ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

11 to 13 June 2024

Herne Hill School

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Herne Hill

London

SE24 9LY

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. Leaders and managers have the necessary knowledge, skills, and understanding to carry out their responsibilities of actively promoting the wellbeing of pupils. They monitor and consider the risks of harm to the pupils' physical, social and emotional wellbeing and adapt procedures where necessary. The proprietor effectively monitors the work of leaders and managers to quality assure their work.

2. Leaders and other staff routinely listen to pupils. This informs the school's development, indicates how teaching can be improved and helps to ensure that future plans reflect pupils' needs and interests. Leaders have created an inclusive culture where diversity is respected and celebrated.

3. Leaders ensure that staff, including those in the early years, are suitably qualified and have the necessary understanding and skills. All staff receive ongoing training to enhance their knowledge and practice. Leaders regularly evaluate teaching and its impact on pupils.

4. Adults foster caring and nurturing relationships with pupils in Years 1 and 2 and in the early years, modelling how to act in social situations and following the school's 'golden rules'. Pupils mix regularly and comfortably with peers. Teachers consistently reinforce the difference between right and wrong behaviour with a gentle and reasoned approach. Pupils accept responsibility for their choices and behave well towards each other. Bullying incidents are rare and if they occur are appropriately addressed.

5. The school's aims and ethos as a provider of pre-preparatory education are reflected in policies and implemented through appropriate planning. Curriculum plans take into account the needs of individual pupils.

6. Teachers plan effectively and use a wide range of resources to support learning. The atmosphere in lessons is positive, calm and warm, so that pupils apply themselves well. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive specialist teaching which contributes to pupils' depth of understanding of English. However, some pupils with higher prior attainment do not consistently receive the level of challenge they need to progress in line with their abilities.

7. Leaders have carefully adapted the premises such as improvements to the Kindergarten muti-use building and the performing arts studio to meet the developmental needs of the pupils. They implement health and safety policies consistently and effectively, including risk assessment, first aid and fire risk management.

8. Pupils of all ages develop a wide range of physical skills, such as balancing and climbing. When faced with a lack of success, they demonstrate resilience. Adults know pupils well and support their emotional needs. Pupils learn how to recognise and express their emotions and share worries.

9. Pupils feel safe at school. There is a well-embedded culture of safeguarding. Leaders and the proprietor ensure staff are suitably checked before working at the school and, on joining, staff are trained to carry out their safeguarding responsibilities. When concerns emerge, staff and leaders act appropriately. Leaders made a minor change to the published safeguarding policy during the inspection to reflect the wording of current guidance.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are 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 met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should ensure that:

- pupils with higher prior attainment are consistently given the opportunity to make progress in line with their abilities
- the wording of all policies reflects current guidance.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. Leaders have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to carry out their responsibility to actively promote the wellbeing of pupils and ensure that the Standards are met consistently. Leaders place their shared aims and values as a specialist provider of early years education at the centre of strategic planning. They use relevant research and thorough evaluation of the school's current strengths and areas for development to inform changes, including the continuous evolution of early years practice.

11. Risks of harm to pupils' physical, social and emotional wellbeing are monitored by leaders and where issues are identified, swift action is taken. Rigorous procedures are in place for mitigating the risk from daily activities including the use of outdoor play equipment, offsite trips and those specific to the early years setting.

12. Leaders ensure that staff in the early years setting are suitably qualified and have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach a balanced and age-appropriate curriculum. The setting is well resourced and maintained to a high standard. Staff in the early years have regular individual meetings to develop professional practice and discuss any child welfare concerns. These meetings also provide the opportunity for staff to access further external training.

13. Leaders make suitable arrangements to ensure that appropriate ratios for supervision of children in the early years are maintained at all times. Key adults are assigned to children prior to joining the school to foster secure bonds and liaise with parents. Staff in the early years keep appropriate records and store them confidentially.

14. Leaders publish information for parents along with the necessary policies on the website and in parent handbooks which are specific to each stage in the school. These policies are also available from the school office. All parents receive an annual report of their child's progress in addition to termly consultation evenings.

