



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION REPORT

THE GOWER SCHOOL

MAY 2018



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School College	The Gower School			
DfE number	206/6381			
EYFS number	131690			
Address	The Gower School 10 Cynthia Street Barnsbury London N1 9JF			
Telephone number	0207 7700 2445 (Nursery) 0207 7278 2020 (Primary)			
Email address	info@thegowerschool.co.uk			
Principal	Miss Emma Gowers			
Proprietor	Miss Emma Gowers			
Age range	0 to 11			
Number of pupils on roll	291			
	Boys	141	Girls	150
	EYFS	184	Juniors	107
Inspection dates	2 to 3 May 2018			

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 The Gower School is an independent nursery and primary school for boys and girls aged between 3 months and 11 years old. It occupies three sites in the London borough of Islington. The nursery school, which opened in 2000, occupies two buildings at the North Road site and the primary school, which opened in 2007, educates children from Reception until Year 6 at a site about a mile and a half away. The school is accredited by the Montessori Schools Association (MEAB). It is a private limited company run by a sole proprietor who is also the principal of the school.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection the school has opened a new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) building at the North Road site, which includes a dance studio, classroom space, a library and a kitchen. At the primary school a new central library has been created, a science lab has been built and new classroom spaces developed.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to enable its pupils to be happy, confident learners who are thoughtful, considerate and self-motivated so that they can achieve their potential.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from mainly professional families who live locally and reflect the international character of London. The school's own assessment indicates that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 20 pupils as having special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND) which include speech and language delay, sensory processing and other difficulties. One pupil has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for 29 pupils in the nursery and 31 pupils in the primary school. They are supported by their classroom teachers. The school identifies 14 pupils as being more able in some areas of learning and the curriculum is modified for them.

2. REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports 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. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such 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.

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 full regulations 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, the 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 uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 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 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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

- 2.9 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required.
- 2.10 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

- 2.11 Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils and appropriate accommodation for their 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.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.13 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include 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 those with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, and 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.

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

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.15 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.

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

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.17 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.

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

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

- 2.19 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is outstanding.
- 2.20 Children under two make rapid progress relative to their starting points and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Excellent care and planning meets the needs of all the children.
- 2.21 Children are happy, safe and secure within their nurturing environment. Requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare have been fully met, and staff work together as a strong and successful team who fulfil their responsibilities and protect the children in their care.
- 2.22 Leadership and management are a strength of the setting. Practitioners rigorously evaluate and reflect on their practice, ensuring continuous improvement. The recommendation from the previous inspection has been fully implemented.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

- 2.23 The effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding.
- 2.24 Leaders and nursery practitioners work together as an extremely effective and successful team with an ambitious vision for their setting. They have high expectations of what babies and children under two can achieve in their learning and development.
- 2.25 Key people find systems for supervision meetings very supportive and positive in helping them improve their role with parents and pupils. Staff feel they are listened to and appreciate the many opportunities they have for appropriate professional development. All staff attend 'Tiny Talk Signing' training to promote early language skills.
- 2.26 All practitioners are now involved in robust continuous evaluation of their provision. EYFS leaders have regular and effective meetings with all key people who jointly contribute their own ideas and views to enable the setting to improve further, thus meeting a recommendation at the previous inspection. Parents' views are sought in annual questionnaires and leaders act upon the responses to these. The pre-inspection questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive, and parents spoken to during the inspection were extremely happy with every aspect of the first stage of their children's education. They greatly appreciate the parent partnership, the caring staff and the family atmosphere of the setting.
- 2.27 Learning programmes meet all the statutory requirements. Staff plan a range of exciting experiences, both indoors and outside, according to children's needs and interests. These focus on the prime areas of learning in conjunction with the Montessori curriculum, ensuring a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children's progress is carefully tracked. Rising twos enjoy digging for treasure and finding a mouse house with specialist teachers in the forest section of the park. Whilst the setting's garden area provides opportunities for outdoor play, it does not reflect the same level of vibrancy and stimulation as the indoor areas.
- 2.28 Leaders actively promote equality and diversity and British values of tolerance and respect in daily practice. Children's diversity is celebrated, for example, through their participation in Chinese New Year, Holi and Hanukah activities and International food week. Positive behaviour is celebrated and encouraged during daily activities.
- 2.29 Exemplary arrangements for safeguarding are a strength of the setting; all staff are well trained in child protection, paediatric first aid and prevent training. They understand procedures to be followed in the event of a concern. Adult to child ratios are very high. Children's safety is a high priority and daily risk assessments are carried out.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- 2.30 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.

