremely well. They use this information and pupils' EHC plans to help create an individual education plan. This plan is then used to create a personalised curriculum for each pupil that links to one of three pathways.

Pupils learn a broad range of subjects on each pathway, some delivered through a therapeutic approach, such as drama. There are high levels of one-to-one teaching, and some pupils learn, when they are ready, in group sessions. During group sessions, pupils have the skills to behave very well and to access their learning with increasing independence. Pupils' physical development is weaved carefully into the school day, for example through the therapy provision, class activities and a personalised approach to physical education (PE).

Leaders think about what pupils should learn and when they should learn it. However, in some subjects, leaders have not identified the precise knowledge and vocabulary that they want pupils to know and remember. As a result, teaching can become focused on activities rather than on what pupils should learn from each activity. When this happens, adults lack clarity on what they should be assessing when they check pupils' understanding.

Leaders prioritise reading, for example staff read regularly to pupils and pupils have regular phonics sessions to help build their fluency. They read from books that match the sounds that they are learning. That said, sometimes adults working with pupils lack the expertise needed to make full use of the opportunities to reinforce

pupils' use of phonics. This is not helpful in supporting pupils on their journey to becoming fluent readers.

Leaders have recently reviewed their personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum. This is improving the breadth of content that is taught to pupils. Pupils have lots of opportunities to learn about life- and self-help skills, for example with daily tutor sessions. These sessions help pupils to become more independent in their day-to-day lives, including with activities that they can do at home for themselves. Leaders are currently embedding their plans for preparation for adulthood. They have organised recent work experience activities to help pupils develop an understanding of the world of work and future career opportunities.

Staff make sure that pupils are taught about differences, for example in relation to religious beliefs and sexual orientation. They successfully adapt their teaching so pupils can access the content for PSHE and relationships education, for example through social stories, one-to-one sessions and assemblies. Leaders also organise bespoke activities for pupils that link to their interests, such as climbing and art. Pupils on the primary site all access different daily clubs such as play skills.

Staff are well trained. They manage behaviour expertly. They use a range of ways, such as visual timetables and communication cards, to help pupils move from one activity to another. Staff ensure that things are kept calm and that small issues in relation to behaviour do not build up into more serious issues. As a result, any need for physical intervention is only used as a last resort. Overall, pupils make great gains in learning how to self-manage their behaviour.

Staff are proud to work at Snowflake. They feel well supported, for example with regular training in the school's approaches to helping pupils with ASD. Teachers new to the profession speak positively about the ongoing mentoring and guidance they receive.

The trustees from the proprietor body are passionate and fully supportive of the school's work, including with fundraising. The school meets the requirements of the independent school standards (the standards). However, a few aspects of record-keeping and compliance were remedied during the inspection. Occasionally, the rigour with which the proprietor body checks on adherence to the standards is not as robust as it should be. Leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff are well trained. Staff ensure that pupils can communicate their emotions and feelings using the methods that best suit each pupil. Staff know how to spot any changes in pupils' behaviour. They know to report anything, 'no matter how small'. Leaders pick up any concerns quickly, checking in with external agencies for guidance and support should it be needed.

Staff teach pupils how to manage their own safety, for example in understanding appropriate behaviours, and the importance of road safety. Pupils feel safe at school. Parents say their children are well looked after.

The safeguarding policy is written in line with the latest statutory guidance and is available on the school website.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects and pathways, the component knowledge that pupils need to learn is not precisely set out. As a result, there is a tendency for adults to focus on the teaching and assessment of tasks or skills, rather than the underpinning knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should be learning. Leaders should review their curriculum thinking in these subjects, ensuring that component knowledge is explicitly set out, taught and assessed.
- Occasionally, some adults working with pupils to improve their reading lack expertise. This means sometimes they do not support pupils in using their phonics as well as they should. Leaders should review their training and monitoring, ensuring that all staff help pupils to build up their reading fluency effectively.
- Leaders' oversight of the standards lacks rigour. Leaders had to remedy a few aspects of compliance with the standards during the onsite inspection. Leaders, including the proprietor, should improve the robustness of their checks so that the standards are consistently met.

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.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 135616 |
| DfE registration number | 207/6408 |
| Local authority | Kensington and Chelsea |
| Inspection number | 10267645 |
| Type of school | Independent school |
| School category | Other independent special school |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 42 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Snowflake School for Children with Autism Ltd |
| Chair | Faryaneh Akhavan |
| Headteacher | Kerry Sternstein |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £58,500 to £65,500 |
| Telephone number | 020 7370 3232 |
| Website | www.snowflakeschool.org.uk |
| Email address | info@snowflakeschool.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 12 to 14 February 2019 |

Information about this school

- Snowflake School is an independent special school. It caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Almost all pupils have an EHC plan.
- Pupils are placed at the school from a range of local authorities.
- The school operates from two sites, for:
 - primary pupils at 46a Longridge Road, Kensington and Chelsea SW5 9SJ
 - secondary pupils at 10–14 Crown Street, Ealing W3 8SB.
- The proprietor body is not listed on the government register of educational establishments 'Get Information about Schools' website.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- The school accesses additional facilities for PE, from:
 - Everyone Active, High Street, Acton SW5 9SJ
 - Virgin Active, 188a Fulham Road, London SW10 9PN.
- The school's last full standard inspection was in February 2019, when it was judged to be outstanding, and all the independent school standards were met.
- The school had a material change inspection in August 2020. This change involved extending the capacity of the school from 18 to 42 pupils, with the addition of the site for secondary pupils in Ealing. This site opened in September 2020.

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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior staff across both sites. An inspector also held meetings with the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors also held telephone meetings with local authority leaders to discuss safeguarding and the quality of education provided to pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading (including communication), mathematics, PSHE and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with lead teachers/senior leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of

lessons and spoke to teachers, therapists, supporting adults, and spoke to pupils about their learning. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work in a range of other subjects.
- Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and behaviour. They reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including pre-employment checks on staff, risk assessments and case studies. Inspectors considered the views of parents, staff, pupils and other agencies to help evaluate the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors considered a range of evidence to evaluate compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors considered replies to Ofsted Parent View and the online surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lascalles Haughton

His Majesty's Inspector

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