

The American School in London

1 Waverley Place, London, London NW8 0NP

Inspection dates

4 October 2022

Overall outcome

The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 3, 3(i)

- The previous inspection found that in lower school and middle school in particular, leaders and staff placed more emphasis often on discussing social justice issues, based on the school's social justice programme, than on teaching subject-specific knowledge and skills. In some cases, members of staff were promoting partisan political views.
- To meet the standards in this part, the school's action plan proposed to review curriculum programmes in all subjects and phases of the school and provide training for staff.
- Training designed and delivered by the school's senior leaders for all staff has helped to underpin the necessary reconstruction of the curriculum and reworking of classroom practices. As a result, staff understand and know how to take a fair and dispassionate approach when presenting views on political issues.
- Senior leaders have worked effectively with leaders of subjects and teaching staff. They have carried out a rigorous review of each scheme of work in every subject area. Together, they have agreed the subject-specific content that they want pupils to know. They have checked the content of all teaching resources in use in classrooms to ensure that none supports an unbalanced presentation of opposing views. Leaders have ceased the use of Learning for Justice social-justice standards in the school, and these standards no longer inform teaching.
- Teachers commented that new curriculum subject content guidance helps them to teach pupils the skills and knowledge that they need. Teaching staff know what resources to use in class and for homework tasks. They understand the steps leaders expect them to follow should they wish to introduce any new materials and how to ensure that nothing one sided is introduced.
- Leaders and teaching staff have reviewed the content of displays around the school, including in corridors and classrooms. New guidance for staff ensures that these consistently avoid prompting one-sided views to pupils. Leaders have made sure that

expectations for any visitors coming into school to speak to pupils are set out clearly, to maintain a balanced presentation of any viewpoints.

- Refreshed and in some cases fully redrafted curriculum subject plans reflect the substantial and thorough work of leaders and staff to address any imbalance in subject content. These ensure teachers and staff take a fair and dispassionate approach in presenting views on political issues.
- The school now meets all the previously unmet requirements in this part.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5, 5(a), 5(b), 5(b)(i), 5(c), 5(d), 5(d)(i)

- The previous inspection found that a culture had developed where alternative opinions were not felt routinely welcome. In some classrooms, members of staff were presenting one-sided viewpoints. Significant numbers in all parts of the school did not feel able to express their views freely in class, particularly if these did not fit with teachers' strongly expressed opinions. Some parents, carers and pupils did not share leaders' positive views about 'affinity' groups. Instead, they found these associations alienating. All this undermined some pupils' self-esteem and their sense of place within the school and the wider community.
- The school's action plan did not set out how the school's leaders planned to alleviate parents' and pupils' feeling that the 'affinity' groups were divisive.
- Older pupils in particular recognised that teachers now present a wide range of viewpoints, and guide them routinely to consider and weigh these up to inform their own opinions. Pupils are encouraged strongly to acknowledge the views and beliefs of others, promoting respect and tolerance. They felt more confident than at the time of the previous standard inspection to participate in class discussions and to express their points of view.
- Leaders have reorganised the former 'affinity' groups and made sure that membership and attendance at all social, cultural or faith groups is now open to all pupils, fostering fundamental British values of respect and tolerance. None have any restrictions on who may join these groups and/or attend meetings. Pupils commented that now pupils from all backgrounds may and do attend these groups, when previously membership and attendance at some were exclusive.
- The school now meets all the previously unmet requirements in this part.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 7, 7(a), 7(b)

- The school's safeguarding policy and practices reflect the latest statutory guidance.
- Arrangements for the management of any safeguarding concerns, disclosures or allegations are suitable. Staff are trained to identify possible issues about pupils' welfare. They know what leaders expect them to do should any issues arise, and act quickly when appropriate. Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding ensure that pupils receive the help that they need. They work in close partnership with outside agencies and

maintain detailed records. Pupils are guided to avoid potential risks to their well-being and encouraged to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations, including online.

