

School inspection report

16 to 18 April 2024

Liberty Woodland School

Morden Lodge

Morden Hall Road

Morden

SM4 5JD

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 have the required skills and knowledge to enable them to carry out their responsibilities to effectively meet the Standards. They create and regularly review a range of policies and procedures that reflect up-to-date guidance which is effectively implemented.
2. A board of governors provides support and challenge to the senior leaders in school. Their regular meetings and visits provide appropriate oversight as they focus on key areas of the school and the progress being made towards the successful implementation of the development plan.
3. Pupils and staff know and strive to follow the school's ethos. Leaders have effectively put in place actions to provide a distinctive setting in line with their aims. Pupils develop a range of skills and personal qualities as a result. Leaders ensure these aims are incorporated into planning so that the quality of teaching consistently enables pupils, including children in the early years, to make good progress across a wide range of subjects.
4. Leaders have developed a curriculum which draws upon the school's distinctive outdoor setting. It places environmentalism at the heart of pupils' learning alongside the core skills of literacy and numeracy. Staff, including those in early years, make effective use of this environment in well-planned learning activities to enable pupils to make good progress across all areas of learning.
5. Leaders effectively monitor the quality of teaching to ensure that planning enables pupils to develop an appropriate range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Leaders' monitoring of assessment enables them to put appropriate interventions in place to address any areas of weakness or gaps in learning. However, this aspect of leadership is under-developed and does not always identify areas for consistent challenge in the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
6. Leaders provide some extra-curricular activities, but the limited range means that pupils do not always have the opportunity to gain additional skills and knowledge beyond what is already provided in the curriculum.
7. Leaders prioritise pupils' positive mental and physical health as part of their planning of the curriculum so that pupils develop mature levels of self-understanding and self-esteem. This is supported by the effective and broad personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme, which includes age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE).
8. Leaders create a community in which trust and mutual respect lead to pupils' good behaviour.
9. The school site, premises and accommodation are suitably maintained, and risk is appropriately managed. Effective systems ensure health and safety, the prevention of fire, first aid and medical care. Pupils are effectively supervised across the site.
10. Pupils to develop respect for others, including those who are from different faiths and cultures. The school provides a range of opportunities so that pupils are prepared for life in British society. Pupils understand the concepts of democracy, the rule of law, and tolerance and demonstrate respect for their local community through charitable events and use of local facilities. Secondary pupils receive adequate careers advice but the careers programme is limited in the range of options presented to pupils.

11. Leaders ensure that effective arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders regularly review the safeguarding policy so that it reflects the latest guidance. Recruitment checks are carried out and recorded appropriately but a small number of administrative errors required correction during the visit.

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:

- develop the use of assessment data further to ensure all pupils are appropriately challenged in literacy and numeracy
- develop the provision for extra-curricular activities to broaden opportunities for pupils to extend their pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding
- develop the careers programme to ensure secondary pupils are able to make informed choices about a broad range of careers options
- ensure systems are in place to identify administrative errors in the SCR and to record any actions taken to manage late checks.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