15. Leaders maintain effective links with external agencies to gain specialist advice, support pupils who have SEND, and those affected by welfare issues. They inform the local authority of attainment of children at the end of their Reception year. They provide the local authority with the required information regarding any pupils it funds as part of an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

16. Teachers respond to parental concerns quickly and informally in the first instance. If complaints are formalised, leaders resolve them within the timeframes specified by their published policy. Leaders keep appropriate records of complaints and the actions taken as a result of them. Learnings are shared with the proprietor and systems are reviewed and changed when necessary.

17. Leaders have created an inclusive culture where similarities and differences are valued and celebrated. They take proactive steps to improve the accessibility to the curriculum, such as the use of hearing enhancement equipment. Leaders regularly review progress against the targets in the accessibility plan and adapt it as required to address changing needs to ensure that the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met.

18. The proprietor oversees the school's effectiveness in delivering its aims and of meeting the Standards. He frequently visits staff and pupils, receives reports, attends meetings, and reviews

information to ensure the quality of leaders' decisions. The proprietor takes effective action to develop the school's premises and facilities, such as refurbishment of Year 1 and 2 classrooms.

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

19. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

20. The school's aims and ethos, as illustrated through the ‘golden rules’, are reflected in curriculum policy and implemented through careful planning. Curriculum plans do not discriminate and consider the needs of pupils. The decision taken by leaders to have topics such as ‘time detectives’ across the whole school at the same time has provided a structure that enables teachers to link their teaching to inspirational stimuli.

21. Leaders and teachers routinely consult with pupils of all ages about which topics they would like to learn about. They match these preferences to the curriculum plans, integrating concepts such as the water cycle and non-fiction writing about habitats of sea creatures. Topic-based individual and collaborative projects in art develop aesthetic and creative understanding. As a result, pupils are highly engaged in their learning and make good progress in lessons.

22. Teachers plan lessons well and include a range of strategies and stimulating resources. Teachers are positive, calm and warm, creating an environment where mistakes are 'marvellous'. Pupils understand that with effort and persistence, they will achieve. Digital skills such as using art and coding apps are integrated into lessons, developing pupils’ skills and their confidence in the use of technology.

23. Teachers reinforce learning through well-planned tasks. They make effective use of praise so that pupils apply themselves well. Pupils are confident to contribute to lessons and share their learning and ideas. Specialist teaching enhances the pupils' linguistic and musical outcomes through varied and engaging activities.

24. Adults throughout the school intervene if a child is not making expected progress. They give additional support in class, and pupils attend interventions such as additional phonics and physical skills groups. As a result, pupils are provided with the support they need to help make good progress. However, on some occasions, pupils with higher prior attainment do not progress in line with their abilities as activities are not matched to their needs.

25. Leaders have established a suitable programme for the assessment of pupils' achievement, which teachers use to inform their planning. Teachers use appropriate developmental and curriculum guidance to track progress against expectations. On leaving, pupils gain entry to a wide variety of selective and non-selective schools.

26. Pupils who have EAL are usually identified before joining the school in meetings with pupils and parents. Leaders share information with staff to ensure that learning and language acquisition are supported in class through adaptation of tasks and explanations and giving additional time and resources as required. As a result, they make good progress with their understanding of English.

27. Teachers liaise with the special needs co-ordinator and parents to adapt the curriculum and learning spaces to meet the needs of individuals who have SEND. Leaders consult outside specialists when appropriate, and their advice is integrated into pupils' individual learning plans. As a result, pupils who have SEND make good progress from their starting points.

28. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning regularly through observation, reviews of pupil outcomes and shared moderation of work. This monitoring includes assuring that British values are

not undermined. Teachers and teaching assistants undertake further professional development as an outcome of these reviews.

29. Pupils decide which lunchtime clubs they attend, this further develops their sense of leaders listening to their views. Parents select before and after school activities. Leaders plan a wide variety of clubs such as kick boxing, film and photography, musicals, and song writing clubs. Pupils are enthusiastic and develop an interest in areas which they may not have experienced previously. Many clubs complement the curriculum, such as debating club, which enables pupils to practise using their voice effectively.

