

Gesher Primary Special School

The Hope Centre, 228 Walm Lane, Willesden, London NW2 3BS

Inspection dates

5–7 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The trustees, governors and leaders have established a school where pupils are happy and safe and make excellent progress.
- Governors and staff share a clear vision for the future of the school. Governors challenge leaders very effectively to ensure that the quality of education is consistently high. Together they have ensured that all the independent school standards have been met.
- Leaders are highly reflective and are always looking for ways to refine the strong practice throughout the school. They understand the importance of maintaining the high standards as the school continues to develop.
- All staff, including therapists, know each pupil extremely well. They work very effectively together to plan activities that engage pupils and meet their learning needs.
- Pupils make strong and sustained progress in their learning and development. Some have made remarkable progress, particularly in their social and communication development.
- Pupils learn a wide range of subjects. Activities are highly personalised to meet their individual needs. Teachers are skilled at using resources, including visual and communication tools, to enable pupils to access the curriculum.
- All staff put pupils' personal development and well-being at the centre of their work. As a result, pupils behave exceptionally well and make strong improvements in their levels of independence.
- Children make excellent progress in the early years. Staff monitor children's progress accurately to identify their next steps in learning. However, the outdoor area is not as engaging as the classrooms.
- Parents and carers are extremely happy. Many describe the school as 'life-changing'. They report that their children have made exceptional progress. They said that, for some pupils, this school is the first place they have felt safe, secure and included.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain the very high standards of teaching and learning as the school continues to develop.
- Strengthen the quality and use of the outdoor provision in the early years to enhance children's learning and development still further.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Trustees, governors and leaders share a clear vision for the school. Since the school opened in September 2017, they have worked exceptionally well together to establish a school that meets pupils' needs and enables them to make excellent progress. They have appointed a highly effective staff team that understands the ethos, values and vision which underpin the school's work.
- The headteacher is highly respected by staff and parents. Together with the deputy headteacher, she has established effective systems and procedures to ensure that teaching is consistently of the highest quality. Staff are very well supported to continually improve their practice. Leaders have invested heavily in staff training and development. Staff have regular opportunities to reflect on their work, share good practice and learn from each other.
- Leaders and governors evaluate the school's effectiveness astutely. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths. Strategy documents and improvement plans are used very effectively to continually improve all aspects of the school's work. Leaders understand the importance of maintaining the high standards of teaching and learning as the school develops.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching and pupils' learning very effectively. They lead by example and offer well-considered support and advice to staff. Therapists make an excellent contribution to staff development. For example, they lead regular training sessions and constant discussions about individual pupils, enabling teachers and teaching assistants to refine their strategies. All this is having a demonstrable impact on pupils' learning and development.
- The curriculum is extremely well planned to ensure that pupils experience a wide range of subjects. Staff skilfully link subjects together so that activities are purposeful in meeting pupils' needs.
- Subjects are taught through topics and themes, such as 'people who help us'. The curriculum is further enhanced by the expertise of therapists and teachers who know how to provide stimulating activities that help pupils achieve their individual goals.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities, including swimming, cooking and drama clubs, enable pupils to develop new and exciting interests, as well as improving their self-confidence and resilience. Outings to the local shops, the cinema and science and sensory activity centres make a strong contribution to pupils' well-being and their understanding of the world around them.
- Governors, leaders and other staff have created a school which is calm and purposeful. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education and a range of assemblies are used effectively to help pupils to learn about the Jewish faith, as well as other religions. The curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to learn about different families, to respect others and to value diversity.
- British values have been carefully woven into the curriculum. They ensure that pupils make decisions about their learning and have an opportunity to hear the views of others.

Recently, for example, pupils completed voting forms to decide which film to watch on their trip to the cinema.

- Parents are extremely positive about the school's work. Many parents describe the school as changing the lives of their children and families. Parents report that their children's needs were often misunderstood in previous settings and they are exceptionally thankful and relieved that this school has the knowledge, expertise, skills and resources to enable their children to enjoy happiness and success. As one parent said: 'This school is wonderful, my son is so happy and it's such a pleasure to know he is in the right environment and is being cared for, educated and nurtured.' This view was echoed by many other parents.