12. The proprietors, one of whom is also the head, have appointed a board of governors to support them in providing effective oversight of the school's work and performance. As a result, senior leaders are challenged appropriately. Governors have an in-depth understanding of the performance of the school as a result of twice-termly meetings, regular visits, which focus on their linked areas of the school's development plan, and reports provided by senior leaders. This ensures leaders have the required skills and knowledge to enable them to carry out their responsibilities effectively, and consistently meet the Standards. Leaders regularly review policies and updates to guidance to ensure that appropriate Standards are met and that pupils' wellbeing is promoted.
13. The school's aims are known and understood by the pupils and staff. As a result, pupils develop the skills and attitudes to help them become inquiring, independent and kind global citizens, who are emotionally intelligent, socially responsible, and innovative problem solvers.
14. Leaders carefully self-evaluate each area of the school's work. They share their initial findings with the wider staff body, who have the opportunity to contribute to the process. Leaders produce an effective strategic development plan to guide their next steps and ensure improvements to the provision, leading to successful outcomes for pupils.
15. Teachers plan lessons, which enable pupils to acquire new knowledge and skills, and make good progress across all areas of their learning. Leaders are highly visible in the learning environment and regularly monitor each year group's experiences and progress. They guide teachers in the extended weekly planning sessions to ensure effective individualisation of the curriculum for all pupils. This process does not always identify areas for further improvement in literacy and numeracy skills.
16. Leaders in the early years use a wide range of approaches and resources to promote effective learning, which ensures pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Staff ratios are carefully adhered to so that children are appropriately supervised and that safeguarding procedures are followed to effectively promote children's wellbeing.
17. Leaders implement an effective programme of risk management. This takes into consideration the practical aspects of the school's operations, especially the additional potential risks posed by the unique woodland setting. Leaders produce suitable risk assessments for buildings, outdoor covered learning bases, the pond and river, and trips, which are followed and then reviewed by teachers and leaders.
18. A suitable accessibility plan, as well as a well-considered curriculum, comply with the Equality Act 2010 to ensure the school does not discriminate against individuals or groups of pupils.
19. Leaders and teachers are visible and available to parents who wish to discuss aspects of their children's, progress, wellbeing and experiences at school. They respond quickly and effectively to parents' concerns, and complaints are dealt with effectively by the headteacher and governors when required.
20. Parents receive suitable reports about their children's progress as well as other useful and relevant communication from the school. Parents can access a wide range of information on the school's website.

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

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. Leaders have developed an innovative curriculum which has literacy, mathematics and environmentalism at its core. This is planned to take advantage of the school's outdoor learning areas. The schemes of work supporting this approach use cross-curricular projects to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects. As a result of this, pupils make secure connections between different areas of learning. For example, pupils use mathematical lines, shapes and angles in a 3D art sculpture project, and in a statistics project, pupils in Year 8 create games to test theoretical probability against experimental probability. The project-based approach continues in the secondary school as part of the International Baccalaureate (IB) middle years programme.
23. The early years curriculum is broad. Highly committed teachers enable children to draw upon the wide range of outdoor areas to learn in a variety of styles. The programme of activities develops a range of skills tailored to meet the needs of the individuals within the class. Effective planning of both teacher- and child-led learning means that children make good progress across all areas of learning. Their good level of development is above the borough and national norms.
24. Leaders' planning means that pupils are organised into classes which often draw from more than one year group and smaller groups of pupils for core literacy and numeracy lessons. The composition of these groups is based on their ability and progress and builds upon the development of skills most appropriate to those pupils at any particular time. Pupils in all groups are actively engaged in tasks and acquire new knowledge and skills to enable them to make good progress. Teachers and pupils develop constructive and positive relationships which support the development of confident and self-motivated learners who are able to reflect upon their learning and apply this to enable future progress.
25. Teaching takes into account pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs including those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are deployed effectively to enhance the learning in each group and pupils develop effective questioning skills, which enables knowledge and understanding to be shared creatively. Teachers encourage pupils to assess their own work using success criteria and a 'glow and grow' approach. Teachers' ongoing verbal feedback enables pupils to build on previous learning, acquire new knowledge and make good progress in all key skill areas. Pupils engage in this interaction in a highly confident manner and express their understanding often with advanced vocabulary and use of related skills. For example, pupils in Year 2 use appropriate punctuation including inverted commas, effective vocabulary, well-controlled handwriting and accurate spelling. There are suitable processes to support children who have English as an additional language (EAL) so their English skills develop, enabling them to access the wider curriculum.
26. Through the regular collection of assessment data, leaders have developed a system to monitor the attainment and progress of individual pupils and groups. Teachers use this information to plan appropriate interventions to support relative weaknesses or gaps in pupils' learning. The assessment framework uses the school's own stage-related skills ladders and core competencies to measure pupils' progress against nationally recognised, age-related expectations. However, this use of assessment data is under-developed, especially in identifying opportunities for pupils to be further challenged in the core skills of literacy and mathematics.

