



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports**

**Southbank International School, Kensington**

**December 2021**

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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Southbank International School, Kensington		
<b>DfE Number</b>	207/6383		
<b>Address</b>	Southbank International School, Kensington 36–38 Kensington Park Road London W11 3BU		
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7229 8230		
<b>Email address</b>	communications@southbank.org		
<b>Principal</b>	Ms Siobhan McGrath		
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr James Carroll		
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 11		
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	157		
	<b>EYFS</b>	14	<b>Juniors</b> 143
<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>30 November to 3 December 2021</b>		

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Southbank International School, Kensington, is a co-educational day school. Originally founded as The American International School in 1979, it moved to its current site in Kensington in 1992. It is owned and governed by the Cognita Schools group.
- 1.2 The school is divided into three sections: Early Childhood, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for pupils aged from three to five years; lower primary for ages five to eight years and upper primary for ages eight to eleven years. Pupils follow the International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP). Over 40 nationalities are represented amongst its pupil body, and many pupils are multi-lingual.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new deputy principal, digitised much of its curriculum, introduced a new mathematics and writing scheme and enhanced its science curriculum.
- 1.4 During the period March to May 2020 the setting was closed, reopening in June 2020 to children in the EYFS only and for other pupils in August 2020.
- 1.5 During this period of closure the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils.
- 1.6 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.7 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.8 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than children in the EYFS, vulnerable pupils, and the children of key workers received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.9 Since 2020, EYFS profiles have not been externally moderated.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.10 The school is committed to challenging students academically whilst maintaining a liberal ethos and promoting the values of the International Baccalaureate, through offering a broad curriculum with a global outlook and a strong emphasis on inquiry. It aims to offer a safe, caring and supportive environment that celebrates diversity, treats every individual with fairness and respect and develops a culture of responsibility, service as action and accountability.

### About the pupils

- 1.11 Pupils come mainly from a range of professional international families living within central London. Assessment data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 19 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 49 pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers and by specialist EAL teachers. Data used by the school have identified 24 pupils as being the more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

**COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.**

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

### **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

### **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

**2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

**2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

**2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

**2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

**The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

#### Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils develop extremely effective study skills by the time they leave the school.
- Pupils make strong progress from the earliest age. The progress of those with EAL is particularly rapid.
- At all ages, pupils' attitudes to learning are highly positive.
- Pupils are highly effective listeners.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils demonstrate extremely high standards of behaviour and an acute understanding of right and wrong.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent social skills across all ages.
- Pupils display extremely high levels of personal responsibility both in lessons and during free time.
- Pupils exercise excellent tolerance and acceptance of others' differences.

#### Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school may wish to consider:

- Enabling pupils to extend their technological skills and knowledge by increasing opportunities for them to engage in the full range of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects.

#### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils sustain the strong progress they make from the earliest age throughout the school. By the time they leave the school, external assessment results show that the attainment of pupils across all age groups is excellent, their scores ranking above or well above those students in similar schools worldwide. Pupils with SEND make rapid progress, whilst the attainment of pupils with EAL, who make up a significant proportion of the school's population, is particularly high; they too make extremely rapid progress from the time of joining the school. This was confirmed in lesson observations, discussions with pupils and staff and scrutiny of pupils' work. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that teaching, including any online provision, enables their child to make progress and that their child's particular individual needs are met effectively. Pupils' considerable academic attainment and progress is due to careful planning, high-quality teaching and skilled implementation of intervention strategies.