The school's application to make a material change to its registration

- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum, assessment procedures and policies are in place to cater for key stage 2 pupils. Building work is planned to take place during the summer holidays. This will create two additional classrooms, an additional therapy room and sufficient toilet facilities for girls and boys in key stage 2. The facilities and space available are more than adequate for the proposed increase in the number of pupils on roll from 14 to 40.
- The school is likely to meet the independent school standards if the Department for Education (DfE) approves the material change.

Governance

- The trustees of the school have worked closely with governors to ensure that the school meets all the independent school standards. Governors and trustees are highly ambitious for the school. Their long-term aim is to establish a special school that is a 'centre of excellence' that provides highly effective support for pupils and their families.
- Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and clear strategic plans are in place to improve the school further. They have very high expectations of all staff so that the school's aims are fulfilled. They visit the school regularly and know pupils and their families well.
- Governors bring a wide range of skills and expertise to their roles. They have established effective committees to monitor different aspects of the school's work. Governors take training and development seriously in order to hone their skills and expertise. They attend training regularly to keep up to date with current guidelines and to ensure that their checks on the quality of education provided are robust.
- The headteacher meets with governors regularly. Governors ask challenging questions to validate what they are told. Visits to the school enable governors to see for themselves the impact of leaders' actions. Staff, including therapists, share their expertise with governors, including through training sessions. There is a strong sense of teamwork, where governors work alongside staff to evaluate the school's effectiveness.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- The designated safeguarding lead makes sure that all staff know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil's welfare. Training is up to date and staff have a strong understanding of the latest legislation. The suitable safeguarding policy is published on the school's website and meets requirements.
- Leaders' pre-employment checks on staff are robust. The school's single central record of staff recruitment checks is up to date and complies with the current guidance. Leaders ensure that the risk assessment policy is followed so that pupils are safe in school and on educational visits. Pupils' individual needs are incorporated into all risk assessments.
- Leaders ensure that all training is personalised to the school's context. Staff have a clear understanding of how to safeguard the well-being of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Therapists, teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to help keep pupils safe in school. For example, they ensure that behaviour plans and individual education plans support pupils' care and welfare needs effectively.
- Leaders ensure that all staff know how to create a safe and calm environment for pupils. They use a range of communication techniques very effectively to enable pupils to share their feelings, wants and needs.
- All parents who responded to the Ofsted survey, Parent View, said that their children are safe at school. Pupils' responses to the school's surveys demonstrate that they feel safe in school and have a strategy to follow if they feel upset or worried.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress because they are extremely well taught.
- Leaders ensure that each pupil's needs and interests are understood well by staff. This is one of the reasons why pupils achieve excellent outcomes.
- Staff know pupils extremely well. Teachers ensure that work is very well matched to pupils' abilities so that all learning is purposeful and supports pupils' outcomes. Staff observe pupils' learning effectively and record their achievements diligently.
- Routines are very well established in each of the classes. These help pupils to feel safe and support their readiness for learning. Staff convey consistently high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. A range of systems that aid pupils' communication are used consistently well throughout the school. This ensures that pupils have continuity in their learning and develop the confidence to work with a range of adults.
- Staff promote pupils' speech, language and communication skills very effectively. They use resources and focused activities very well to extend pupils' language and vocabulary. They track pupils' progress in this area exceptionally well and provide plenty of encouragement and support. Throughout the school, staff use a consistent approach to demonstrating spoken language. Interactions between adults and pupils are highly effective.
- Staff bring learning to life by using interesting resources, including modern technologies, to engage pupils in high-quality learning experiences. In mathematics, pupils confidently use a range of number resources to help them to add and subtract. In science, pupils had

great fun identifying objects around the classroom that were made from different materials.

- Pupils' reading and writing skills are very well promoted. Staff take each pupil's starting points into account and plan activities each day that support pupils' fine motor and writing skills. Pupils read regularly and develop a love of reading.
- Pupils are set a range of challenging tasks that enable them to reach their full potential. For example, they learned about materials and could suggest reasons why the metal jug would be useful for hot milk and why some plastics are transparent. In reading, teachers challenge the most able pupils very effectively, including by asking questions that ask pupils to give reasons for their answers.
- Pupils' achievements are recorded in a variety of ways. Video clips and photographs are used very effectively to capture pupils' successes across the curriculum. The use of an online app enables parents to view their child's progress and contribute their learning.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of teaching in the school. Typical comments from parents included, 'The teachers work phenomenally hard to provide bespoke teaching for each child and the results are tremendous.'

