



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

The Pointer School

June 2022

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School's Details

School	The Pointer School			
DfE number	203/6065			
Address	The Pointer School 19 Stratheden Road Blackheath London SE3 7TH			
Telephone number	020 8293 1331			
Email address	head@pointers-school.co.uk			
Head	Mrs Charlotte Crookes			
Proprietor	Mr Robert Higgins			
Age range	3 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	354			
	EYFS	107	Juniors	247
Inspection dates	14 to 17 June 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 The Pointer School is an independent co-educational day school. It provides an education founded on Christian principles. The main premises for Years 2 to 6 are located in a detached Victorian house near Blackheath. The Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 are situated in a Georgian building, a short walk away.
- 1.2 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to provide learning for life and to maintain its Christian ideals in all its undertakings, placing emphasis on personal faith, respect, integrity and friendship. It aims for its pupils to be well educated, with a love of learning, ready to engage in the wider world, happy and self-confident, with a good sense of humour, generous in spirit, kind and aware of others' feelings.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Most pupils live locally and are from professional families. They are from a wide range of nationalities giving the school an international flavour. The school's own assessment data indicate that the ability of the pupils is broadly in line with that expected for their age. The school has identified 49 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities of whom 41 pupils receive additional specialist help. A very small number of pupils have an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for 136 pupils of which four require additional support. Where pupils are identified as being more able, the curriculum is modified for them.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety;

acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils demonstrate high levels of academic and extra-curricular achievement.
- Pupils are excellent communicators.
- Pupils' numeracy skills are excellent.
- Pupils' achievements outside the formal curriculum are both wide-ranging and of high quality.
- Pupils' attitudes towards learning are excellent.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils have an excellent understanding of themselves.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent spiritual understanding and appreciate the non-material things in life.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent behaviour.
- Pupils have excellent social awareness and work collaboratively with others towards common goals.
- Pupils' knowledge, understanding and sensitive appreciation of the beliefs of others' faiths is excellent.

Recommendations

3.3 The school should make the following improvements:

- Ensure pupils benefit from a consistent use of constructive feedback to further enable their successful next steps.
- Ensure all pupils are given open-ended and challenging opportunities to further extend their learning.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils at the Pointer School demonstrate high levels of academic and extra-curricular achievement as a result of adaptive teaching, nurturing pastoral care, and thoughtfully planned resources. The commitment of senior leaders ensures pupils attain excellent results in externally standardised tests

and curriculum assessments throughout the year. Comprehensive tracking and monitoring procedures enable leaders and teachers to identify, and respond to, relative areas of weakness in the curriculum and the performance of cohorts and individual pupils, leading to interventions being provided to support or challenge those pupils. All pupils, including those with SEND, EAL and those who are most able, make excellent progress, both within individual lessons and over time, due to the sensitive and well-planned support provided by the school. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, a very large majority of parents felt that teaching, including online provision, enables their children to make progress.

- 3.6 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across all areas of learning are excellent. Pupils are enthusiastic about acquiring new knowledge and respond effectively to their teachers' verbal and written suggestions for making improvements and completing tasks. They effectively draw upon previous learning and demonstrate success in applying this. For example, Year 6 pupils made excellent use of their knowledge of Shakespeare's soliloquies to write a future tense diary for a book character. They recalled the features of internal dialogue and their understanding of grammatical tenses to successfully support their writing. Comprehensive and thoughtful curriculum planning ensures pupils develop strong skills across the curriculum. Pupils particularly enjoy opportunities to draw together and apply knowledge and skills from different areas of their learning. For example, when using their knowledge of marine animals, children in the EYFS constructed imaginative sentences. Year 6 pupils designed and built rafts using their scientific knowledge of materials, and Year 5 pupils developed life skills to a high level, learning how to book flights online. In questionnaires, all pupils felt their teachers knew their subjects well and most pupils felt that their skills and knowledge improve in most lessons. This was confirmed by observations during the inspection.
- 3.7 Pointer School pupils are excellent communicators. From an early age, children are confident and articulate speakers, describing a diagraph as 'two words who get together to make a new sound'. Pupils benefit significantly from the school's clear focus on speaking and listening and the many opportunities to engage in public speaking, assemblies, and committees. Pupils demonstrate outstanding listening skills both in the classroom and in other aspects of school life, for example in assemblies. The youngest children love to read, and they quickly develop strong skills in matching letters to sounds. This enthusiasm continues and develops throughout their school journey. When writing, pupils present their work with pride and confidence, using ambitious and powerful vocabulary, such as a Year 2 description of *Willy Wonka* as a 'sparkling gem'. By Year 6, their writing skills are particularly highly developed as seen in a narrative story, 'I was cloaked in fear, my hands trembled and I felt that my heart was ticking its final tock.'
- 3.8 Pupils' mathematical skills are excellent. Their firm grasp of numeracy is strongly embedded from an early age, enabling them to gain a genuine sense of delight in increasingly challenging number-based tasks as they progress through the school. Children in the EYFS apply their mathematical understanding to a range of real-life settings, for example, when using coins in their classroom shop. Pupils effectively apply mathematical knowledge and skills to further their learning across the curriculum, for example, in English when pupils use line graphs to record Romeo's emotions in Shakespeare's play. In geography, pupils compare population data using graphs and in history they consider the pre-war hyperinflation and value of the Deutschmark in the Weimar Republic.
- 3.9 The development of pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills over their time in the school is excellent and is highly effective in supporting the curriculum. Children in the EYFS handle devices with confidence and use a range of applications in their enquiry-based learning. As they progress through the school, pupils enthusiastically demonstrate an increasing range of skills including coding, spreadsheets, presentation software, word processing and touch typing. Pupils make effective use of their ICT skills in other subjects, for example, when skilfully photographing the progress of plant growth in Year 6.
- 3.10 Pupils' ability to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise develop throughout their time in the school and by Year 6, when given the opportunity, they apply higher-order thinking skills to successfully deepen

