

Inspection of The Japanese School

87 Creffield Road, Acton, London W3 9PU

Inspection dates: 6 to 8 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

No

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have not followed statutory guidance when appointing new staff to the school. Staff do not have a secure enough understanding of some of the key risks to which pupils may be vulnerable. Consequently, leaders' approach to ensuring that pupils are kept safe from potential harm is not effective.

Conversely, leaders are determined to provide pupils with a highly ambitious curriculum. Pupils achieve exceptionally well and acquire detailed knowledge in the broad range of subjects studied. Leaders provide many enrichment opportunities to support pupils' personal development. They also have high expectations for pupils' behaviour, guiding pupils on how to behave with integrity, as well as how to make a positive contribution to society. All of leaders' ambitions for the quality of education and pupils' conduct are realised consistently.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their very high rates of attendance. Pupils are kind towards others and go out of their way to support their peers, including when new pupils join the school. They welcome new pupils warmly because many pupils remember what it was like for themselves not so long ago. Any misbehaviours, including bullying, are a rarity. Should they have any concerns, pupils know they can approach a trusted member of staff who will readily help them.

Pupils value and are proud of their school. This is demonstrated by the conscientious manner in which they all help out with keeping the school clean and tidy every day.

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

The proprietor body and school leaders have not ensured that the school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. They have also not ensured compliance with all the independent school standards.

Leaders provide pupils with a broad and highly ambitious curriculum. Much thought has gone into what knowledge pupils must learn across subjects. Curriculum thinking lays out step by step the chunks of knowledge that need to be taught.

Teachers have extensive expertise in their subjects. They also know how to teach subject content so that pupils understand and remember it. Leaders ensure that a range of high-quality resources are available to support the delivery of the curriculum. This helps teachers to present new knowledge clearly.

Leaders have developed suitable systems for identifying and supporting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers keep a close eye on the development of pupils' understanding, addressing misconceptions and giving extra support to pupils who fall behind. Teachers also create many opportunities for pupils to revise prior learning. This assists pupils in embedding key knowledge in their long-term memories. As a result, pupils achieve very well across the subjects.

Leaders take advantage of the many things on offer in London to enrich and deepen pupils' learning. They also arrange educational journeys across the UK, such as to Scotland. These are planned carefully to expand pupils' experiences and cultural capital. Opportunities for pupils to develop and nurture their talents and interests are prioritised. For example, staff in the art department arrange an annual sketching competition for all pupils. Groups of pupils spend the day visiting and sketching at significant places of interest, including, for example, in stately homes, on Tower Bridge and at London Zoo. The winners have their work framed and exhibited. In addition, the school has begun to submit pupils' artwork to the Royal Academy of Arts

Pupils who join the school tend to be at the very early stages of speaking English as an additional language. Leaders make it a priority to deliver a comprehensive and aspirational English curriculum. Staff are well trained and have the necessary expertise to support pupils to build up their knowledge effectively. They deliver a well-considered and precisely sequenced curriculum. The teaching of reading is a priority from the start, including the use of phonics to ensure that pupils can decode words accurately and fluently. As pupils progress through the school, they become fluent and confident readers in English. This is in addition to their confidence and fluency in reading Japanese. Within the English programme, pupils learn conversational English, writing, spelling and listening skills. Staff also enter pupils' writing in English into national writing competitions. Some pupils have had their written submissions published.

The atmosphere in classrooms is underpinned by a very strong culture of ambition. It is expected and routine among pupils to strive to achieve well. As a result, they engage fully in their lessons and even low-level disruption is rare. These attitudes play a major role in pupils' academic success.

Leaders provide pupils with a variety of enrichment opportunities. These include many cultural visits and a range of sporting and musical clubs. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme is well thought through. It teaches pupils about a range of relevant topics to support their understanding of wider society. For example, when teaching pupils about how the government works in Japan, they are also taught about democracy in Great Britain. Pupils are taught to respect people with protected characteristics, and they learn about different faiths and cultures. Secondary pupils particularly value their lessons on the Abrahamic religions. The approach to providing pupils with relationships and sex education gives due regard to the statutory guidance.

Across the school, pupils take on a range of leadership responsibilities. For example, the environmental committee designed and planted a welcome garden at the school entrance. Leaders provide pupils with useful careers guidance. Pupils also have opportunities to undertake work experience.

Staff said that leaders help them to have a reasonable work-life balance.