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Parents report that their children are happy at school. For some, this is the first time they have been able to say this. As one parent reported: 'My son is extremely happy at Gesher, which is entirely down to the excellent care, attention and enthusiasm of everyone working there. We could not be happier.'
- Leaders, governors and all staff put pupils' personal development and welfare at the heart of their work. Staff encourage pupils' independence very effectively. They encourage pupils to try new activities and take manageable risks in a safe and secure way. Staff promote pupils' self-esteem continuously. They praise pupils' achievements consistently so that pupils know what they are doing well.
- Pupils have opportunities to take responsibility. Photograph galleries in each classroom show that pupils have jobs to do each day, such as recycling and sweeping. Staff help pupils to understand and manage their daily routines. Pupils know when to change their visual schedules and respond very well to countdowns when tasks are about to finish.
- Pupils' physical well-being is very well supported. Teachers make very good use of outdoor play, the soft-play room and weekly swimming lessons to support pupils' physical development. The well-resourced sensory rooms enrich pupils' learning and support their well-being.
- Staff are well trained in meeting pupils' social and emotional needs. In the Ofsted survey, all staff said that pupils behave well. Staff feel very well supported by leaders in all aspects of their work, but particularly in managing pupils' behaviour and emotional needs.
- School records show that there have been no bullying incidents. Leaders and staff use the curriculum very effectively to promote pupils' self-awareness and feelings. Pupils show

respect and kindness to others. For example, during a mathematics session, pupils helped each other, without being prompted by an adult, to find the correct coins needed to pay for the items in the shop.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Staff discuss pupils' learning behaviours regularly to find out the best ways to meet each pupil's needs. Pupils' personal behaviour plans are used very effectively by all staff. Staff are skilled at supporting pupils' behaviour and intervene skilfully to prevent a situation from escalating. Staff use different spaces well so that pupils can access a safe and calm place when they are feeling worried or anxious.
- Drama therapy is an integral part of the school's work. This, like other therapies, is used very effectively to promote pupils' well-being and help them to manage their feelings and behaviour. Therapists work closely with other staff to ensure that pupils' views are acknowledged and any barriers to learning are alleviated.
- Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and in the playground is excellent. They feel safe and secure and follow teachers' instructions very well. Staff join pupils' play and follow their interests and fascinations.
- Leaders have worked very effectively to ensure that rates of pupil absence are low. Leaders promote the importance of coming to school regularly through the website and regular newsletters. Many parents said that their children never want to miss a day at school and are sad when the school closes for the holidays.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress because teaching is highly effective at meeting their individual needs.
- Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stages of their learning. Staff continually check pupils' progress and achievements and tailor activities very effectively to help them to achieve their next steps. Teachers' meetings with leaders ensure that each pupil's strengths and next steps are identified and that any gaps in pupils' learning are swiftly addressed.
- Excellent collaboration between therapists, teachers and other professionals ensures that pupils achieve their best. Together, they provide activities that ensure that pupils make very strong gains in their social, emotional and physical development.
- Highly effective therapy sessions contribute significantly to pupils' progress. As a result, pupils of all abilities make excellent progress in their speech, language and communication development. Equally, occupational therapy is used very effectively to ensure that pupils develop their physical, sensory processing and self-care skills.
- Pupils make very good progress in acquiring skills across the curriculum, including in subjects such as science and art. They make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their individual starting points. Stimulating activities enable pupils to develop their phonics skills and an understanding of number, shape and measure.

- Pupils enjoy singing songs, listening to stories and using modern technologies to find out new information. This successfully broadens their vocabulary and supports their language development. Jewish studies are incorporated into the timetable effectively. Interesting tasks ensure that pupils develop the basic skills in reading and understanding Hebrew.
- Staff make sure that pupils are challenged to achieve their targets and goals. The most able pupils make very strong progress in their learning because staff know how and when to extend activities to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Parents are exceptionally positive about their children's progress since joining the school. Typical comments from parents include: 'Not only has he made progress with regards to his learning but, more importantly for me, he is happy, content and comfortable enough to develop and gain independence.'

