

# School inspection report

13 to 15 May 2025

## **The Pointer School**

19 Stratheden Road

Blackheath

London

SE3 7TH

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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## Summary of inspection findings

1. Leaders work together effectively to enhance pupils' wellbeing. Governors' robust oversight provides them with a comprehensive understanding of the school's successes and areas for improvement. This oversight includes receiving regular reports, making frequent visits, commissioning external reviews and conducting regular surveys to gather feedback from all groups of stakeholders. As a result, governors support and challenge leaders to ensure that leaders have the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities so that the school meets the Standards.
2. Reflective leaders ensure pupils' wellbeing sits at the heart of their decision-making. This commitment is evident through positive relationships between staff and pupils, a welcoming culture and high-quality pastoral care, all of which contribute to an environment where pupils feel secure and which helps them achieve well and be prepared for the next stage of their education.
3. Leaders' careful curriculum planning ensures pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects. Teachers use suitable resources effectively. Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress from their starting points. Teachers typically use effective methods that encourage pupils to think critically and collaborate effectively. However, some teaching approaches offer fewer opportunities for pupils to apply their prior knowledge in ways that challenge them to think independently and learn for themselves.
4. In early years, staff encourage children to collaborate and support one another, emphasising the importance of kindness and respect. Teachers and teaching assistants create engaging activities while ensuring effective supervision and maintaining suitable staff-to-child ratios. As a result, children settle in and make progress within a secure and purposeful environment that fosters an atmosphere of enthusiastic participation.
5. Leaders and staff recognise possible risks in the school environment and take necessary actions to reduce these risks. Health and safety arrangements, first aid provision and fire safety protocols are comprehensive and effective. Leaders meticulously maintain records relating to these to ensure accountability.
6. Pupils develop a broad social and economic understanding through a range of speakers, trips, weekly reflection opportunities and planned learning points in lessons. The 'Pointer School Way' (PSW) is the foundation of the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme and enhances pupils' comprehension of important traits and values such as resilience and respect. Such values are reflected in pupils' positive attitude throughout the school. Pupils recognise and appreciate the uniqueness of individuals, demonstrating respect and acceptance for everyone. They learn to understand that every person is different and valuable.
7. The safeguarding measures in place are effective and in accordance with current statutory guidelines. The safeguarding team takes swift action when concerns are brought to their attention. Staff members receive appropriate safeguarding training and are knowledgeable about the procedures for recording and reporting any safeguarding issues that may emerge.

## The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

## Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that lessons include engaging teaching strategies that consistently challenge and enable pupils to think and learn for themselves.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Leaders have an ambitious and clear vision for the school. They set high expectations for the pupils and foster an inclusive and harmonious environment which promotes pupils' wellbeing and supports pupils pastorally and academically. Governors regularly review the school policies and procedures to ensure they comply with current statutory guidance. They monitor the effectiveness of leaders' work through regular visits and communication to ensure that leaders apply their skills and knowledge effectively to enable the school to meet the Standards. Leaders adeptly apply shared policies and resources from the larger organisation of which they are part while preserving the school's individual identity and promoting its particular ethos and aims.
9. Leaders proactively evaluate where the school is most effective and where provision could be improved. They carefully identify the necessary steps to improve pupils' overall experience. This thorough self-evaluation process informs school development planning and contributes to positive outcomes for pupils. Leaders undertake actions such as reviewing and developing the curriculum and teaching strategies to further encourage pupils' critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration. Leaders consider the perspectives of staff, pupils and parents when making any major changes to the school.
10. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders consistently ensure pupils are treated fairly and actively promote an inclusive environment that celebrates individuality and diversity. A suitable accessibility plan is in place that focuses on making the curriculum accessible to all, addressing the physical development of the site, and ensuring that key information can be accessed effectively.
11. The school provides all required information to parents, mainly through the school's website. Parents receive termly progress reports detailing their child's levels of achievement, effort and recommendations for future learning steps. Leaders provide the local authority with the required information relating to the use of funds for pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
12. Leaders maintain effective liaison with external agencies to take advantage of support available in the local area. This informs their ongoing practice when responding to situations as they arise. When necessary, leaders seek specialist advice and guidance, such as communicating with safeguarding agencies and working with speech and language therapists, to support pupils who have SEND.
13. Leaders have a secure understanding of any potential risks associated with the school site, including those that are not immediately obvious. They employ effective strategies to assess and manage potential risks, including with regard to educational visits and site security. Risk assessments are comprehensive and indicate suitable steps to identify and mitigate risks. Leaders regularly review risk assessments and update them as necessary.
14. A suitable complaints policy is in place. Leaders record and respond to concerns appropriately. They manage formal complaints in a timely manner, with appropriate governor involvement if necessary. Leaders are accessible to parents and communicate with them regularly, which helps address any informal complaints promptly and effectively. Leaders review issues raised by complaints and reflect on any lessons learned to identify areas for improvement.