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

30. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

31. Pupils in Years 1, 2 and children in the early years develop a wide range of physical skills and co-ordination due to carefully planned and regular outdoor activities, including climbing, water play, sand play and painting. They participate in these activities with confidence and when met with activities not going to plan, they adapt with resilience. Teachers are on hand to support and intervene when appropriate, allowing the children to develop physical skills and emotional resilience.

32. Leaders have integrated the golden rules across the school. Adults model the language of these rules and the moral attitudes they embrace. Pupils of all ages understand what the rules mean, and the vast majority follow them. As a result, pupils behave well towards each other. When low-level behavioural issues such as calling out occur in lessons, teachers respond gently and calmly, reminding pupils of the relevant golden rule and encouraging changes in behaviour. Incidents are recorded and potential trends explored to identify next steps, which can include additional staff training.

33. Bullying incidents are rare. Leaders take swift action if bullying is suspected, keeping parents informed so they can understand and support the school's position. The pupils involved are appropriately supported to reduce emotional impact and avoid recurrence.

34. Leaders have carefully designed the inside and outside spaces to meet the developmental needs of the pupils. These are well-maintained, and if defects are noticed, they are quickly remedied. Leaders implement health and safety policies consistently and effectively. A monitoring and auditing system is in place. Where needs are identified, action is taken promptly. Staff follow relevant fire safety legislation, including the regular maintenance of fire detection equipment and the rehearsals of evacuation.

35. Leaders train staff to administer first aid in a timely manner. Data of accidents is collated and analysed to identify areas for improvement, for example, an alteration to the arrangements for using the artificial playing surface during break times which successfully reduced collisions. Adults carefully manage pupils' specific dietary needs. At mealtimes, individual pupils are identified to ensure staff are aware of potential risk and appropriate food is served.

36. Leaders maintain accurate admissions and attendance registers. If pupils do not attend and no prior reason is given, the school immediately contacts the parents. Leaders inform the local authority if a pupil leaves or joins the school at a non-standard time.

37. Staff supervision of pupils is appropriate through the day. Leaders allocate responsibilities for supervision based on risk, experience and the number of staff required for particular age groups.

38. Leaders implement a personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum incorporating relationships education, which follows the latest guidance. Parents are consulted on proposed changes and regular information on topics is shared with them. Teachers' planning effectively considers the pupils' age and needs. Topics range from living in the wider world, healthy living and wellbeing and relationships.

39. Adults know pupils well, monitor their interactions and support emerging emotional needs as appropriate. They establish clear routines to deepen pupils understanding of emotional regulation. Pupils recognise and express their emotions and share worries with adults or use the classroom 'worry monsters'. Teachers plan moments of calm into the day, enabling pupils to establish routines. Examples include the use of mindful moments and 'Buddha bells' that support pupils to relax before focusing on a task. Leaders plan effective transitions as pupils move up the school: in Kindergarten children move rooms regularly and as they get older familiarisation activities begin well in advance of any changes.

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

40. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

41. Role play areas support 'real life' practice for children in the early years, developing their understanding of key aspects of life such as sharing and negotiation. Children problem-solve, work collaboratively and ask for help when needed.

42. Pupils of all ages are curious about the world around them. Adults foster caring and nurturing relationships with children and model how to act in social situations. Pupils mix regularly and comfortably with peers. They take turns and wait patiently for their turn, understanding that not everyone can have a go at the same time. They co-operate with each other to achieve common goals and are supportive when managing success or disappointment. Leaders make sure pupils develop curiosity about the world through curriculum opportunities such as science and assemblies.

43. Leaders introduce economic education in the early years through practical activities such as creating a fruit shop at snack time where children buy their snacks with play money. Teachers further develop this awareness through the maths curriculum for older pupils and opportunities such as helping count money during charity fundraising events.

44. Leaders seek and respond to the views of pupils. Regular opportunities are planned for the pupils to express their views. The youngest children contribute their opinions on experiences in shared books collated by staff. Children in Pre-Reception regularly vote on matters relevant to them in the short-term, such as choosing a daily story. Consequently, they learn effectively to manage their emotions surrounding winning and losing and to respect a result. Year 2 pupils vote to select school council representatives. This recently sent feedback to their local council on local transport plans.