their understanding. For example when Year 6 pupils hypothesised that their plant's growth would be stunted as it had not been watered and the soil had dried up in the heat of the classroom. Pupils draw upon independent research and wider sources of information to create their own conclusions, for example, when Year 3 pupils hypothesised that one pupil's water bottle would be the heaviest as it was bigger and made of metal. Younger children make effective use of their study skills when researching marine animals causing great excitement when discovering dolphins can squeak. Pupils' analytical skills are excellent, enabling them, for example, to draw upon their numerical understanding in mathematics to analyse and evaluate the temperatures of different countries. Pupils are encouraged to consider relative areas of weakness and have a practical understanding of how to go about addressing these in order to improve their progress. However, there is a lack of constructive feedback aimed at extending pupils' thinking skills beyond their work simply being right or wrong. In response to the questionnaire, most parents felt that the school equips pupils with the team-working, collaborative, and research skills they need in later life.

- 3.11 Pupils' achievements outside the formal curriculum are both wide-ranging and of high quality. Pupils have won top places in national competitions for short films and digital art and have been successful in essay writing and handwriting competitions. They engage highly enthusiastically in a wide range of in-school activities and their sporting ability is developed through involvement in sports and athletics competitions. The school's chess curriculum enables pupils to gain regular national and regional success. Music plays a prominent role in school life and pupils benefit from membership of elite and inclusive choirs that perform in and out of school, regularly achieving success in competitions. The majority of pupils learn at least one instrument and their involvement in ensembles in and out of school deepen their musical development. Most pupils in Year 6 successfully gain places at a range of independent and maintained schools with demanding entry requirements. A small number of pupils regularly win academic and other scholarships.
- 3.12 Pupils' attitudes towards learning are excellent. They show resilience in their learning; for example, Year 2 pupils focus for extensive periods, working independently and enthusiastically. When given more open-ended opportunities, pupils demonstrate initiative and take an active part in their own learning. They enjoy being given the opportunity to decide which level of task to tackle, for example in the times-table competitions. They never shrink from challenge and relish those opportunities they are given. Pupils are curious in their approach and they independently seek opportunities to extend their learning, for example, conducting their own research in additional projects. In the questionnaire a small minority of pupils stated that all lessons were not interesting. Inspectors observed that pupils' engagement is very strong in lessons that strive to extend the learning of all abilities. Pupils consistently work well together and take leadership in their learning, for example, when Year 6 pupils animatedly discussed the benefits of a propeller versus an oar, in addition to adding a rudder to ensure it had clear direction. Year 1 pupils cheered and supported their teammates when passing the spoon gently and considerately, as well as giggling at the rubber egg when it bounced under the shed. Pupils' engaging and positive attitudes towards collective activities and community performances, is a hallmark of Pointer pupils.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils have an excellent understanding of themselves and, as embodied in the *Pointer School Way*, benefit from the whole school approach to being one's 'best self'. Pupils proactively reflect on many aspects of their own and others' learning, for example, Year 2 pupils state, 'I liked writing about Carrot Club because I like vegetables'. Pupils' self-understanding is greatly enhanced by the many opportunities provided and encouraged through the curriculum, to reflect via bubbles, reflection time and feedback when provided. From the earliest age, children are enabled to focus on and celebrate their successes and to consider areas for further development in a balanced and proportionate way. In the EYFS children are confident in exploring their outdoor area, using water, brushes and buckets

to paint the flowerpots. As a consequence, pupils' self-esteem and sense of self is excellent. Pupils talked about how they can freely approach adults for help and advice and do so with self-assurance.

