



Progress Monitoring Inspection Report

Sherrardswood School

October 2023

School's details

School	Sherrardswood School			
DfE number	919/6047			
Address	Sherrardswood School 3 Lockleys Drive Welwyn AL6 0BJ			
Telephone number	01438 714282			
Email address	office@sherrardswood.co.uk			
Headmistress	Mrs Anna Wright			
Chair of governors	Mr Ali Khan			
Proprietor	Alpha Schools Limited			
Age range	2 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	502			
	EYFS	23	Prep	148
	Seniors	261	Sixth Form	70
Date of inspection	31 st October 2023			

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Sherrardswood School is a co-educational independent day school situated in Hertfordshire. It was founded in 1928 and is now owned by Alpha Schools Limited, whose directors provide governance of the school. The school consists of a pre-school, which includes an early years setting, prep school, senior school and sixth form, all of which are located on the same site. The school has identified 245 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional specialist help. There are 38 pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 8 pupils, 5 of whom receive additional support for their English. The school's previous inspection was a focused compliance and educational quality inspection in February 2023.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced progress monitoring inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the focused compliance and education quality inspection on 21 to 23 February 2023. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs) and the requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework.

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and the proprietors)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (manner in which complaints are handled)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

- 2.1 The school meets the requirements.
- 2.2 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

- 2.3 The school meets the standard.
- 2.4 Safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively, including those related to the welfare of the pupils with SEND and children in early years. Senior leaders ensure that, where appropriate, they access both timely support and guidance from the local authority in handling safeguarding matters. They work closely with the school's proprietorial body in ensuring robust safeguarding arrangements.
- 2.5 The school provides appropriate support for pupils' needs, most especially those pupils who may be vulnerable. Staff listen to pupils and take appropriate and timely action when they raise concerns. Pupils confirmed this and their view is supported by records of safeguarding. All staff have received suitable training on the recent changes in statutory guidance, in particular regarding online safety. All staff are familiarised with *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) Part 1 and Annex B. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies have sufficient status and authority to undertake their roles. They have the appropriate level of training, which is in line with local procedures. The DSL provides regular updates to all staff and opportunities to discuss any changes to safeguarding policies and their implementation.
- 2.6 Staff throughout the school have a full understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They understand procedures for reporting any concerns about pupils and operate these appropriately. They are aware of the types of child-on-child abuse that can occur, including any relating to inappropriate sexual relationships. They understand the significance of reacting to and reporting such behaviours effectively and do so. The wellbeing of pupils with SEND is promoted effectively and their particular needs are taken into account in handling any safeguarding incident. The school maintains appropriate and detailed records of any safeguarding concerns. These show timely and appropriate liaison with parents. There is an effective code of conduct for staff, which makes clear the high expectations required of all staff working in the school. In discussions, staff showed effective understanding of the code.
- 2.7 There are appropriate measures to handle any allegations against adults working in the school. Staff understand these and are prepared to report any concerns they may have, including at a low level. The proprietor and senior leaders undertake an annual safeguarding review with due diligence. They demonstrate suitable rigour in their oversight of arrangements. This includes, if necessary, consultation with external professionals and undertaking a review of any safeguarding incidents that may occur. The proprietorial board members have all received appropriate training in safeguarding.
- 2.8 The school now obtains suitable references and checks the list of those prohibited from teaching prior to staff starting work at the school. Improved monitoring of safer recruitment at senior leader and governing board level now enables effective oversight of recruitment processes. It has ensured that since the previous inspection, all required checks of new staff have been undertaken appropriately, including checks against the list of those prohibited from management where appropriate. Staff checks recorded correspond to the details contained in staff files, with all the required data being appropriately entered.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9]

- 2.9 The school meets the standard.
- 2.10 The school has a suitable behaviour policy which is available on the school website. It sets out the aims of the school and outlines both rewards to promote good behaviour and the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour. Staff and pupils understand the policy, which is implemented effectively. Senior leaders record details of any incidents appropriately and monitor these to identify any patterns of poor behaviour and any action taken. These show that staff consider appropriately the specific needs of individual pupils, including those with SEND, when dealing with any misbehaviour, including serious incidents. The chair of governors meets on a regular basis with the pastoral leaders to provide appropriate oversight of behavioural standards at the school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10]

- 2.11 The school meets the standard.
- 2.12 The school has an appropriate anti-bullying policy which is implemented effectively. Pupils in discussion commented that they know when and how to seek help and that they should report any bullying they observe. Records of any bullying incidents are congruent with other behaviour and safeguarding records. Staff understand clearly that any form of child-on-child abuse is a potential safeguarding issue. Records demonstrate that bullying incidents are rare and those that do occur are dealt with promptly and effectively. Support is given to both the victim and the perpetrator and parents are kept fully informed. All bullying incidents are referred to those with safeguarding responsibilities. Senior leaders maintain a suitable centralised log and review this regularly, together with proprietors. This identifies any trends in incidents and allows appropriate actions to be taken.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – risk assessment [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 16]

- 2.13 The school meets the standard.
- 2.14 An efficient and effective approach is taken to managing risk to ensure the welfare of all pupils in the school. An appropriate written risk assessment policy is implemented. Staff have all received training in assessing risk for their respective areas and for organising school outings. Risk assessment documents show that appropriate evaluations are undertaken across all age groups. This includes suitable consideration of the needs of children in early years. Risk assessment is appropriate and comprehensive. It identifies possible risks and specifies appropriate control measures to mitigate these. Where there is a perceived need, the school produces effective risk assessments for individual pupils to ensure their welfare and safety, most especially where a pupil is assessed as being vulnerable. Senior leaders review and sign off all risk assessments and suitable oversight is maintained by members of the proprietorial body.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors [ISSR Part 4, paragraphs 18–21]

- 2.15 The school meets the standards.
- 2.16 The school now carries out all required checks on staff, supply staff and the proprietors. Checks are record appropriately on a single central register of appointments (SCR). Senior leaders and proprietorial board members jointly undertake regular checks of the SCR to check its accuracy. The school's safeguarding audits include maintenance of the SCR as an integral part of this review.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

- 2.17 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website and provided to parents on request.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33]

- 2.18 The school meets the standard.
- 2.19 An appropriate complaints policy is in place which is effectively implemented. It includes the required three stages at which complaints may be raised. Scrutiny of the complaints logs demonstrates that the school now follows its policy and procedures appropriately. Suitable action is taken and the outcome is communicated to parents within the school's published timescales. The log indicates that there have been no complaints that have reached stage 3 over the past academic year, and therefore there have been no panel appeals as a result. Evidence also indicates that follow-up of recent complaints is systematic, thorough and meets the school's published timescales. Evidence of complaints in connection with pupils indicates that the school goes through fair and appropriate procedures in line with its policy, whilst assuring that the safeguarding needs of its pupils are met. Governors meet with senior leaders on a regular basis, review all formal complaints and look for evidence of trends and themes.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]

- 2.20 The school meets the standard.
- 2.21 The proprietor and senior leaders have implemented all of the points in the school's action plan effectively. Appropriate measures are in place to support ongoing compliance, particularly in the case of staff recruitment. The proprietorial board members together with the senior leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge to ensure their duties and responsibilities are fulfilled effectively, that the standards are consistently met, and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and requirements of the Early Years Statutory Framework, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the headmistress, senior leaders and other members of staff and spoke with the proprietor. They talked with groups of pupils and scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.