



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Dolphin School (Incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools)

October 2022

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School's Details

School	Dolphin School (incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools)			
DfE number	212/6387			
Registered charity number	1145113			
Address	Dolphin School (incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools) 106 Northcote Road Battersea London SW11 6QW			
Telephone number	020 7924 3472			
Email address	stpa@dolphinschool.org.uk			
Headteacher	Mr Sam Gosden			
Chair of governors	Mrs Sian Gates			
Age range	2 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	141			
	EYFS	58	Juniors	83
Inspection dates	4 to 6 October 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Dolphin School (incorporating Noah's Ark Nursery Schools) is an independent co-educational day school. The main school, for pupils from Reception to Year 6, was founded in 1986 and is located in a church building in Battersea. In 2002, the early years settings for children aged from two to four years, collectively entitled Noah's Ark Nursery Schools, were incorporated into the school. One of these Nursery Schools operates from the main Dolphin School site and the other Nursery is located in a local church hall.
- 1.2 All three schools operate as a single charitable trust overseen by a board of governors. The headteacher, who was appointed in 2021, is the head of Dolphin School and is responsible for all three settings, although each nursery operates separately on a day-to-day basis under the oversight of the head of Noah's Ark Nurseries.
- 1.3 The current chair of governors took up her responsibilities in May 2021. The current safeguarding governor took up her role in September 2022.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to find and release children's potential in academic work, creative endeavour and sporting pursuit, and to develop their character according to a Christian understanding of what it means to be human, appreciating and valuing the contribution made by diverse ethnic groups. It seeks to ensure that pupils will be securely prepared to meet the personal and intellectual challenges of secondary school.

About the pupils

- 1.5 The majority of pupils come from professional and business families living within a 3-mile radius of the school. Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the school is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. The school has identified 18 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, including dyslexia and dyspraxia, 15 of whom receive specialist help. No pupils in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. No pupils speak English as an additional language. Data used by the school have identified 17 pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them because of their special talents in art, drama, music and sport.

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. 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 showering facilities where required by the standard, 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 display excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in their learning.
- Pupils of all ages progress well and attain beyond national age-related expectations.
- Pupils across the school demonstrate an exemplary attitude to their learning.
- Pupils are highly articulate and accomplished listeners from a very young age.

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

- Pupils are enormously considerate, caring, courteous and respectful of each other and all members of the school community.
- Pupils have an extremely well-developed sense of self-belief and self-confidence whilst showing mindfulness towards others.
- The behaviour of all pupils is excellent.
- Pupils display outstanding compassion and understanding of the needs of others outside their own community.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Strengthen further pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding by greater breadth of mathematical study.
- Strengthen pupils' ability to carry out and evaluate scientific experiments.

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' achievement is strong, especially in aspects of literacy, music and art, demonstrating fulfilment of the school's aim to realise pupils' potential in academic study and creative endeavour. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children make excellent progress due to the rigorous assessment process that highlights areas of strength and weakness and identify children's next steps. Collaborative planning and focus on individual needs enable activities to be put in place to support those who need it and to challenge those with particular skills and abilities. In recent years, all EYFS children achieved national age expected levels of attainment. Evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils'

work and the school's own assessment data confirms that pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is above national age-related expectations. Pupils with SEND also make strong progress so that their attainment meets their expected levels. Throughout the school, secure progress is achieved across the curriculum by all pupils who benefit from leaders' regular monitoring of attainment, where data is used effectively to identify pupils' needs at an early stage. High expectations of staff and pupils' own self-discipline enable pupils to make positive transitions within their school and are successful in attaining places in senior schools and those that require success in 11+ examinations. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching, enables their child to make progress.

