

School inspection report

14 to 16 January 2025

Southover Partnership School

288 Kingsbury Road

Roe Green Park

Kingsbury

London

NW9 9HA

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The recently formed senior leadership team and board of trustees are highly committed to the successful future of the school. They are purposeful in ensuring pupils' academic and personal success. However, comprehensive and systematic methods for monitoring the school's policies, procedures and outcomes are not in place.
2. The monitoring of safeguarding has not been sufficiently rigorous, particularly in relation to referrals to the local authority designated officer (LADO) and the management of low-level concerns about adults.
3. The curriculum covers all the required areas, with a focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Learning is enhanced by support given from the therapy team. Pupils are supported in gaining a wide variety of qualifications including BTEC and NCFE vocational qualifications and GCSE. Aspirational targets are in place for most pupils, with the implementation of effective interventions where pupils are not achieving their expected outcomes. Most teachers adapt their teaching to support the individual needs of pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and education, health and care (EHC) plans. The requirements for managing EHC plans are met because the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) liaises effectively with leaders and staff in each of the sites. Overall, pupils make good progress from their starting points.
4. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE) schemes have been carefully adapted to meet the ages and needs of pupils. There are clear expectations for behaviour. Pupils form secure attachments with their key persons, mentors and teachers. They are well supported in managing their own behaviour in a variety of contexts and in communicating their thoughts and feelings to others. A small number of staff do not always feel confident in using the agreed methods for managing behaviour, and as a result these are not always implemented consistently.
5. A revised attendance policy was uploaded to the school's website during the inspection. The school's outreach provision effectively ensures that pupils have access to education if they are unable to attend school. Raising pupils' attendance at school has been identified by leaders and trustees as a high priority.
6. The school meets the requirements for health and safety, first aid, premises and accommodation. Records in relation to accidents and the administration of medicine are maintained appropriately. Suitable risk assessments for health and safety and safeguarding are implemented consistently. However, recording of maintenance checks is inconsistent across the sites.
7. The school promotes the principles of equality, inclusion and respect effectively through PSHE and RSE, across the curriculum, during activities, trips and recreation times. Pupils contribute to the school and wider community, particularly through the work of the school council.
8. Pupils receive helpful guidance regarding examination entry and suitable careers advice. They are supported in undertaking work-related experiences, attending college for open days and obtaining additional qualifications. They are well prepared for college and life beyond school.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are not met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are not met.

Areas for action

The proprietor must ensure that:

- the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge
- fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and
- they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils

so that:

- trustees have suitable oversight of safeguarding
- low-level concerns are understood by all staff and are reported and recorded in line with statutory guidance
- referrals are made to the local authority designated officer (LADO) in line with statutory guidance
- records from all aspects of the provision are collated and systematic procedures for monitoring by leaders and trustees are implemented to ensure the Standards are met consistently.

Recommended next steps

The trustees and leaders should:

- ensure that the attendance policy is made available to parents and that strategies used to increase attendance rates are implemented consistently
- implement consistent recording and monitoring of the required health and safety checks
- support staff in implementing the school's behaviour policy and strategies for behaviour management consistently.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. The school's trustee and leadership structure has recently undergone major change, with the appointment of a new chair of trustees and executive headteacher following a period of turbulence that included changes of leadership and the relocation of one section of the school. The appointment of trustees and key personnel is still in process. There is a determination to ensure that people with appropriate skills and experience are appointed in order to form a cohesive team across all sections of the school and to ensure that the Standards are met consistently.
10. Newly appointed trustees and leaders have extensive knowledge and experience of special education and social care. This has supported positive communication between trustees and leaders, incisive self-evaluation and strategic risk assessment of the school's circumstances and needs. The governance structure currently includes a full board with committees for teaching and learning, nominations and remuneration, finance, audit and risk, operations and developing people. Oversight of wellbeing and safeguarding is not currently in place.
11. Trustees and leaders have articulated an aspirational vision for the school that encompasses education and care with a focus on inclusion, underpinned by the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the academic and personal development of pupils. Trustees and leaders have supported a detailed school improvement plan which has identified key priorities for action including the implementation of systematic monitoring, developing the quality and consistency of teaching across the partnership, developing careers education, improving pupils' attendance and ensuring that the school's safeguarding policy and procedures are implemented consistently, in line with statutory guidance.
12. Although there is a commitment to training and professional development, the current training programme does not fully enable staff and trustees to develop the knowledge and skills required to meet the Standards consistently. Staff appreciate being nominated by pupils for an external leadership award that recognises where adults have contributed beyond expectations and where the funds awarded must be used to improve the organisation. Current staff awards are being used to install professional-standard catering equipment to enhance the teaching of food and nutrition and the provision of food during breaktimes, and to install outdoor garden furniture to provide comfortable facilities for outdoor socialising.
13. Leaders work effectively with a wide range of local authorities, other schools and colleges. Leaders ensure that local authorities receive required information in relation to the funding received and provisions made for pupils who have EHC plans. The school has a suitable accessibility plan that considers provision across the sites to ensure that pupils are placed in an environment that best supports their access to the curriculum and the physical environment.
14. Leaders ensure that all required information is made available, mainly through the school's website. Parents receive regular and informative newsletters that include photographs and accounts of work produced by pupils in lessons, activities, trips and fun had during special days such as World Book Day. Staff communicate regularly with parents, often daily, to ensure that pupils are supported personally and in their learning. There are also more formal parental consultations at the beginning of term. Termly reports have been revised after consultation with parents to show pupils' targets and progress more clearly as well as documenting their attitude and personal development.