- 3.6 From the earliest age, pupils develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding, supported by the multi-disciplinary approach to the curriculum. Across all areas of learning, pupils are highly effective at applying these. The youngest children confidently decoded new words containing familiar digraphs and trigraphs during a language lesson. Rapid development of parry-disengage-riposte skills was displayed during a fencing class. In a music lesson, when pupils creatively considered how themes for song writing could be used to express views positively. Pupils explained that the methods they are taught for acquiring new knowledge and understanding through enquiry assist them to be skilful and independent learners. They use their communication skills, natural curiosity, creativity and high-level thinking skills to produce research projects, such as an investigation into unconscious bias, of excellent quality.
- 3.7 Pupils are confident, expressive users of language in their writing and speaking. They are also particularly effective readers and listeners, as seen in their ability to respond to other people's ideas in debate and discussion and to negotiate tasks in lessons by asking questions in response to what they have heard. The youngest pupils were able to explain logically why a photograph of the moon and stars matched a definition of bedtime, because darkness is needed for good sleep. In the younger years, pupils are able to write in sentences using capital letters and full stops; writing is well structured, with confident use of sequence adverbs, the past tense and accurate spellings, as seen in accounts of pupils' holidays. In a mathematics lesson, older pupils independently demonstrated ways of interpreting crime figures by contextual extraction of information from a newspaper article. Pupils can express their reasoning clearly, due to teaching's skilful use of open questioning.
- 3.8 Pupils are highly capable mathematicians who enjoy the subject. From an early age, they use concrete, pictorial and abstract techniques effectively to deepen their mathematical knowledge. They can solve challenging problems, confidently working through a logical sequence of operations. Older pupils confidently solved multi-stage word problems using equations including exponents. The youngest children successfully applied their knowledge of number bonds to ten to solve a Hanukkah candle challenge. Pupils develop numerical competence by taking charge of their learning. They are able to determine their level of working, with limited teacher guidance, with increased confidence due to the effective implementation of an advanced maths curriculum, as well as appropriate levels of challenge to match their ability. Pupils are highly adept at applying numeracy skills to other areas of learning because planning includes opportunities for pupil-led, cross-curricular units of inquiry.
- 3.9 Pupils' use of ICT across the curriculum is strong. They are confident, knowledgeable and instinctive users of technology. Their excellent ability to inform and enhance their learning across the curriculum areas is facilitated by leadership and governance ensuring the availability of individual devices and specialist teaching. Pupils' learning is limited, however, in some areas of STEM subjects as the curriculum does not include opportunities for them to learn about control or food technologies. Nevertheless, they make effective decisions about when to use their devices and when it is less useful to do so. Older pupils clearly described how they use spreadsheets to keep accounts for their business challenge projects; they create highly interactive websites, engaging videos and online questionnaires as part of their individual projects. Younger pupils improved their text decoding skills by accessing reading improvement apps during a language lesson, while the oldest pupils were able to use video-conferencing technology to meet and share the outcomes of their research projects with pupils in other international schools. Pupils are highly motivated to learn through friendly competition in self-assessment, using digital resources across the curriculum.
- 3.10 Pupils develop highly effective strategies for learning as they move through the school, so that by the time they leave, their study skills and habits are particularly strong and engrained. When completing independent project work, the oldest pupils were seen to use at least three different sources to validate the accuracy of their research. This was strongly evidenced in leavers' exhibition essays and presentations, which demonstrated levels of analysis, hypothesis and reasoning significantly above that expected for their ages. Included were such advanced topics as the importance of sleep, and inequality in sport, with every source appropriately acknowledged. Leadership has been successful in

embedding core IB principles of open-minded enquiry and reflective thinking into pupils' learning habits.

- 3.11 Pupils are successful in a wide range of academic, sporting and cultural endeavours, both within their own school and in competition with others. Sports teams compete successfully in swimming, cross-country, football, chess and athletics. Musicians from the school have represented the school in the finals of global competitions against other international schools. Budding film-makers won a national competition for a short film in a foreign language and pupils have won international awards for innovation in design. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities. The breadth of these, successfully captures the pupils' enthusiasms and promotes their considerable achievements in these areas.
- 3.12 Pupils develop extremely positive attitudes to learning from the earliest ages, which continue to grow as they move through the school. Older pupils displayed highly independent learning during their study of ancient civilisations, and the oldest produced videos on subjects such as diversity, supported by immersive websites and quizzes on bias, all based on individually chosen lines of enquiry. They described how their ability to take initiative in their learning was supported by teachers providing guidance but not answers (described as 'trails of breadcrumbs' by pupils) for them to follow towards success in their tasks. Additionally, the holistic nature of the IB learner profile and its deeply embedded values contribute fully to developing pupils' positive attitudes.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Throughout the school, pupils' levels of self-understanding are highly developed. They are supported in this by the school's highly effective IB ethos and approach, which teaches reflection, critical appreciation, and principled thought. Pupils described how their self-esteem was boosted by the results of their unit of inquiry into sustainability, when they designed, built, and exhibited houses made of waste products. They explained that empathetic and unobtrusive support from staff is also key; a subtle 'thumbs-up' during a presentation, for example. Pupils displayed great resilience, for example, when their careful work in digital art was deleted by mistake; they simply started again and resolved to make it even better. They described how the school's universally adopted practice of encouraging pupils to try first, ask peers next and, finally, ask staff for help allows them to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 3.15 Pupils are extremely effective decision-makers. They explained that they choose for themselves how to allocate the time for tasks they have chosen, based on a teacher-imposed limit. The school's leadership has successfully promoted this by advocating an 'agency' approach to teaching, through which pupils are taught to exercise 'voice, choice and ownership' of their learning. This was seen most clearly in a unit of inquiry lesson in which older pupils chose their own interest paths when researching ancient civilisations. In a language and literacy lesson, younger pupils made 'principled choices' from a range of proposed class activities. Pupils of all ages clearly understand the importance of making correct judgements. They explained that they are taught to be responsible citizens and successfully achieve this aim.
- 3.16 Pupils develop a keen sense of appreciation for the non-material aspects of life. They explained, in discussions, that abstract values such as love, family, friendship and education are worth more than anything. The oldest pupils described their feelings of awe as they admired the vaulted architecture of St. Paul's Cathedral during a visit; they spoke of their appreciation of the calmness it inspired. Others described the mesmerising effect of the paintings they studied at Hampton Court Palace and the 'mind-blowing' effect on them of listening to accounts from courtiers who experienced life there. Pupils explained that they frequently create lists of 'wonderings' on a variety of topics during their units of inquiry, a practice which encourages learners to expand their imagination and to develop their consideration of the non-material.