- 3.15 Pupils of all ages make well-informed choices and are encouraged to do so through a variety of initiatives such as the school council, where pupils make decisions such as which sausages will be purchased, which meals are preferred, and who will feed the worms on the roof garden. Older pupils understand and use the steps and consequences behaviour scheme to ensure they clearly know the outcomes of their decisions. Where pupils are given opportunities to make decisions in their learning, they respond positively. For example, pupils choose to waterproof their sail whilst another group decided not to have a campfire on their raft for safety reasons. They are supported in making important decisions about the next stages of their lives, for example, nursery children were encouraged to put their hands up to ask questions as this will be required of them in Reception. In response to the questionnaire, most pupils felt they were well-prepared for their next schools.
- 3.16 Pupils demonstrate excellent spiritual understanding and appreciate non-material things in life. They appreciate the world around them through activities such as cloud-gazing, dance and retreat sessions on the local heath where they focused on the minutiae of the nature around them, enabling them to drift off into a contemplative place. Pupils regularly experience moments of "awe and wonder". For example, when nursery children gasped in wonderment as the water painted on flower pots mysteriously evaporated in the sunshine or when squealing with delight when unfolding Papel Picado art pieces. Pupils explained that the use of the quiet spaces at school gives them time to think and be calm. Pupils clearly respond positively to the values of the school and are very aware of the constantly encouraging staff role models.
- 3.17 Pupils are consistently keen to maintain high personal standards of behaviour throughout the school in response to the clear expectations set by teachers, support staff and senior leaders. They distinguish between right and wrong, and they place great value on honesty and respect. In the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils felt some teachers favour some pupils over others but inspectors did not witness this or find any evidence to support these concerns. In Year 2, pupils learned to seek consent from peers before hugging them, and in assembly, pupils recalled the core aspects of taking care of people, treating others how you would want to be treated, being kind, being givers not receivers, and being honest. Pupils take great pride in their school and are keen to do the right thing at the right time. They demonstrate excellent behaviour around the school and especially during unstructured periods such as breaktime. They understand the importance of maintaining positive relationships with one another, and this aspect of school life is recognised and praised in assemblies and on an individual basis. Pupils report they feel very well-supported by their teachers. In their responses to the questionnaire, most pupils felt that the school listens to what they have to say.
- 3.18 Social development in pupils of all ages is excellent and they form productive relationships with their peers from an early age. In the playground, pupils demonstrate a clear awareness of the needs of others and their social responsibility to support their peers was evident when a pupil rushed to assist another as they dropped their fruit box on the ground. Pupils have excellent social awareness and work collaboratively with others towards common goals such as building rafts or carrying equipment in the EYFS. Pupils work with excellent levels of collaboration to solve problems or share ideas. Year 1 pupils showed excellent collaborative skills when working together to build a rocket, shared water in the play kitchen, and cycled together. When pupils are reluctant to collaborate, teacher intervention provides supportive encouragement. Their social development is greatly enhanced by the consistently high quality of the opportunities to work collaboratively in and out of the classroom, using talk partners to discuss deforestation, group work and team activities on residential trips, and pastoral play sessions.
- 3.19 Pupils wholeheartedly embrace the many opportunities provided by the school to take responsibility for significant aspects of school life. They are eager participants in the school council, music and drama productions, are members of sports teams, mathematics challenges, and reading competitions. Pupils enjoy supporting younger pupils through duties, supporting global causes such the Ukraine and in the

EYFS when visiting the local community to find out what grown-ups do all day. Such events clearly have a strong influence on the development of their self-esteem and self-confidence.

- 3.20 Pupils' knowledge, understanding and sensitive appreciation of the beliefs of others' faiths and religions is a characteristic of Pointer School pupils, and is an uncomplicated and natural part of the DNA of the school. Pupils demonstrate considerable respect for one another, whatever their cultural backgrounds, gender or traditions. They clearly value the multi-cultural ethos of their school. The curriculum develops understanding of diversity and promotes inclusivity as seen in activities enjoyed in international week. Pupils take pride that they are drawn from over 40 national backgrounds, and enjoy speaking in public about their own roots. Pupils respect and value diversity of all kinds with an honest integrity. They demonstrate an uncontrived sensitivity and tolerance to those from different backgrounds, traditions and family units as an integral and highly developed facet of their values and personalities.
- 3.21 Pupils know how to stay safe, both in the real and virtual world. They appreciate the regular focus on online safety in ICT lessons and speak confidently of the need to maintain anonymity in certain scenarios, protect passwords and identity, and to adopt a mature approach to strangers. They understand the importance of being physically healthy, including how to keep their bodies safe, and their right to consent. They value the opportunities they have in school and beyond to participate in team and individual sports and activities. They also understand how to be mentally healthy, and the school creates an environment where this aspect of their lives is taken seriously and is seen as an area for all pupils to nurture. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy diet and were recently delighted to have the school council's recommendations realised by their chef. In response to the questionnaire, almost all parents felt that the school encourages their children to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration periods and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Alexander Mitchell	Reporting inspector
Mr Giles Brand	Compliance team inspector (Bursar, GSA school)
Mrs Alexia Bolton	Team inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)