15. Leaders respond promptly to concerns raised by parents. The school has a suitable complaints policy which is implemented appropriately. Records are kept in line with statutory requirements, including the outcomes of any complaint and details of any action taken.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

16. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. The curriculum is suitably planned, enabling pupils to have experience of science, technology and the arts as well as developing key skills in English and mathematics. Effective support for developing communication skills has recently been provided through the therapy team, which consists of a speech and language therapist, school counsellor and occupational therapist. Therapists conduct staff training, specific assessments and strategies as part of pupils' EHC plans and more widely where needs have been identified. The impact of this individual support is carefully tracked and discussed in weekly team meetings, which include the SENCo. During discussions about their work and in lessons, pupils who were unable to communicate previously have drawn upon the support they have received to express their learning, thoughts and feelings.
18. There is a determination to enable pupils to achieve qualifications that prepare them for entry into further and higher education. Pupils pursue a wide range of qualifications including entry-level mathematics, science, history, geography and physical education (PE); foundation mathematics and English; BTEC home cooking, business, digital media, hair and beauty and performing arts; NCFE business administration, understanding coding, graphic design, creative craft, managing your money; GCSE maths, English, biology, chemistry, physics, art and design. Pupils are supported by school staff in attending local colleges to obtain qualifications. Courses and settings are chosen carefully to match the needs of the pupils. Transition from school to college is carefully planned to include close liaison with parents and college staff. Pupils and parents appreciate how this initiative enhances pupils' qualifications as well as preparing them for further education.
19. Teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) understand pupils' learning and changing needs. They continually adapt their teaching and resources to enable pupils to enjoy and access learning. In science, for example, pupils demonstrate their understanding of cell construction by creating a cell diagram using pasta. Pupils' work is valued and displayed attractively in departments, around the school and in newsletters published on the school's website. This encourages pupils to value learning and motivates them to contribute. Teachers and LSAs continually check pupils' understanding of a topic or idea before moving on. They provide helpful notes and resources to aid revision and support pupils in organising their work.
20. Pupils are supported effectively by the outreach team if they are unable to attend school. Pupils are supported in using technology to access lessons with their teachers in real time, as well as having home visits and daily contact. This consistent and targeted support from the outreach team enables pupils to access education and to transition to frequent attendance in lessons at school after prolonged periods of absence.
21. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) are carefully assessed to ascertain separately their SEND and EAL needs. One-to-one EAL support is provided if required. Teachers use a range of strategies and resources to develop pupils' fluency and understanding.
22. Leaders have recently implemented a coherent framework for assessment across all stages and subjects. Pupils' needs are assessed appropriately on entry to school. Their progress is then monitored diligently by most subject leaders using detailed trackers which indicate when a pupil is meeting, exceeding or not meeting their targets. The SENCo supports school leaders in ensuring that EHC plans are reviewed and updated as required. Targets in the majority of EHC plans relate to

pupils' academic targets. Data from the assessment trackers are collated effectively, enabling leaders and trustees to monitor pupils' progress and attainment and to set aspirational targets.

23. A key focus is the support of pupils in accessing education through regular attendance at school and ensuring that gaps in their learning are addressed. Overall, pupils make good progress. Most pupils who take functional skills and BTEC qualifications attain a pass. All pupils who enter for GCSE qualifications obtain grade 1 and above, with the majority attaining grade 4 and above.
24. Pupils enjoy attending a range of clubs including art, cryptic crosswords, music, karaoke, guitar, table tennis, fitness, chess and film club. These support their academic and personal development.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

25. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

26. Pupils' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing are high priorities for leaders throughout the school. Staff receive regular training and guidance, including from the therapy team, so that they can support pupils in a sensitive way to manage their emotions and behaviour and to participate positively in the life of the school.
27. In consultation with parents, leaders have carefully adapted the school's PSHE and RSE schemes to support the ages and needs of pupils whilst also meeting statutory requirements. The PSHE curriculum is implemented flexibly to enable immediate response to pupils' questions and to issues that arise in the school or the community. Pupils respond well to this integrated approach, which enables them to understand changes they will experience during puberty and a range of issues including relationships and managing friendships, boundaries and consent, harassment, radicalisation and domestic violence.
28. As well as weekly core lessons, teachers have identified where aspects of PSHE and RSE can be taught across the curriculum, during activities and social times. For example, in food and nutrition lessons pupils learn about food hygiene and independently caring for themselves, including through eating a balanced diet. The occupational therapist effectively supports pupils' physical development including through the provision of exercises that can be done within the classroom. Pupils are active during their PE lessons and at breaktimes in many activities, such as table tennis. Staff engage in physical activities alongside the pupils, which encourages them to participate and enjoy the benefits of being active. Pupils particularly enjoy sports day where they can take part in a range of competitive races alongside their parents and staff.
29. The caring ethos of the school enables pupils to develop secure attachments with their key persons, mentors, therapists and teachers. Pupils are supported in understanding themselves, their feelings and the emotions and actions of others. Through these relationships they begin to develop an understanding of spirituality and the importance of the non-material aspects of life.
30. The school has a clear behaviour policy which includes rewards, sanctions and procedures for de-escalation and positive handling. Pupils value the reward system because effort is recognised, and they are motivated to work harder and abide by the school's expectations. An electronic system for recording pupils' behaviour has recently been implemented. This has enabled leaders to effectively monitor pupils' behaviour and any patterns. It also enables staff to share information and, when necessary, take appropriate action without delay.
31. There is a high level of well-organised supervision in place for pupils throughout the day, including as pupils enter and leave the premises. LSAs are highly effective in blending classroom learning and recreation time, which supports pupils' wellbeing and their ability to manage their behaviour in different contexts.
32. Pupils are supported in managing their behaviour and emotions through a restorative approach whereby they understand the reasons for their behaviour, how to avoid such behaviour in the future and how to put things right. Although appropriate training is in place for behaviour management, a small number of staff do not always feel confident in using the agreed methods and they are therefore not implemented consistently.

33. The school meets the requirements for health and safety, first aid, premises and accommodation. Suitable use is made of external specialists to carry out safety checks including for electrical and fire equipment. Fire procedures are clearly displayed, and fire drills are carried out regularly. An appropriate number of staff are qualified in first aid. There is a suitable first aid room at each site and medicines are stored securely. Records in relation to accidents and the administration of medicine are maintained appropriately. Recording of maintenance checks and monitoring of these is inconsistent across the school sites.
34. A revised attendance policy was uploaded to the school's website during inspection which details the way in which the school meets statutory requirements. Local authorities are informed of leavers and joiners at non-standard transition points. The school has implemented a range of suitable strategies to improve school attendance including home visits, daily contact and teaching provided by the school's outreach staff. Raising pupils' attendance at school continues to be a high priority.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

- 35. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

36. The ethos of the school promotes the principles of equality, inclusion and respect. Pupils have proudly produced a wooden plaque to remind everyone that the school's values of 'trust, believe and succeed' mean that there is a focus on building positive relationships with each other in an environment where everyone is valued, and where everyone can make a positive contribution to the school and wider community.
37. The PSHE curriculum is adapted sensitively to enable pupils to empathise and appreciate differences between people including culture, religion, beliefs, gender and disability. Pupils are presented with different viewpoints and are encouraged to consider evidence on both sides to come to a balanced view. This was exemplified during a discussion about whether pupils should wear lanyards during visits outside school. The value of staff and pupils being able to recognise those within the group more easily were weighed against the possibility of revealing information to strangers.
38. Pupils understand the importance of having rules and laws, individual freedom, respect and tolerance. They are supported in engaging socially with one another during breaktimes and activities, including while preparing their own lunch and eating it with their friends. Pupils who have previously been unable to eat food in a social situation say that these arrangements have enabled them to enjoy eating food and to develop their friendships. Pupils also develop their social skills through a wide range of visits including to the zoo, docklands and museums. Whole-school participation in celebration days such as World Book Day and World Maths Day enable pupils to develop their social skills and enjoy being part of the school community.
39. Pupils have a voice and are listened to, particularly by their key persons and mentors. This enables them to be part of the school community and to contribute their thoughts and ideas. Pupils participate in a school council and enjoy taking on the responsibility of being councillors. They express their ideas assertively using the council as a means of positive change. For example, being able to order from a choice of outside lunch options was a suggestion put forward by the council. Pupils are eagerly awaiting the school hoodies that were ordered as a result of persuasive arguments put forward by school councillors.
40. Pupils recognise that helping others also helps them to develop as people. They raise funds for selected charities such as Comic Relief. Pupils have successfully achieved external community awards where funds awarded must be used to enhance the school environment. Recent purchases have included garden furniture, a design and technology storage unit and workbench, and an electric guitar and amplifier. This initiative enables pupils to develop their budgeting skills including through making price comparisons and considering value for money.
41. The school has developed opportunities for pupils to have more extended work-related experiences. Pupils who attend a local farm once a week enjoy learning how to look after the animals. Work experience in a local café increases pupils' understanding of food safety and handling money. In economic education, older pupils learn about different types of taxes and insurance and the importance of budgeting and saving money.
42. Pupils receive helpful information about choosing examinations that will meet their individual needs and future plans. Leaders support older pupils in preparing for their next steps by having discussions

