

Inspection of Merlin School

4 Carlton Drive, Putney, London SW15 2BZ

Inspection dates: 25 to 27 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have created a warm and welcoming culture. Kindness is at the centre of the school's ethos. Small class sizes enable staff to provide highly personalised support. As a result, all pupils can thrive in the school.

Leaders have extremely high expectations of pupils. This ensures all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve very well. Staff know the pupils well and working relationships are extremely positive.

Pupils are hardworking, confident and highly motivated to learn. The development of character is a focus throughout the school. This includes during the daily 'quickies' session at the start of each school day and termly presentations all pupils deliver to their class.

Pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school site is exemplary. They are polite, friendly and happy. Pastoral support in the school is extremely strong and as a result, pupils are safe in school.

There are a wide range of clubs and extra activities for pupils to take part in. These include a variety of sports clubs, music groups and chess club. Pupils all take part in regular school performances and also raise money for charity and contribute to the local community. This includes a link with a local hospital which pupils visit to support patients and perform at in the school choir.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils in the school, including pupils with SEND. The curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils build knowledge progressively over time. This helps pupils to learn and remember new concepts quickly. Leaders' curricular thinking embeds subject-specific vocabulary, which pupils routinely use confidently. For instance, in computing, Year 3 pupils described with great accuracy computer hardware, including the use of graphics cards.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and present information clearly. Small class sizes enable staff to spend a significant amount of time with each pupil. This allows staff to check understanding and address any misconceptions swiftly. In Reception, teachers are highly skilled at ensuring that children develop their communication skills. This includes regularly checking and developing the children's use of new vocabulary.

All pupils, including pupils with SEND, consistently produce work of a very high standard. Pupils have a deep understanding of what they are learning. They retain this knowledge and apply their learning to a range of contexts.

Leaders have placed a sharp focus on the teaching of early reading. All staff are well trained in delivering the phonics programme, which ensures that they teach it to a consistently high standard. Staff are highly skilled at identifying any pupils who fall behind in their reading. Effective support is put in place for these pupils to ensure that they catch up. Books are well matched to pupils' phonics level. This enables pupils across the school to read with confidence and fluency.

Staff encourage pupils to have a strong passion for reading. Pupils regularly read engaging and high-quality texts. Adults read to pupils daily. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about receiving the 'reading aloud with expression' award. Leaders communicate regularly with parents and carers to encourage regular reading at home.

Pupils are highly focused during lessons. They consistently demonstrate excellent attitudes to their learning. In early years, children are motivated and share and cooperate well with each other. The attendance of all pupils in school, including pupils with SEND, is extremely high. Leaders work effectively with parents and have robust strategies in place to ensure that pupils attend school regularly.

The school's personal development curriculum has been carefully planned to ensure that pupils' knowledge and understanding deepen and build over time. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves healthy and safe, including online. If staff identify specific personal development needs for any pupils, they put in place bespoke support to address this.

All pupils attend a wide range of outings that offer both academic and cultural experiences. These include visits to museums, places of worship and a range of performances. A variety of external speakers also visit the school to talk to pupils about a range of topics, including careers and democracy.

Teachers feel well supported to carry out their roles and have access to a wide variety of professional development opportunities. The proprietor and principal understand the school well and provide support and extra accountability for leaders.

The proprietor ensures that the independent school standards are met in full. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	101065
DfE registration number	212/6144
Local authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	10322565
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent day school
Age range of pupils	4 to 8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	123
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Sir Alford Houstoun Boswall
Headteacher	Violet McConville
Annual fees (day pupils)	£17,880
Telephone number	0208 788 2769
Website	www.merlinschool.net
Email address	secretary@merlinschool.net
Date of previous inspection	12 to 14 October 2021

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The address of the school is 4 Carlton Drive, Putney, London, SW15 2BZ.
- The school is registered to admit 220 pupils.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the proprietor, the non-executive principal, members of the senior leadership team and a range of staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, discussed with pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and visited lessons for a range of other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, pupils and staff, including through responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

The school's proposed change to its premises

The school has applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to make a 'material change' to its registration. At the DfE's request, we checked whether the school meets the relevant independent school standards if the DfE decides to approve the change. This part of the inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002.

- The outcome of this part of the inspection is: **the school meets the independent school standards relevant to the material change. The**

material change has already been implemented.

Information about the material change inspection

- Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils in the school. The proprietor has ensured there is a written curriculum policy. Plans and schemes of work are in place for the proposed additional year group. These cover all learning and development requirements. A programme of activities has been planned to support and develop children's personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills. Highly effective leadership and management ensures that the independent school standards are met consistently and that the school actively promotes the well-being of pupils.

Inspection team

Simon Conway, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Christian Hicks

His Majesty's Inspector

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