- 3.6 Pupils of all ages are curious and interested learners, demonstrating excellent knowledge, skills and understanding. EYFS children confidently explore their classroom and outside space, benefitting from well planned and engaging activities available to them. For example, Reception children demonstrated excellent physical skills, self-identifying ways to challenge themselves further by walking slowly and pointing their toes. Year 3 pupils used excellent linguistic skills when performing poetry, reflecting on each performance, and proposing ways to use tone and pace to add interest. Pupils in Year 6 displayed an advanced knowledge of challenging terms such as oxymoron and clearly explained its use in writing to enhance tension and personification. Pupils use their knowledge and understanding when considering environmental issues. For example, Year 1 pupils utilised scientific understanding alongside awareness of human and social impact in their discussion on global warming, contemplating using reusable water bottles to save the planet. Pupils' creative and aesthetic abilities are well developed within the art curriculum where pupils were observed making interesting and difficult collages and through the creative and varied artwork on display around the school. However, pupils are not as skilled as possible in carrying out and evaluating scientific experiments.
- 3.7 Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills. Inspectors observed strong verbal communication between pupils from a range of abilities. Pupils are articulate and respectful of both their peers and adults in school and listen carefully to the ideas and opinions of others from a young age. For example, EYFS children regularly contribute to show and tell sessions and are frequently encouraged to verbalise their thoughts and respond to extremely effective questioning by adults. In a Year 5 English lesson, pupils worked collaboratively to describe a setting and introduce characters for their shared story, listening attentively to ensure accuracy when it was their turn to speak. Early literacy skills develop quickly in the EYFS due to the well-structured phonics programme, enabling children to develop secure pre-reading and writing skills. Children in Reception build on this strong foundation with creative writing using key words consistently. Older pupils' writing showed excellent progression in a variety of genres ranging from poetry to political reporting, using more complex sentence structures. For example, Year 6 pupils demonstrated self-confidence when exchanging adjectives to increase effect and using 'successfully' in a simile.
- 3.8 Pupils display well-developed numeracy skills and apply their mathematical knowledge confidently to problem-solving and reasoning activities across the curriculum. EYFS children have a secure knowledge of using numbers to count, demonstrating excellent understanding of the concept of number. Pupils in Year 1 displayed strong understanding of one less and one more, confidently using the signs of 'greater than' and 'less than' when recording. Year 3 pupils demonstrated good understanding of mathematical skills relating to addition and subtraction calculations using two- and three-digit numbers. They were able to verbalise their working and explain why they had chosen specific methods, recording their working using accurate methods. Pupils apply their understanding across other subjects. For example, in a Year 1 topic lesson, pupils recorded traffic surveys using tally charts and pictograms and in a Year 4 science lesson, pupils worked collaboratively to sort living things into classification groups using Venn diagrams and a Carroll matrix. Pupils demonstrate a strong ability to apply their mathematical thinking and to conceptualise their knowledge of number work in order to apply it and solve problems. However, there is scope for pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding to strengthen further.

