

Inspection of First Bridge School

Station Court, Imperial Wharf, 1 Townmead Road, London SW6 2PY

Inspection dates: 16 to 18 April 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
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Personal development	Outstanding
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Leadership and management	Good
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive a personalised programme of effective education and therapeutic and clinical support at this special school. The expert team truly understands pupils' various complex needs, including their autism.

The specialist curriculum enables pupils to make exceptional progress in their behaviour. The curriculum also offers exceptionally high-quality provision to promote pupils' personal development, including in their social and physical skills. Staff carefully balance a nurturing, therapeutic approach with high expectations of pupils' achievement. When they are ready, pupils are well supported to communicate and read and to learn successfully in a range of subjects.

Pupils are safe, well cared for and closely supervised. The school is calm and organised with well-established routines. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as reflected in their high rates of attendance. Pupils trust staff to help them. They especially like singing and playing games, including in the outdoor play space.

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

Pupils, who all have complex needs arising from their autism as well as other special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive a good quality of specialist education at First Bridge. Leaders have created and implemented an ambitious curriculum. They ensure that staff receive thorough and regular professional training so that each pupil benefits from a bespoke, high-quality programme centred on their personal development. The curriculum focuses especially on enabling pupils to self-regulate, socialise and keep themselves safe. Staff carefully plan and resource sequenced teaching activities, which are informed by continuous assessment of pupils' achievements. They skilfully adapt activities as necessary and demonstrate a thorough understanding of each pupil's complex needs. As a result, pupils are continually building on their prior learning. They typically make excellent gains socially, emotionally and behaviourally.

When pupils are ready, they access more formal academic learning in English, mathematics and all the other required areas of learning, including in group sessions. Pupils especially enjoy, and benefit from, outdoor physical education, healthy food sessions and themed learning weeks. Leaders prioritise teaching pupils to communicate in a range of ways. They have put in place a suitable phonics programme for the small number of pupils who are ready to learn to read. However, this aspect of the school's work on the curriculum is not as well developed as others. This includes ensuring that training for staff strengthens the consistency and quality of phonics teaching. Sometimes, the time devoted to the teaching of phonics is not as much as pupils need. This reduces the otherwise positive impact of the school's work to promote pupils' reading development.

Assessment information in school is clear and comprehensive. This is used well to inform pupils' individual teaching programmes. Leaders keep approaches to checking

pupils' achievements under review to ensure that they contribute purposefully to supporting learning. For example, leaders are currently working on more coherently matching up the range of evidence of pupils' achievements with assessment records.

The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme is taught through the specialist curriculum, assemblies and 'special events'. Pupils learn about differences, British values and how to manage difficulties. Pupils also learn the required relationships education content when they are ready, in line with statutory requirements.

Staff are positive about the training, support and guidance that they receive from leaders. They spoke especially favourably about the school's pupil-centred approach and its diverse and inclusive culture. The parents and carers who submitted a written comment to Ofsted Parent View during the inspection wrote equally positively about the impact of the school's work.

Proprietors and leaders have worked effectively to establish this new school. They continue to work proactively together to continuously develop the provision as it grows. Arrangements for both supporting and holding leaders to account are strong. Proprietors and leaders ensure that they continuously check and maintain compliance with the independent school standards and schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- While pupils' language and communication are well supported by the curriculum, the approach to phonics teaching is not as well embedded. This means that support for pupils who are learning to read is not as sharply focused as it could be. The school should realise its plans to strengthen the expertise to deliver the phonics programme, as well as the opportunities that pupils have to practise reading.

How can I feed back my views?

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

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

School details

Unique reference number	149762
DfE registration number	205/6005
Local authority	Hammersmith & Fulham
Inspection number	10322626
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent special school
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Number of part-time pupils	5
Proprietor	First Bridge Group Limited
Chair	Aleksandra Zerkalova
Headteacher	Mikaela Green
Annual fees (day pupils)	£85,000 to £95,000
Telephone number	020 3026 0095
Website	www.firstbridgecentre.com
Email address	admissions@firstbridgecentre.com

Information about this school

- First Bridge School is an independent special day school in Hammersmith and Fulham. The school opened in September 2023 for pupils with autism and other SEND. Around half of the school's pupils have education, health and care plans.
- The wider organisation provides early intervention for children with autism at their applied behaviour analysis clinic, First Bridge Centre, which is inspected separately by Ofsted as an early years provider.
- The school makes no 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.

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

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. The inspector also spoke with the local authority designated officer for safeguarding.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, PSHE education and human and social education. He held discussions with staff, visited lessons and considered pupils' work. The inspector held meetings with the school's senior leadership team and all members of the proprietor body. Other areas of the curriculum were also considered as part of this inspection.
- The inspector toured the premises and considered a range of documentation in order to consider the school's compliance with the independent school standards.
- The inspection considered the views of parents submitted on Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey of school staff. Instead, the inspector spoke to staff on site about their views of the school.
- At the request of the Department for Education, the inspection considered the themes arising from some concerns they had received, as well as the school's arrangements for the management of complaints.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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