27. Leaders provide some well-planned extra-curricular activities to broaden pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. Although the use of non-school Fridays enables parents to extend pupils' experiences beyond the curriculum, the range of these extra-curricular activities is restricted, which limits opportunities for pupils' to develop a wider range of skills and knowledge.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. Leaders prioritise pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing as integral aspects of the curriculum. They plan topics effectively so that pupils develop high levels of self-esteem, self-knowledge and self-confidence. Through a range of collaborative activities, pupils support and challenge each other where appropriate and demonstrate mutual respect, tolerance and acceptance of others' differences.
30. The school has developed a broad and varied curriculum to ensure pupils successfully develop their social skills. A well-planned personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) programme, which incorporates age-appropriate relationships and sex education (RSE), supports pupils' personal development. Consultation with parents takes place and parents are aware of their right to withdraw their child from sex education in the secondary years.
31. Leaders planning means that pupils are outdoors all day, every day. They believe this has a highly positive effect on their wellbeing, both physically and mentally. Daily engagement with their natural environment, alongside carefully planned mindfulness and meditation sessions, ensures pupils develop a mature spiritual understanding and a keen appreciation of the non-material aspects of the world in which they live.
32. Teachers' effective planning of the early years' curriculum, ensures that children engage effectively with a broad range activities and tasks in their learning environment. Children develop effective social skills as they negotiate different grouping arrangements throughout the day. Staff model positive behaviour, and help them to learn to live and learn together.
33. Leaders have developed a programme of physical education throughout the school which builds on the principles of the IB curriculum. Pupils develop skills in team and individual sports using resources and facilities in the local community. For example, coaches from a local professional football team lead weekly training sessions in the autumn term, and pupils enjoy swimming, judo, running and street dance at other times of the year. Pupils are physically fit and recognise the benefits of exercise.
34. Pupils' behaviour consistently reflects the school's value of respect for others. Leaders have created restorative practices to help pupils resolve conflicts and repair relationships. Pupils' awareness of their feelings and emotions is notably well-developed. Due to their understanding of 'zones of regulation', pupils have open and honest conversations that lead to effective self-regulation of their emotions and behaviour. When required, senior leaders take individual pupils on a walk around the site to provide individual support and guidance. Pupils listen respectfully to each other and to their teachers. They develop a degree of trust enabling them to safely access the outdoor curriculum involving elements of exploration and the use of appropriate tools and other equipment.
35. Leaders have developed effective systems for health and safety and the prevention of fire. Premises and accommodation are maintained to a suitable standard. All staff are trained in first aid and effective arrangements are in place for medical care. Appropriate records are in place, and parents are informed when required. Pupils are well supervised across the site by staff, and clear protocols, which maintain their safety, are understood by all. This is effective from the earliest ages as early years children respect the 'invisible boundaries' and the rainbow ribbons.

36. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. Pastoral leaders monitor attendance and act upon concerns effectively so that levels of attendance are good. When pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times, appropriate reports are made to the local authority.