15. Early years leaders demonstrate high expectations for what children will achieve. Leaders and staff in the early years collaborate regularly to discuss teaching and learning outcomes. This ensures that children receive consistent and effective support. Leaders provide children with a suitable, recently redeveloped learning environment that supports children's development well.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance**

- 16. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

17. The curriculum is suitably balanced and regularly reviewed to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to learn and make good progress across a wide subject range. Teachers plan coverage of all required curriculum areas methodically, ensuring they also create opportunities to build on individual pupils' interests and achievements. They design programmes of study that extend beyond the national curriculum to help pupils understand more complex concepts. Leaders' review of the curriculum has led to an extension of subjects and a recently introduced scheme for teaching children and pupils about letters and the sounds they represent, which has enhanced their learning in this area.
18. Children in the early years are introduced to a range of languages, including Spanish, French and Arabic, laying a secure foundation for future language learning. Age-appropriate activities are often linked to topic work and include enrichment opportunities, such as a metal workshop. These activities build on children's interests and foster high levels of engagement in learning. Staff encourage creativity in children's play and support language development by modelling vocabulary and asking probing, challenging questions. This approach results in motivated, engaged and independent learners.
19. Teachers display secure subject knowledge, make effective use of high-quality resources and plan lessons carefully, enabling pupils to make good progress. They typically employ effective teaching strategies that engage pupils, capturing their interest in learning. When teachers provide an appropriate level of challenge, pupils show genuine interest in their work and apply intellectual effort, becoming self-motivated. However, in some lessons, teaching strategies do not consistently challenge and enable pupils to apply previous learning and think and learn for themselves as effectively as possible.
20. The school's inclusive culture ensures that pupils who have SEND are well supported. Leaders of provision for pupils who have SEND identify pupils' needs carefully. They then create 'class wisdom' sheets detailing effective strategies for supporting each pupil and share these with teachers and key staff. Strategies to aid learning, such as additional adult assistance and the use of tailored resources, support and clarify learning for these pupils and help engage them with their learning.
21. Teachers closely monitor the progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) to identify their learning requirements. Tailored strategies, such as visual aids, are thoughtfully incorporated into classroom activities when required, ensuring these pupils receive the necessary support. As a result, pupils who speak EAL achieve well and rapidly improve their fluency in English.
22. Leaders and staff closely monitor pupils' progress through an effective range of regular assessments, including standardised tests and teacher-led evaluations. Leaders analyse assessment data to ensure pupils make good progress and to monitor the effectiveness of teaching. Staff use assessment data to inform their planning and identify when pupils need greater support or challenge. Teachers provide pupils with positive and constructive written and verbal feedback. This helps pupils understand the successful aspects of their work and identify the areas that require further development.
23. The school provides a varied programme of clubs and extra-curricular activities. Pupils practise and develop their skills in areas such as sailing, performing arts, robotics, and cookery. Leaders monitor

pupils' participation in the recreational programme through an effective tracking system, and gather feedback from pupils and parents about what is successful, making adaptations where needed. This inclusive programme allows pupils to explore new interests, be creative and develop their skills and confidence in the areas that they engage with.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation**