- 3.9 Pupils have a confident grasp of information, communication and technology (ICT) and its application, using it as a research tool and across other subjects. In the EYFS, nursery children use programmable toys and mobile electronic devices, using simple computer applications to support their learning. Reception children were extremely competent when using the interactive white board to demonstrate their phonic understanding. Older pupils make effective use of the available electronic devices to enhance their learning and can share their knowledge, demonstrating how to access programs to extend learning. In computing lessons, pupils show confidence and capability with discrete skills such as programming and coding, with Year 6 being challenged to 'debug' their interactive books. The development of pupils' competency in ICT is supported by leaders' and governors' investment in high-quality digital resources to develop their skills.
- 3.10 Pupils of all ages and abilities develop a strong range of study skills and show natural curiosity. In the EYFS, child-initiated activities support and develop independent learning skills from an early age. Specific study skills were seen during lessons and in children's work, such as prediction, analysis, hypothesis, comparison, and justification. For example, children in Reception were able to analyse tricky words and identify words with alternative meanings such as *'duck' might mean duck in the water or duck where you have to bend down*. In a Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils displayed excellent justification of their opinion with regard to which number was higher or lower, displaying strong reasoning and explanation. In lessons, pupils show independence of thought, share ideas confidently and show good use of critical language, relishing the opportunity to give an opinion. This was seen in Year 6 'relationships time' period, where pupils confidently and competently used high order skills to debate whether a man showed wisdom through bravery when discussing a scenario of a man saving a dog in stabbing incident. They exhibited high levels of synthesising information from a range of source material and linking different articles regarding the same topic.
- 3.11 The creative and sporting endeavours of pupils demonstrate success both individually and collaboratively in the breadth of opportunity outside of the classroom which are always celebrated in assemblies. Sporting achievements have included taking part in a variety of competitions ranging from street dance, triathlon, ballet and gymnastics. Pupils have achieved success with gold in the Junior Maths Challenge and merit in the Junior Maths Challenge Kangaroo as well as inclusion in the Royal Academy of Art Young Art Exhibition. There is much success in other performing arts, with pupils participating in The Royal Ballet of Dance opening night as well as achieving exam success in a range of musical instruments.
- 3.12 Pupils of all ages, needs and abilities demonstrate excellent focus and attitudes to learning. They can work both collaboratively and independently and show high levels of maturity in their thinking. Pupils are confident learners who are happy to take the initiative in lessons as well as support the development of each other's progress. They exhibit a definite will to succeed. For example, Year 3 pupils demonstrated excellent awareness of improving their poetry performance and engaged in detailed discussion and analysis of their own and peers' performances. Pupils' have an extremely effective 'have a go' attitude towards their learning. Leaders' and staff's high expectations of behaviour and learning and pupils' own wish to do well help them develop excellent habits for learning. This very much reflects the school's objective of educating children in the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need in order to lead fulfilling lives.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils show excellent levels of self-understanding, supported by the ethos of tolerance and care for others found throughout the school. Pupils persevere and complete tasks with a high level of resilience, confident in the knowledge that making a mistake often makes for the best learning experience. Children in the EYFS are confident in their environment, working together, discussing ideas, and developing perseverance. Without a hint of self-importance, pupils develop confidence in

their own abilities. They appreciate that whilst their teachers will support and challenge them as they develop and grow, so too will their peers. This was seen when Reception children encouraged their friend to achieve success with a chorus of '*Come on, you can do it!*'! Self-esteem is built and reinforced at all ages by the frequent praise and rewards given by staff and their peers. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school helps their children to be confident and independent.

- 3.15 Assurance and confidence is displayed in pupils' decision-making ability. Children in the EYFS exhibit strong levels of independence, where decision making opportunities are included from a very early age. They learn to make informed choices during child-initiated activities, where teachers explain the range of options and provide help and guidance. Snack time is also a learning opportunity with nursery children confidently making decisions as to their cracker topping, independently preparing the delicacies and tidying away. Older pupils are able to consider options evaluatively and are willing to take risks in their learning. They demonstrate excellent awareness of decision making when designing and creating interactive stories in computing. Pupils are aware that the decisions they make can have a lasting effect on their future. They learn to make clear, sound decisions based on common sense and appreciate that decisions have consequences. Year 6 pupils identified their choice of senior school was their most significant decision. They readily acknowledged they had a responsibility to make the best decision for themselves rather than be swayed by friendship groups.
- 3.16 Pupils' spiritual understanding is excellent, supported by the many opportunities to grow in spiritual awareness and leaders' promotion of the school's Christian understanding of what it means to be human. In discussions, pupils reflected that as they step into school, they feel the presence of God and don't have to worry as He is always with them. Pupils articulate their values and beliefs clearly. They respect the ethos of the school that challenges them to be the best they can be. They also appreciate the good in those around them, treating each other with empathy and kindness. Pupils' strong philosophical and spiritual awareness is developed through reflective study and the highly effective life education and daily 'relationships time' programme. Leaders ensure that the school's values of love, wisdom and truth permeate all areas of the community. As a result, pupils develop a deep and meaningful appreciation of the spiritual aspect of life based on a strong understanding of different faiths.
- 3.17 Pupils have a strong moral awareness and are deeply caring and respectful of one another and the school community. They demonstrate excellent behaviour and can work effectively. From the earliest age, pupils develop a clear understanding of right and wrong and learn how to resolve conflict successfully by being fair and taking turns. Expectations for behaviour are high and pupils are very keen to maintain their high personal standards of behaviour throughout the school. This was demonstrated by Year 2 pupils' awareness of moral decisions during their relationship time session. They evaluated what was right to expect from another person, they trusted their friends to undertake decisions and shared whether this was right or wrong. Pupils understand and respect the rules and ethos of the school. Their interactions are based upon a dignified sense of respect for each and every member of their school community and the wider society. In interviews, pupils were quick to affirm they do not need to be told, that they know the difference between right and wrong and always treat others how they want to be treated.
- 3.18 Pupils display excellent social awareness and compassion. They support and encourage each other and celebrate everyone's successes. Almost all pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that pupils treat each other with respect. From the EYFS throughout, the children's learning is significantly enhanced by the consistent use of group activities where they encourage, listen and support each other. Pupils exhibit a strong sense of togetherness and awareness that success comes through collaboration and older pupils collaborate successfully in a way that benefits their knowledge and understanding. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors acknowledged that when you are working as a team, there is always someone as your back-up, to pick you up when you do something wrong. Pupils understand the importance of maintaining positive relationships with one another. They enjoy