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

37. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

38. Leaders create a range of opportunities to encourage pupils to develop respect and tolerance for people with different backgrounds. Leaders compile a 'cultural calendar' which leads to celebrations in morning meetings when pupils share information about their diverse cultures and religions. Pupils recognise, understand and appreciate the festivals of various world religions.
39. Pupils' preparation for life in British society is supported by a programme of visiting parents and external speakers such as Transport for London, local charities, and a financial management agency. Leaders ensure that pupils understand and appreciate British values through, for example, educational trips to the Houses of Parliament. They experience the concept of democracy and feel that their voices are heard and valued. For example, pupils choose the school's charities, contribute to the list of extra-curricular clubs, select their own topics for study and use the suggestions box to help improve their community.
40. Pupils develop their understanding of money throughout the curriculum. For example, children in Reception plan how they will buy and sell various food items in a shop, and pupils in Year 7 complete a budgeting and price comparison task during a trip to local supermarkets whilst studying global inequality.
41. Children in the early years are well prepared for transition to Year 1. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are aware of opportunities in the wider world and of their future selves which they discuss in careers lessons. Pupils in the secondary years follow a programme of careers advice which considers skills and aspirations, and information about future opportunities. Individual meetings with the head take place in the summer term. However, the information provided to senior pupils and range of career options discussed by pupils is limited.
42. Pupils understand the need for rules and laws and the important role these play in school and wider society. They accept responsibility for their own behaviour within the bounds of 'be safe, be happy'. They demonstrate a mature understanding of challenges facing individuals in today's society and related global issues. Leaders create opportunities for pupils to discuss their understanding of a variety of topics such as sexism, human rights and over-fishing of the oceans. Pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong within society, for example, through conversations about global environmental issues such as illegal logging in the Amazon.
43. During the course of the inspection visit, pupils were proudly preparing to welcome members of the local community into their school to raise awareness of local and global environmental issues and to raise funds for a local wildfowl charity. This forms part of an on-going programme to liaise with the local community.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. Leaders have established suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of pupils. They regularly review the most recent safeguarding guidance and ensure this is reflected in policies and procedures. This results in an open and transparent culture which encourages adults to be alert to signs that a child may be at risk. A designated safeguarding governor with responsibility for this area regularly reviews the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements.
46. All adults are appropriately inducted and trained in safeguarding and have a secure understanding of procedures. They speak confidently about how they ensure the safety and wellbeing of pupils. All staff know how to respond to and record any child-on-child concerns. Appropriate training ensures staff know how to safeguard pupils against the risk of extremism. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and other members of the safeguarding team, receive appropriate higher-level training in line with local requirements.
47. Safeguarding leaders maintain appropriate records of concerns and they liaise effectively with external agencies, for example, the local authority designated officer and children's services, when required. Leaders maintain a log of any low-level concerns raised by members of staff.
48. The school listens to the views of individual pupils through a range of mechanisms which include speaking to trusted adults, posting their concerns in the suggestions box, and daily check-ins at morning meetings.
49. Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils' access to the internet is suitably filtered and monitored to protect pupils from inappropriate content.
50. Leaders ensure that appropriate safer recruitment checks are carried out on all adults who work with children. These are recorded in a single central record (SCR) of appointments. During the inspection, a small number of administrative errors were found which were rectified before the end of the inspection. Some notes explaining the management of delayed checks were available in the personnel files but not on the SCR.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Liberty Woodland School			
Department for Education number	315/6029			
Address	Liberty Woodland School Morden Hall Road Morden SM4 5JD			
Phone number	0208 648 9775			
Email address	office@libertywoodlandschool.com			
Website	www.libertywoodlandschool.com			
Proprietor	Liberty Woodland School Ltd			
Chair	Professor Julie Fisher			
Head	Mrs Leanna Barrett			
Age range	4 to 14			
Number of pupils	92			
	EYFS	18	Primary	64
			Secondary	10
Date of previous inspection	30 June 2022			

Information about the school

52. Liberty Woodland School is a co-educational day school adjacent to Morden Hall Park. Pupils are accommodated in Morden Lodge, a renovated nineteenth-century house, an art studio housed in a nineteenth century stable block and in classroom 'dens' which are specially adapted as nature-immersed classrooms. The work of the leaders is overseen by a board of five governors.
53. The school has a reception class of 18 pupils who follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework.
54. The school has identified 32 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of which, one pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
55. English is an additional language for one pupil.
56. The school states its aims are to develop children as those most likely to succeed in 21st century. Using its unique outdoor learning environment, the school seeks to develop its pupils to become inquisitive, independent, innovative problem solvers, and to grow into kind, global citizens who are emotionally intelligent, empowered, inclusive and socially responsible.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

16 to 18 April 2024

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

58. 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 chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and outdoor facilities
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

59. 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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