**24. All the relevant Standards are met.**



## Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

25. Pupils' spiritual and moral understanding is effectively fostered through a well-structured religious education curriculum and weekly assemblies held at the local church. These deepen pupils' appreciation of the major world religions and create platforms for exploring ethical and religious topics. For instance, older pupils engage in discussions and debates about themes such as, what justice and freedom mean to different religions. Additionally, special events such as 'diversity week' and pupil-led presentations about various faiths cultivate respect for different cultures and beliefs. These experiences and learning contribute to pupils' understanding of the value of inclusivity and the necessity for mutual respect.
26. Leaders actively seek opportunities to enhance pupils' self-confidence while supporting their wellbeing. Regular feedback mechanisms, including pupil surveys on themes such as resilience, guide leaders in identifying ways to further support their confidence and sense of security. As a result, a diverse range of pastoral groups has been established to offer support for pupils identified as potentially benefitting from various forms of additional provision, such as play therapy. Positive interactions between staff and pupils have an impact on building pupils' self-confidence and their ability to express things that matter to them.
27. The physical education (PE) programme supports pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing. Pupils learn how maintaining physical health contributes to emotional health too. Pupils' participation in a range of different indoor and outdoor sports helps them develop their co-ordination, confidence, self-esteem and teamwork skills, as well as developing their techniques in the sports themselves.
28. Pupils' emotional development is nurtured through the carefully planned 'Pointer School Way' programme, which supports and complements the pastoral support for pupils. This programme includes suitable PSHE and relationships education. It is taught sensitively, reflecting the school's Christian ethos in its emphasis on valuing people's dignity and on the equality of people's rights, and includes weekly reflection times that enhance self-awareness. Lessons taught by teachers who know the pupils well, along with assemblies and special events, address themes such as online safety, diversity, changes during puberty, the importance of respecting privacy, consent, different types of family groupings and healthy relationships.
29. Leaders incentivise positive behaviour through a motivating reward system and a set of values that foster team spirit and a sense of responsibility towards others. The anti-bullying strategy is effective, and leaders and staff communicate a clear zero-tolerance stance on bullying. Staff receive training to help them identify and manage bullying issues. Events such as 'anti-bullying week' help raise awareness of the different forms of bullying and the negative impact they can have on people. Rare instances of poor behaviour or bullying are dealt with appropriately, including through suitable and fair use of sanctions when required. Leaders support pupils involved in any behavioural dispute, encouraging them to reflect on their behaviour and its consequences for others. They monitor behavioural and bullying incidents carefully to see if there are any trends or wider issues that need to be addressed.
30. A calm and purposeful atmosphere pervades the early years settings. Adults' foster children's positive mental health and emotional wellbeing by providing nurturing, warm, supportive relationships and utilising detailed individualised planning. Children are encouraged to be inquisitive

and reflective. They discuss their learning enthusiastically and display confidence with one another. Staff plan activities to promote children's physical development, such as developing fine motor skills through creating artwork and using the climbing equipment to build gross motor skills.

31. Leaders oversee a robust approach to health and safety, ensuring procedures are implemented effectively. All necessary checks are undertaken regularly and systematically so that the premises are well maintained, and any potential health and safety issues are promptly addressed. Comprehensive fire risk assessments, routine fire evacuation drills and the diligent upkeep of fire safety equipment are all in place.
32. Pupils benefit from attentive supervision by caring adults who know individual pupils well. Staff are deployed appropriately and leaders maintain suitable staff-to-child ratios in the early years at all times.
33. The school implements appropriate first aid procedures. Appropriately trained staff, including paediatric first aiders in the early years, administer first aid or medication in a timely and suitable manner. Pupils are well informed about whom to approach if they feel unwell or are injured.
34. Admission and attendance registers are maintained in line with current statutory guidance. Systems are in place to address any persistent lateness and absences. Leaders work collaboratively with parents to ensure pupils maximise their attendance. The school informs the local authority whenever pupils join or leave the school at non-standard transition points.

### **The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing**

- 35. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

36. Staff actively cultivate pupils' economic awareness by providing engaging, age-appropriate experiences that develop financial understanding. In the early years, children are introduced to the use of coins and money through hands-on activities, such as role playing shopping and purchasing items for special occasions. Year 6 pupils manage an enterprise club where they organise the sale of second-hand uniforms. This experience builds on previous learning in the curriculum that develops pupils' insights into financial decision-making, profit margins and sustainability, through budgeting, pricing and customer interactions. These initiatives ensure pupils develop a foundation in economic principles, equipping them with real-world financial literacy and entrepreneurial thinking.
37. Pupils are well prepared academically and socially for the next stages of their education and life in British society. Leaders maintain a close liaison with senior schools and provide pupils with examination and interview practice. These support a smooth transition to their next schools.
38. The school provides pupils with a structured schedule of early careers guidance. This includes workshops, talks and assemblies about different types of careers. Regular talks from representatives from different careers help to challenge gender stereotyping in the workplace. As a result, pupils gain a broader understanding of potential career paths.
39. Staff emphasise the importance of mutual respect through their teaching, discussions with pupils and through themes met in PSHE lessons. Pupils learn about different forms of prejudice and how these impact people. They discuss issues of equality and the contributions people representing different cultures have made to art, literature and science. Leaders have recently reviewed and updated reading schemes and texts to better reflect a diverse society. Regular themed events such as 'diversity week', raise pupils' awareness and promote tolerance and harmony. Art and music projects are thoughtfully linked to assemblies which explore different heritages. During events such as Black History Month, pupils delve into studies about the life and impact of important historical figures who represent diverse cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds. Teachers discuss current events with pupils, prompting pupils to engage with global challenges and learn about the implications of extremism and populism. Staff ensure that any political discussion is conducted fairly and without bias.
40. Adults teach children to care for and respect one another in the early years. They serve as positive role models, helping children form successful friendships. During registration, positive relationships are fostered through welcoming routines, affirmations and greetings in multiple languages. The outdoor area is equipped with age-appropriate equipment and designated learning zones that promote co-operative play and the development of skills such as negotiation and turn-taking.
41. Pupils learn to differentiate between right and wrong by the implementation of a clear behaviour policy and following the school values. Staff and older pupils' model positive behaviour. The PSHE curriculum deepens pupils' understanding of democratic principles and encourages respect for public institutions and the services they provide. For instance, starting in the early years, children learn about the importance of the local community police officer. By Year 6, pupils develop a more comprehensive understanding of Parliament's role and the rule of law, when they investigate the organisation of the Houses of Parliament and the electoral process and start to look at the British legal system.