- This independent school standard continues to be met.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1), 32(1)(c)

- The school's safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.
- This independent school requirement continues to be met.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)

- The previous inspection found that independent school standards in this part were not met because the proprietor body had not ensured that those responsible for the school's leadership and management were fulfilling their responsibilities to meet the independent school standards.
- Success criteria in the school's action plan were not sufficiently focused on ensuring that parents and pupils no longer have serious concerns.
- This inspection found that leaders, including the proprietor body of trustees, have worked quickly since the action plan was rejected, to address weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. The action plan was reviewed to ensure that all courses of action have been focused specifically on securing lasting improvements. Members of the proprietor board of trustees have secured strong leadership through the appointment of the interim head of school.
- The interim head of school and senior leaders have not shied away from getting to the heart of the issues raised in the previous inspection report. They secured significant cultural change throughout the school and addressed the standards not met at the previous standard inspection. They have identified those aspects of the school's curriculum that were the source of concerns and taken decisive action to neutralise areas of weakness.
- Leaders have designed and delivered training for all school staff, including teachers, administrative staff and those who drive minibuses that bring pupils to and from school. This training has ensured that leaders' plans for transformation have been understood by all.
- Staff new to the school at the start of the 2022 academic year have also received specific training, ensuring that a school-wide understanding of shared approaches and responsibilities is maintained.
- All staff spoke positively about the way leaders have galvanised the school's community, provided clarity and established structure. Staff have found this to be supportive and helpful.
- Responses from parents to Ofsted' online survey were overwhelmingly positive and reveal a strong sense of unity where previously the school's community was fractured.

Many parents made a point of writing to praise the work of leaders and the recent changes that they have made.

- Leaders demonstrate a secure understanding of the independent school standards and particularly so in the areas where standards were not met previously.
- The school now meets all the previously unmet requirements in this part.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that were checked during this inspection. This included the standards and requirements that the school was judged to not comply with at the previous inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

The school now meets the following independent school standards

Part 1. Quality of education provided

- 3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school-
 - 3(i) does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 5 The standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school is met if the proprietor-
 - 5(a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
 - 5(b) ensures that principles are actively promoted which-
 - 5(b)(i) enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - 5(c) precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school;
 - 5(d) takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils-
 - 5(d)(i) while they are in attendance at the school, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	101168
DfE registration number	213/6215
Inspection number	10245153

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

Type of school	All-through school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1403
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	230
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	The American School in London Educational Trust
Chair	Erin Roth
Headteacher	Coreen Hester (Interim head of school)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,000 to £32,000
Telephone number	020 7449 1200
Website	www.asl.org
Email address	asl@asl.org
Date of previous standard inspection	14 to 16 December 2021

Information about this school

- There have been a number of changes to the school's leadership since the previous inspection. In January 2022, an acting head of school was appointed who was replaced in April 2022 by an interim head of school. The interim head of school is not the head of school listed on the Department of Education's (DfE) register of educational

establishments, known as 'Get information about schools'. The interim head of school was previously the school's substantive head of school from 2007 to 2017. A new chair of the board of trustees has also been appointed.

- The school's previous standard inspection took place in December 2021.
- Leaders have introduced changes to the school's curriculum, including terminating the use of Learning for Justice social-justice standards.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school is organised into three phases known as divisions. These are lower school (ages four to 10, including Kindergarten for children aged four and five), middle school (ages 11 to 13) and high school (ages 14 to 18). The last two grades in high school division, grades 11 and 12, represent what is known as sixth form in the United Kingdom. The school is exempt from the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school has made in meeting the independent school standards and other requirements that it was judged to not comply with at its previous inspection.
- The school's previous inspection in December 2021 was a standard inspection, at which the school was judged not to comply with the independent school standards.
- Following the inspection in December 2021, the DfE required the school to prepare a statutory action plan. Ofsted evaluated the school's action plan to be unacceptable on 12 May 2022. The action plan was rejected by the DfE.
- This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection since December 2021. It was conducted without notice.
- The focus of the inspection was to check whether the school complied with particular requirements within Parts 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8 of the independent school standards.
- Inspection activities included meetings with the head of school and senior leaders, members of the board of trustees, teaching staff and pupils. Inspectors viewed a range of documentation, including curriculum plans.
- Inspectors considered online survey responses, including 660 free-text responses from parents, 434 responses to the survey for pupils and 288 responses from the school's staff.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

Noeman Anwar

His Majesty's Inspector

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