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The high-quality provision in key stage 1 is also seen in the early years. Leaders make sure that children are happy, safe and settled. They meet regularly with staff to check on children's progress and monitor the quality of teaching and learning very effectively.
- Leaders have an excellent understanding of early years provision. Their evaluations on the quality of teaching and learning are accurate and well informed. Leaders have ensured that all statutory requirements for the early years, including those relating to safeguarding, are met.
- Teaching is highly effective because staff know children exceptionally well. Staff are very skilled in identifying children's next steps in their learning and supporting them to achieve their challenging targets.
- Therapists work closely with all early years staff to ensure that children's needs are known and understood well. They provide very effective training for staff and parents, which ensures continuity and a consistent approach to each child's care and learning.
- Teachers assess children's knowledge, skills and understanding when they first start. Assessment is used very effectively to monitor children's development over time. Planning is highly personalised to meet children's individual needs and interests. This enables them to make strong and sustained progress.
- Staff make learning fun. They use high-quality resources to help children engage in the planned activities. Technology is used very effectively to support pupils' learning. Visual prompts are used exceptionally well to support children's understanding of routines. As a result, children develop a strong understanding of what is happening throughout their day.
- Staff skilfully adapt activities to follow children's ideas and interests. Children enjoyed creating 'masterpieces' in art, choosing which craft materials they would like and using these to produce paintings of sunflowers.
- Children develop an understanding and enjoyment of books. The attractive reading area creates a quiet space for children to relax and explore different stories. They especially enjoy looking at the books they have made themselves, remembering the moments captured in photographs.

- The classroom is bright, attractive and engaging. It is set out very effectively to enable children to use independent workstations, spaces for group activities and areas where they can explore for themselves. Teachers ensure that children have regular use of the outdoor area. However, the outdoor area does not fully engage children in their learning and development.
- Children's behaviour is very well managed. All adults support children's social and emotional development effectively. They work with the therapy team to ensure that children's personal needs are fully met. Children are happy and behave exceptionally well.
- Staff use snack time to develop children's social skills. Children develop the confidence and independence to communicate their choices for snack each day. They use visual prompts to support their developing language skills and ask for different fruits, healthy snacks and water. This is a social occasion, where children sit together sensibly. Adults skilfully engage children in purposeful discussions about healthy lifestyles.
- Parents are fully involved in their children's learning. They are kept up to date using the online app and the school's website, where photographs, videos and explanations are regularly posted so that they can see the progress their children make. Staff lead sessions for parents and hold 'open mornings' so that parents can see how well their children are doing, and share ideas about how they can help their children at home.

School details

Unique reference number	144738
DfE registration number	304/6005
Inspection number	10044419

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

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	The Gesher Trust
Chair	Howard Zetter
Headteacher	Gianna Colizza
Annual fees (day pupils)	£31,500
Telephone number	020 7884 5102
Website	www.gesherschool.com
Email address	hello@gesherschool.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Gesher is a primary special school that caters for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Although the school's religious ethos is Jewish, it admits pupils from all faiths. Most pupils have speech, language, communication and social needs. The school specialises in supporting pupils who have autism spectrum disorder.
- The school opened in September 2017. Currently, there are two classes: one for children in the early years and one for pupils in key stage 1. Most pupils have an education, health and care plan and are funded by their local authority.
- This was the school's first standard inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place with one day's notice.
- At the request of the DfE, the inspector was asked to consider the school's application for a material change to increase the number of pupils on roll from 14 to 40, to increase the age range of pupils on roll from four to seven to four to 11 and to consider the suitability of the proposed new classrooms.
- As part of this inspection, the DfE commissioned Ofsted to consider the school's application to make a material change to its registration. The school applied to the DfE to increase the capacity to admit up to 40 pupils and to increase the age range of pupils from four to seven to four to 11.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning across all year groups and subjects. He spoke to pupils informally throughout the inspection and observed them at playtime and lunchtime.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to evaluate the effectiveness of leadership on teaching and learning. He met with all members of staff, including therapists, to discuss their roles and the impact of their work on pupils' learning and development.
- Meetings were held with the trustees and governors and with the educational psychologist. The inspector spoke to four parents during the inspection and considered the 19 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. He considered 10 responses to the staff survey.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work with teachers. He looked at records of pupils' learning, the online tool that captures their achievements and a variety of individual education plans and behaviour plans.
- The inspector considered the school's documentation relating to safeguarding, and scrutinised other policies and procedures to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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