



Material Change Inspection Report

Sherrardswood School

March 2024

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@sharrardswood.co.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Anna wright			
Chair of proprietors / governors	Mr Ali Khan			
Proprietor	Alpha Schools Limited			
Age range	2 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	505			
	EYFS	27	Prep	149
	Seniors	261	Sixth Form	68
Date of inspection	13 March 2024			

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 an early years setting, prep school, senior school and sixth form, all located on the same site. The school has identified 197 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive additional specialist help. There are 43 pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 37 pupils, none of whom need additional support for their English. The school's previous inspection was a regulatory compliance inspection in February 2023, which was followed by a progress monitoring inspection in October 2023.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an announced material change inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to assess the school's proposal to increase its capacity from 400 to 550 pupils, with the main focus of change being in the senior school. 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 11 (health and safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 12 (fire safety)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 16 (risk assessment)	Met
Part 4, paragraphs 18 to 21 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors)	Met
Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 29 (premises and accommodation)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32 (1) (c) (provision of information)	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 The school effectively implements all aspects of its safeguarding policy. It provides appropriate support for the needs of all its pupils, including those with additional needs and children in early years. Current arrangements are sufficient to provide effectively for the proposed increase in pupil numbers.
- 2.5 Staff, including senior leaders, listen to pupils effectively so that pupils are confident to report any concerns which they have. When pupils report concerns, they receive a suitable response and action is taken where needed. This is confirmed in records of safeguarding incidents. Pupils are well educated about the risks associated with online behaviour and the school's provision is effectively filtered and monitored. Careful records are kept of pupils of concern and these are stored confidentially and securely. Senior leaders liaise promptly and appropriately with external agencies such as the local authority and the police when necessary.
- 2.6 The head leads the safeguarding team and all are effectively trained in line with local requirements and statutory guidance. They train staff effectively on appointment and regularly thereafter, including in the dangers of extremism. The safeguarding team provides frequent updates of any concerns or of changes in statutory guidance. Staff demonstrate effective understanding of safeguarding procedures. They feel well supported by senior leaders in prioritising the wellbeing of pupils.
- 2.7 Staff understand the importance of their code of conduct which makes clear the necessity for professional behaviour. Suitable arrangements for the reporting of allegations about adults in the community are in place and staff confirm that they would use the whistleblowing procedure should it be necessary. They have an effective understanding of low-level concerns, use the system suitably. An appropriate log of these concerns is kept.
- 2.8 The proprietor provides effective oversight of safeguarding and members of the proprietorial body are suitably trained. The chair, who also has board responsibility for safeguarding, is a regular visitor. The proprietors provide support and challenge to the safeguarding team in the school. The safeguarding team report regularly to the wider board of directors and they undertake an effective annual review of the safeguarding policy and practice in the school.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – health and safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 11]

- 2.9 The school meets the standard.
- 2.10 There is an appropriate health and safety policy which is effectively implemented to ensure the safety of pupils, staff and visitors. Records show that testing of all utilities is regularly carried out. Staff are trained suitably in health and safety matters and they are confident to report any concerns that they have.

- 2.11 Traffic is effectively managed around the site and pupils take routes across the school which are traffic free. Daily checks are carried out in the early years and any concerns are reported and responded to promptly and effectively.
- 2.12 Systems currently in place cater effectively for the proposed increase in total pupil numbers.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – fire safety [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 12]

- 2.13 The school meets the standard.
- 2.14 The school has a suitable fire prevention strategy; fire risk assessments and evidence of consequent actions taken show that such actions are suitable and sufficient to reduce any identified risks. Fire infrastructure is regularly checked and staff and pupils understand the procedures for evacuation. Regular fire drills are held and any concerns generated are followed up to improve practice.
- 2.15 Systems currently in place cater effectively for the proposed increase in total pupil numbers.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14]

- 2.16 The school meets the standard.
- 2.17 Pupils of all ages are effectively and diligently supervised at the start and end of the school day and during breaks and lunchtimes. Children in early years are always within sight or sound of the adults who care for them. Required ratios of adults to children in these groups are always sufficient. Pupils confirmed that they can always find a member of staff if they need to and that they feel well supervised and safe in school.
- 2.18 Systems currently in place cater effectively for the proposed increase in total pupil numbers.

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

- 2.19 The school meets the standard.
- 2.20 The school takes an effective approach to managing risk within and beyond the school community. An appropriate risk assessment policy is in place and it is suitably implemented so that risk assessment procedures are effective. Risks associated with the proposed increase in pupil numbers have been assessed effectively. Staff complete risk assessments for their own departments, for the site and for any trips or visits which they lead. These are checked and reviewed by senior leaders. Suitable risk assessments are also in place for vulnerable pupils to provide a framework for their wellbeing and safety.
- 2.21 Systems currently in place cater effectively for the proposed increase in total pupil numbers.

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

- 2.22 The school meets the standards.
- 2.23 All required checks on staff are carried out and completed before anyone starts work in the school, as are those on members of the proprietorial body. They are accurately recorded on the single central register of appointments. The school does not currently employ any supply staff.
- 2.24 Systems currently in place cater effectively for the proposed increase in total pupil numbers.

Premises and accommodation – toilets and changing accommodation; medical facilities; maintenance; acoustics; lighting; water supply and outdoor space [ISSR Part 5, paragraphs 23 to 29]

- 2.25 The school meets the standards.
- 2.26 The premises and accommodation in the school are suitable and sufficient for the needs of the pupils. Classrooms are spacious and well-appointed in both the prep and the senior school. The school has brought extra buildings into use over the past few years to add further facilities for the sixth form and for creative subjects. The early years setting is sufficient for the needs of the children who use it and they also have access to hall spaces for physical education and a woodland area. The school is well maintained through a rolling programme of necessary refurbishment. There is suitable provision for the medical care of pupils.
- 2.27 Toilets and washing facilities are age appropriate and provide suitable facilities for pupils in the senior and prep schools. Acoustic arrangements and lighting are suitable and pupils have access to drinking water. The school occupies a large site with facilities for physical education, a woodland and extensive areas for recreation.
- 2.28 Current accommodation is sufficient to cater effectively for the proposed increase in total pupil numbers.

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

- 2.29 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.

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

- 2.30 The school meets the standard.
- 2.31 Senior leaders monitor safeguarding and welfare arrangements appropriately and the proprietors carry out effective oversight of compliance with the regulatory standards. Leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities, so that the independent school standards are met consistently, and they actively promote the wellbeing of pupils. The proprietor and senior leaders have catered effectively for the increase in pupil numbers so that standards continue to be met.

3. Recommendation with regard to material change inspection

Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the school's request to increase its capacity from 400 to 550 be granted. Suitable arrangements are in place to cater for the increased capacity.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspector held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of directors. She visited different areas of the school, and talked with groups of pupils. She scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.