45. Teachers consistently reinforce right from wrong with a gentle and reasoned approach, which enables pupils to accept responsibility for their choices. Pupils respond well to this reinforcement and understand why the school has rules.

46. Pupils are involved in celebrating various religious festivals, working with visitors and parents to understand different cultural traditions. Leaders plan additional opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and broader society from visitors to the school. Pupils and adults represent a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This diversity of the community is actively promoted and celebrated. As a result, pupils are respectful of people different from themselves. Leaders ensure that partisan views are not shared.

47. Older pupils have opportunities to take on positions of responsibility, such as eco-warriors and tree-care monitors: taking early steps to understand their role in society. Teachers plan broader world issues into whole school topics, such as the recent 'Splish splash splosh' theme, which enabled Year 1 and 2 pupils to learn about the effects of plastics in the oceans. Younger children act as leaders when moving between activities and Reception pupils receive the 'star helper' award daily. Leaders create opportunities for pupils to engage with the local community, such as litter picking, choosing local charities to support, and trips in the local area.

48. Pupils further develop understanding of their future role in society through age-appropriate careers education. Leaders from Kindergarten onwards invite visitors into school to speak about their roles. This early experience then progresses into the 'dreams and goals' future lives topic in PSHE lessons.

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

49. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

50. Leaders ensure that staff are appropriately trained in line with current guidance and to a level commensurate with their safeguarding role in the school. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and the deputy DSL have the training to lead staff development and the identification and management of concerns. This includes an understanding of the reporting systems across the different London boroughs in which the pupils live. Safeguarding leaders train new staff members as part of their induction programme, and all staff receive regular update training.

51. The proprietor is appropriately trained to provide effective oversight of safeguarding. He makes regular visits to the school to talk to staff and pupils. Meetings with the DSL and participation in the annual safeguarding review contribute to his oversight of the implementation of the published policy.

52. Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and when concerns emerge, they act quickly to report them to the safeguarding team. This contributes to a culture of putting the welfare of children first. The DSL makes appropriate contact with outside agencies and follows their specialist advice.

53. Leaders made a minor change to the published safeguarding policy during the inspection to reflect the wording of current guidance.

54. Systems for monitoring and filtering of the internet are robust. The DSL regularly reviews monitoring reports and takes suitable action when necessary. Pupils are taught about the safe use of the internet and actively discuss the 'do's and don'ts', such as not sharing personal information or passwords.

55. Pupils feel safe at school. They can express their concerns to trusted adults. Leaders make sure that pupils learn key messages including what to do and who to tell if a situation makes them feel uncomfortable.

56. Leaders follow procedures for safe recruitment, ensuring that all appropriate checks are in place before an adult can work or volunteer at the school. The proprietor ensures that these checks are suitably recorded on the single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

57. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Herne Hill School
Department for Education number	210/6375
Address	Herne Hill School 127 Herne Hill Herne Hill London SE24 9LY
Phone number	020 7274 6336
Email address	enquiries@hernehillschool.co.uk
Website	www.hernehillschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Mr Dominik Magyar
Headteacher	Mrs Ngaire Telford
Age range	2 to 7
Number of pupils	329
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2023

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Information about the school

58. Herne Hill School is an independent co-educational day school in the London borough of Southwark. It is based upon two sites. The main site is a former vicarage. There is an adjacent area of woodland for outside learning and recreation. The school is overseen by a single proprietor.

59. There are 231 children in the early years, comprising four Kindergarten classes, four Pre-Reception classes and three Reception classes.

60. The school has identified 14 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

61. English is an additional language for 26 pupils.

62. The school states its aims are to prepare young children for life, by seeking to provide them with a broad and balanced curriculum within a nurturing environment, based on a bedrock of love and care. It aims to equip its pupils with strong emotional and social skills and values as well as all cognitive foundations to achieve academic and personal excellence.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	11 – 13 June 2024

63. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

64. Inspection activities included:

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

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

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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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