friendly, open-hearted relationships and are always keen to demonstrate that they wish to do their best. There is a strong sense of mutual respect. For example, this was seen with Year 2 pupils who were aware of the various personalities in the class and worked well to listen to viewpoints and discuss their own ideas.

- 3.19 Pupils make sustained and outstanding contributions throughout the school and to the community around them. There are many opportunities for pupils of all ages to take on different roles of responsibility and they fulfil these roles with great pride and conscientiousness. Year 6 pupils take on a variety of responsible positions such as acting as helpers to the younger classes as well as table monitors in the dining hall. They provide excellent role models for the younger children. Pupils look out for each other and provide a wealth of support and encouragement. Pupils are enthusiastic about how they actively make changes via the school council, newly initiated by school leaders. Here, elected class representatives seek and put forward views when attending meetings and the pupils see this as a positive way to make change. Pupils understand the circumstances of those less fortunate than themselves and they are keen to help where they can. The Year 6 Enterprise project has seen pupils engage in successful initiatives, raising sums for a variety of charities. Last year pupils raised over £7,000.
- 3.20 Pupils show excellent levels of respect and tolerance for those around them, reflecting the school's valuing of the uniqueness of individual pupils and promotion of respect for diverse cultures. Pupils instinctively show appreciation for each other's differences, and this underpins the positive relationships between pupils of all ages. Pupils have an excellent and positive understanding of the similarities and differences between people of diverse faiths and cultures. They constantly refer to the school family. Leaders' and staff's promotion of the values of the school is extremely effective in enabling the pupils to recognise and develop their understanding of the diversity within their own community and the world generally. Pupils show tolerance, respect and understanding of those who do not share the school's central faith and help create a very welcoming community for all. Pupils explained: 'It is lovely here, where respect is two-way, where everyone is welcome and where there is no 'I' in team'. In the parental questionnaires, all parents agree that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance of other people.
- 3.21 Pupils are very aware of how to stay safe, both physically and emotionally. They demonstrate a strong understanding of staying safe online and recognise what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Pupils of all ages are confident when discussing healthy eating, having a balanced diet and keeping themselves physically fit. Pupils discussed healthy eating during lunchtime, reminding each other to eat their vegetables and fruit for their health. They nurture and care for each other and show a wealth of kindness and friendship, reflecting the ethos of the school. In an open and affirming environment, pupils care for each other at times of vulnerability and show kindness and friendship in abundance. Pupils know where to seek help and embrace a resilient approach to challenges that they may face. They have a robust sense of well-being and positive attitude to life.

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 a group of governors and attended form meetings 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

Mrs Julie Lowe	Reporting inspector
Mrs Jane Prescott	Compliance team inspector (Headteacher, GSA school)
Mrs Samantha Scott	Team inspector (Headteacher, ISA school)