The proprietor body and senior school leaders have very little understanding of their

statutory duties. This is particularly in relation to the independent school standards and safeguarding. Leadership arrangements mean that senior school leaders and trustees change regularly. For example, senior staff arrive from Japan, and in a matter of a couple of years, return and are replaced by other, new leaders. Trustees also rotate often. The proprietor body has not made suitable provisions to ensure continuity in leadership's oversight of the school, including checking the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. For example, no strategy or procedures are in place for an effective and informative handover when senior leaders change. Incoming leaders do not make themselves knowledgeable quickly about their statutory duties in relation to independent schools in England.

Some unmet independent school standards were addressed quickly by leaders during the inspection. However, there remain several unmet independent school standards, both in relation to safeguarding and arrangements for managing complaints. The proprietor body has not put in place any mechanisms to ensure and assure themselves that all the independent school standards are met securely and consistently.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Recruitment processes for vetting new staff's suitability to work with pupils are weak. Several of the required checks on leaders' and staff's suitability to work with pupils have not been carried out. For example, leaders have not ensured that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks have been completed for all new members of staff, particularly those who arrive from overseas. Additionally, leaders have not complied with the statutory requirements for schools to obtain a separate barred list check if a member of staff works with pupils before a DBS certificate is available. Statutory prohibition from teaching checks have not been carried out.

Arrangements for checking the suitability of members of the proprietor body are also unsuitable. The school does not comply with the requirements for independent schools that all members of the proprietor body must have a DBS check. In addition, the school does not comply with the requirement that independent schools must undertake and record details of the section 128 checks for those in management positions.

Leaders have not done enough to make sure that staff are knowledgeable about the latest statutory guidance. Safeguarding leaders have read but not undertaken specific training on the latest version of statutory safeguarding guidance.

Staff know the school's procedures for reporting concerns and said that they would follow this. However, their understanding of the different types of risks that pupils may face is not well developed. Staff have received a translation of the latest statutory safeguarding guidance, but they have not had specific training to ensure

that they understand and can act on its key messages. They have a limited grasp of some of the key risks, including, for example, online bullying and exploitation.

Pupils said that if they had any concerns, they would tell a trusted member of staff who would help them. Through the curriculum, pupils are taught about risk and how to keep themselves safe. This includes sessions on drug and alcohol abuse, mental health and online safety. Pupils are also taught how to form healthy relationships and the principles of consent.

The school's safeguarding policy is published on its website and refers to current statutory guidance.

What does the school need to do to improve? (information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders do not routinely follow statutory guidance for checking the suitability of staff who apply to work at the school. Additionally, statutory guidance is not consistently followed for checks on the suitability of members of the proprietor body. This puts pupils at potential risk. Leaders should ensure that they familiarise themselves with statutory guidance, and as a matter of urgency, make all the required checks for all staff and, as appropriate, for members of the proprietor body.
- Leaders have not made sure that they and staff are knowledgeable about the latest statutory safeguarding guidance and in particular, the different types of risks that pupils may face. Because of this, staff are unable to be alert to all of the signs that may indicate a pupil may be at risk. Leaders should ensure that they take the necessary action to secure their full understanding of statutory guidance, including any relevant updates. In turn, they should also ensure that staff gain the knowledge they need to be vigilant to all types of potential safeguarding concerns.
- The proprietor body does not ensure that members of the proprietor body and school leaders have the necessary expertise and knowledge to make sure that the school complies consistently with all of the independent school standards. They have not established suitable and effective arrangements for sharing key information, including in relation to safeguarding, when leaders arrive from or return to Japan. Leaders, including the proprietor body, have also not ensured that they familiarise themselves quickly with their statutory duties and the requirements of being registered as a school in England. All of this means that leaders' oversight of the school's compliance with requirements is poor. The proprietor body should put in place suitable procedures for ensuring and assuring themselves of consistent compliance with the independent school standards, including appropriate and securely established arrangements for the sharing of knowledge and expertise every time that leaders and members of the proprietor body change.

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

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| Unique reference number | 101958 |
| DfE registration number | 307/6070 |
| Local authority | Ealing |
| Inspection number | 10267588 |
| Type of school | Other independent school |
| School category | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 6 to 15 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 299 |
| Proprietor | The Japanese School LTD |
| Chair | Yaeko Tsujimura Higaki |
| Headteacher | Masahiko Sato |
| Annual fees | £3,741 |
| Telephone number | 020 8993 7145 |
| Website | www.thejapaneseschool.ltd.uk/nihonjinga_kko |
| Email address | okamoto-k@thejapaneseschool.ltd.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 13 to 15 July 2021 |