about careers and college placements. Staff accompany pupils to open days where necessary and help them to complete application forms. Staff also accompany some pupils when attending college to complete additional qualifications. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils move on to the college of their choice. They regularly share their experiences with other pupils so that they know what to expect from a pupil's perspective.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

43. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

44. Recently appointed senior leaders and trustees have supported an extensive review of safeguarding across the school sites. Although they have identified where procedures need to be improved, and the culture of safeguarding strengthened, monitoring of safeguarding and liaison with the trustee responsible for safeguarding has not been sufficiently rigorous.
45. Although referrals have been made appropriately to the multi-agency safeguarding hub, social services and the police, referrals to the LADO have not always been made in line with statutory requirements.
46. A low-level concerns record has recently been devised but has not been implemented. It was amended during the inspection to bring it in line with statutory guidance. Staff do not clearly understand low-level concerns, including self-referrals or the procedures for sharing and recording these.
47. Suitable policies are in place for safeguarding including the staff code of conduct. These are in line with statutory guidance. There is an effective system in place for filtering inappropriate online content and for monitoring user activity. Any inappropriate access is responded to without delay.
48. The recently implemented electronic system for recording safeguarding, behaviour and bullying concerns has enabled the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy designated safeguarding leads (DDSLs) to begin to monitor safeguarding effectively, including risk assessments which are in place for all pupils. Records are stored securely with the appropriate level of access. Staff training and ongoing support from the DSL teams enable staff to have confidence in using the system. Records are now more precise and include actions taken, any referrals made and how monitoring is to be implemented. The DSL team receive immediate alerts when entries are made to the system which enables them to respond to any concerns without delay, with consideration given to pupils' additional needs and circumstances. Daily meetings and staff briefings now ensure that information is shared, any patterns are recognised and appropriate action is taken where required.
49. The DSLs and DDSLs are trained appropriately. They deliver suitable induction and annual safeguarding training and regular updates. Staff know the pupils well and are alert to any changes in behaviour. However, some staff lack confidence in behaviour management, including positive handling and de-escalation techniques.
50. Support for pupils' wellbeing is a high priority for leaders throughout the school. Teachers, learning support assistants, mentors and the therapy team support pupils in communicating any concerns or worries that they may have. Pupils say staff support them in feeling safe and that they continually have a range of people to whom they can turn if they are anxious.
51. Appropriate guidance is given to pupils about staying safe, including online. Pupils speak confidently about strategies to stay safe including not giving personal information or responding to people they do not know. Leaders responsible for PSHE and RSE have adapted resources effectively so that pupils understand key aspects of keeping safe, including in relation to knife crime, radicalisation, grooming, setting boundaries and consent.
52. The required recruitment checks are implemented and are now recorded accurately with supporting evidence in staff files.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

53. Not all the relevant Standards are met. A schedule of unmet Standards is included in the report.

Schedule of unmet Standards

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

The following standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 8, paragraph 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 wellbeing of pupils.

Safeguarding

The following Standards in this section of the Framework are not met.

Paragraph number	Standard
ISSR Part 3, paragraph 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.

School details

School	Southover Partnership School
Department for Education number	304/6121
Registered charity number	1175243
Address	Southover Partnership School 288 Kingsbury Road Roe Green Park Kingsbury London NW9 9HA
Phone number	020 8446 0300
Email address	info@southoverpartnership.com
Website	www.southoverpartnership.com
Proprietor	The Southover Partnership
Chair of trustees	Mr Neil Taylor
Executive headteacher	Ms Angela Moore
Age range	8 to 19
Number of pupils	59
Date of previous inspection	December 2021

Information about the school

- 54. Southover Partnership School is an independent special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties, autistic spectrum condition and other complex needs. The school operates over three sites in the London boroughs of Barnet, Brent and Enfield.
- 55. All pupils who attend the school have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- 56. English is an additional language (EAL) for eight pupils.
- 57. The school states its aims are to grow happy and successful young people ready for all the possibilities the world has to offer through the delivery of a personalised and holistic educational experience.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

14 to 16 January 2025

58. A team of three inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

59. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other trustees
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the therapy areas and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

60. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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