- 3.17 Across all ages, pupils display the exceptionally high standards of behaviour and an acute understanding of right and wrong. They possess a strong moral compass which manifests itself in class discussions and which they apply to their daily school life. All pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school expects pupils to behave well. They are highly aware of the needs of their peers and were keen to explain how important it is to protect others in school. This unselfish attitude was observed to result in an extremely calm and purposeful learning environment throughout the school. Pupils were seen to engage in effective negotiation to resolve minor differences and explained clearly how the school guides them using reflective counselling when they have made poor choices. Pupils described their use of “I” statements to explain their feelings to others when there is a disagreement. They understand the school rules well and are very aware of the rewards and sanctions available. Competition to win one of the principal’s teddy bears to look after for the weekend, as a reward for setting an excellent example, is particularly keen.
- 3.18 Pupils demonstrate excellent social skills across all ages. They form productive relationships with each other. The youngest pupils demonstrated this most effectively when they collaborated effectively to develop a soundscape using a wide variety of percussive instruments. Break-time play was observed to be highly effective and enjoyable, with pupils involved in a mix of active, passive, loud and quiet activities. They develop excellent social relationships because staff engage pupils in play, actively participating and leading, using skilful distraction and motivating encouragement. Older pupils worked effectively together to complete, successfully, their units of inquiry. They were able to agree on an issue they felt strongly about and adopted a variety of roles within their groups, conducting research, identifying and interviewing experts, reporting on their findings and presenting their research as a group both orally and in writing. Pupils explained that this has a positive impact on their desire to engage with both local and global issues. They described their joy in collaborative working and their relish in cultivating productive relationships with others. Pupil discussions revealed the strongest sense of school community and how this continues to impact on their positive attitude to life.
- 3.19 Pupils display extremely high levels of personal and collective responsibility both in lessons and during free time. For instance, pupils independently tidied resources away without being prompted during lessons and after discussions. They have a strong sense of the importance of others and the need to play a responsible part in the local and wider community. Through the democratically elected student council, pupils organise market stalls to raise funds for the two charities they have adopted. Pupils independently designed, created and produced a multi-language booklet for migrant and refugee children, welcoming them to London, which is distributed by the local council to all new families. Such initiatives are commonplace because of the attitudes which are nurtured as part of the IB learner profile to achieve well-being for themselves and others. Leadership has successfully embedded the core values of fairness, empathy and compassion in the school.
- 3.20 Pupils of all ages display remarkably excellent tolerance and acceptance of others’ differences. They explained animatedly that they have a keen understanding of what it is like to be different because the international nature of the school means that they represent a huge range of countries, cultures, and family structures. They are inclusive of those backgrounds different to their own, mixing readily with pupils of other nationalities, backgrounds and beliefs. In discussions, pupils explained that others’ skin colour, sexuality or religion are immaterial and that being different is to be admired. Pupils therefore warmly embrace the full range of diversity in the school. This highlight in pupils’ personal development is due to the school’s active promotion of a culture of open-mindedness and inclusivity.
- 3.21 Pupils display an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. All pupils agreed, in questionnaire responses, that the school teaches them effectively about safety and also how to stay safe online. Parents agreed that the school encourages their child to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Pupils understand why this is important; they explained clearly, in discussions, the need for making healthy dietary choices and for regular exercise to keep physically healthy. Younger pupils were observed using an innovative reading cave in the classroom where they took time out to be still and calm with a book. Older pupils described how they maintain a healthy mental balance using such

initiatives as “Be Well”, through which they learn mindfulness, practise yoga and create art in the outdoors.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Kerry Lord	Reporting inspector
Mr Gavin Sinnott	Compliance team inspector (Director of studies, IAPS school)
Mrs Jane Crouch	Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Stephen Challoner	Team inspector (Former director of staffing, HMC school)