Information about this school

- The Japanese School provides for the children of expatriates who are working in London for a temporary and limited period until they return to Japan. The school is partially funded by the Japanese government. The senior leadership team and most teachers come from Japan and work in this school for two to three years before returning to Japan.
- The proprietor body comprises a group of Japanese companies. The proprietor board members are representatives of these companies who are currently working in the UK. Employees of different companies take on this role on an annual rotation basis.
- The school follows the Japanese national curriculum, supplemented by aspects of the English national curriculum. Almost all teaching is in Japanese, which is spoken by staff and pupils. The Japanese academic year starts in April.
- The school's last full standard inspection was in December 2021. Subsequently, there was a progress monitoring inspection in April 2022.
- The current headteacher and school administrative secretary took up their posts in April 2022. The current deputy headteacher started in April 2023. The current chair of the proprietor body took up her post from the start of June 2023, having arrived in London a month earlier. She is the third chair of the proprietor body in the past year. Most of the current trustees of the proprietor body are very new to post. This means that most teachers, all senior leaders and trustees are different to those who were present at the time of the last standard inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

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.

The school has failed to meet the independent school standards. These are the requirements of 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics, physical education and PSHE education. Inspectors held discussions with leaders and teachers, visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and held discussions with pupils. Inspectors also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the chair of the

proprietor body and five other trustees. They also spoke with leaders responsible for safeguarding and health and safety.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including information related to safeguarding and the checks carried out before the appointment of staff. Inspectors looked at records of pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of information and toured the school site to check compliance with the independent school standards.
- Inspectors had formal meetings with staff and with pupils. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Katerina Christodoulou

Ofsted Inspector

Sarah Murphy

His Majesty's Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school failed to meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that-
 - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
 - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 18(2)(a) no such person is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that person is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 to that Act;
 - 18(2)(b) no such person carries out work, or intends to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act, or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;
 - 18(2)(d) the proprietor ensures that, where relevant to any such person, an enhanced criminal record check is made in respect of that person and an enhanced criminal record certificate is obtained before or as soon as practicable after that person's appointment.
- 20(6) The standard in this paragraph is met in relation to an individual ("MB"), not being the Chair of the school, who is a member of a body of persons corporate or unincorporate named as the proprietor of the school in the register or in an application to enter the school in the register, if-
 - 20(6)(a) MB-
 - 20(6)(a)(i) is not barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act where that individual is or will be engaging in activity which is regulated activity within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 4 of that Act; and
 - 20(6)(a)(ii) does not carry out work, or intend to carry out work, at the school in contravention of a prohibition order, an interim prohibition order, or any direction

made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in either such direction;

- 20(6)(b) subject to sub-paragraphs (7) to (8), the Chair of the school makes the following checks relating to MB-
- 20(6)(b)(i) where relevant to the individual, an enhanced criminal record check.
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether-
 - 21(3)(a)(ii) a check was made to establish whether S is barred from regulated activity relating to children in accordance with section 3(2) of the 2006 Act;
 - 21(3)(a)(iii) a check was made to establish whether S is subject to any direction made under section 128 of the 2008 Act or section 142 of the 2002 Act or any disqualification, prohibition or restriction which takes effect as if contained in such a direction;
 - 21(3)(a)(v) an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained in respect of S;
 - 21(3)(a)(vi) checks were made pursuant to paragraph 18(2)(d);
 - 21(3)(b) in relation to each member of staff ("S"), whether a check was made to establish whether S is subject to a prohibition order or an interim prohibition order, including the date on which such check was completed.
- 21(4) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation to each member of staff in post on 1st August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1st May 2007, whether each check referred to in sub-paragraph (3) was made and whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained.
- 21(6) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is, in relation each member ("MB") of a body of persons named as the proprietor appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether the checks referred to in paragraph 20(6)(b) were made, the date they were made and the date on which the resulting certificate was obtained.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

- 33 The standard about the manner in which complaints are handled is met if the proprietor ensures that a complaints procedure is drawn up and effectively implemented which deals with the handling of complaints from parents of pupils and which-
 - 33(f) where the parent is not satisfied with the response to the complaint made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e), makes provision for a hearing before a panel appointed by or on behalf of the proprietor and consisting of at least three people who were not directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint;
 - 33(g) ensures that, where there is a panel hearing of a complaint, one panel member is independent of the management and running of the school;
 - 33(i) provides for the panel to make findings and recommendations and stipulates that a copy of those findings and recommendations is-
 - 33(i)(i) provided to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about; and
 - 33(j) provides for a written record to be kept of all complaints that are made in accordance with sub-paragraph (e) and-
 - 33(j)(i) whether they are resolved following a formal procedure, or proceed to a panel hearing; and
 - 33(j)(ii) action taken by the school as a result of those complaints (regardless of whether they are upheld); and
 - 33(k) provides that correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints are to be kept confidential except where the Secretary of State or a body conducting an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act requests access to them.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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