42. Leaders provide opportunities for pupils develop their sense of responsibly towards others by supporting the school and the local and wider community. For example, pupils are responsible for clearing their plates and managing the playground equipment at lunchtime. Older pupils sing at a local home for elderly residents. Pupils support, and regularly donate to, the local foodbank. Various roles, including positions on school and eco councils, are available for pupils to apply for. Activities such as selling loom bands for a national charity, help develop pupils' sense of contribution to the community.

**The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society**

- 43. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

44. Leaders implement suitable safeguarding policies and procedures that reflect current statutory guidance effectively. Governors provide diligent oversight of the school's safeguarding arrangements. They meet with the safeguarding team, regularly monitor trends and check the appropriateness and effectiveness of the school's responses to any safeguarding concerns that arise, including through an annual review of safeguarding.
45. The safeguarding team is suitably trained for their role. They respond to any safeguarding concerns effectively, including by supporting pupils affected by safeguarding issues and engaging effectively with external safeguarding partners, such as the police and children's services. They follow their advice and refer concerns onto them when required. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) maintains detailed and secure safeguarding records that document all concerns and the school's responses to these thoroughly.
46. Staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Appropriate and comprehensive safeguarding training, including at induction, ensures that staff are knowledgeable about potential safeguarding issues and how to respond to and report these. All staff, volunteers and governors receive suitable ongoing training throughout the year. This includes useful regular updates from the local authority and the proprietorial body, which help ensure staff remain informed. Staff understand the school's whistleblowing procedures and the importance of escalating issues externally if required.
47. Assemblies, computing and PSHE lessons teach pupils how to stay safe, including when online. For example, pupils learn about road safety and the dangers of talking to strangers, whether face-to-face or online. The safeguarding team actively maintains, and regularly checks, a suitable filtering and monitoring system and takes necessary action as required should there be an alert. Pupils know how to express their concerns, including through methods such as 'worry boxes' and speaking to trusted adults.
48. Those responsible for safer recruitment methodically ensure that all required pre-employment checks are carried out prior to staff beginning their roles. These checks are carefully documented in the single central record of appointments, which is regularly reviewed by leaders.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 49. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## School details

<b>School</b>	The Pointer School
<b>Department for Education number</b>	203/6065
<b>Address</b>	The Pointer School 19 Stratheden Road Blackheath London SE3 7TH
<b>Phone number</b>	020 8293 1331
<b>Email address</b>	office@pointers-school.co.uk
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://pointers.school">https://pointers.school</a>
<b>Proprietor</b>	Dukes Education Group Ltd
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Aatif Hassan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Charlotte Crookes
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 11
<b>Number of pupils</b>	350
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 to 17 June 2022

## Information about the school

50. The Pointer School is an independent co-educational day school. The main premises for Years 2 to 6 are located in a detached house near Blackheath. The early years and Year 1 are situated in a separate building a short walk away. Since June 2022 the school has been part of the Dukes Education Group Ltd and overseen by the current proprietor, who is supported by a board of advisory governors.
51. There are 100 children in the early years comprising three Nursery and three Reception classes.
52. The school has identified 47 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). A very small proportion of pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
53. The school has identified English as an additional language for 103 pupils.
54. The school states its aims are to be Christian and community focused. It intends to place emphasis on respect and integrity, with a deep sense of responsibility to give back via charitable acts and sustainability initiatives. The school seeks 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.

## Inspection details

### Inspection dates

13 to 15 May 2025

55. A team of four inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

56. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with two governors
- discussions with the headteacher, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

57. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.



**How are association independent schools in England inspected?**

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **[www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)**.

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