- 2.31 Children's needs are at the heart of the setting; staff planning supports and challenges every child and identifies their next steps.
- 2.32 Practitioners have an excellent understanding of the EYFS curriculum and how it is delivered to under-twos. Staff are experts in promoting learning, self-esteem, and a sense of achievement as well as problem-solving skills, as in the Montessori practical life activities, where children progress with their pouring skills until they can pour their milk successfully at snack time. Key people facilitate toddlers' success in putting on their own coats, by laying them out on the floor first.
- 2.33 Assessment procedures are thorough and highly effective throughout the setting. After parents' initial visit to the setting, room leaders make a home visit before their child joins. Staff assess using 'My Montessori Child' and post daily activity records along with photo observations depicting progress. Parents can access these online, adding their own input if they wish. The SENCO will, if required, support children in partnership with parents to ensure that all children make good progress.
- 2.34 Staff interact with children effectively to encourage, support and praise their efforts and achievements, such as during lunchtime when emphasising vegetable names, reinforcing and modelling how to use a fork successfully and demonstrating how to hold a beaker securely when drinking water. Babies and toddlers have free flow access to a covered decked area and are safely guided over a step to access it. Resources are carefully chosen to promote physical development, such as the mini staircase in the baby rooms, cause and effect toys, and wheeled toys outside.
- 2.35 Parents are very happy with the information they receive. The annual report is comprehensive and helpful, giving individual targets for children to further their learning. Children are well prepared for the age two to three progress check which is fully discussed with parents. Regular newsletters inform parents of their children's achievements. Parents have opportunities to attend open evenings, workshops, the termly 'empowered parenting' course and the 'Tiny Talk Signing' courses. They are invited to participate in the termly 'eat at school' week. They greatly appreciate the setting's open-door policy.
- 2.36 Children are taught to respect and support one another, and staff utilise the setting's grouping strategy to take advantage of opportunities to reinforce such behaviour. Resources representing a range of cultures celebrate diversity, such as multilingual signs and books in other languages, to support those children with EAL.
- 2.37 Well-planned teaching supports all children to develop their communication, physical, social and emotional skills, thus enabling them to be ready to progress to the next stage of their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- 2.38 The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children are outstanding.
- 2.39 All staff work together as an extremely successful and committed team who create a calm and nurturing environment where children are happy and secure, yet confident to take risks. For example, key people promote safe climbing as they support and celebrate the achievement of under-twos who persevere and finally succeed in climbing the ladder to the wooden house in the garden.
- 2.40 Staff expertly promote imaginative play and exploration. Children are confident to choose their own activities, they enjoy accessing stimulating resources to observe, handle and play with, such as their treasure baskets. There are many opportunities for children to become independent and responsible. For instance, the 'special helper' brings in a snack for the class, sets it out on the table and announces that it is ready.
- 2.41 Staff plan transition procedures highly effectively and with the utmost care. They ensure that children experience transition as a gradual process geared for each individual. For example, room leaders observe which key person a child bonds with on their visits, and this is taken into account.

- 2.42 Children build very secure and loving relationships with key people and all staff in their room. Babies delight in cuddles, putting their arms up to be held by their carers when they are being praised for their achievements on the mini-staircase. Crying babies who are settling in are comforted and quickly distracted by their key person who knows exactly which resource is going to divert their attention and help them feel at ease. Attendance is regularly and promptly checked.
- 2.43 Behaviour is exemplary. Staff are very positive role models who praise good behaviour, always emphasise 'kind hands' and encourage children to take turns. Good manners are promoted at all times. Care is taken to ensure that children learn how to keep themselves safe.
- 2.44 The setting prides itself on healthy menus. Children thoroughly enjoy their snack and lunchtime experiences. They have many opportunities to exercise in the outdoor areas and in the local park. Under-twos participate in races at the EYFS sports day.
- 2.45 Staff prepare children to respect and care for one another. The setting's grouped classes help older children to be role models and younger ones observe and learn from them. Children enjoy visits from the fire brigade, police and parents who come in to talk to them.

Outcomes for children

- 2.46 Outcomes for children are outstanding.
- 2.47 All children make excellent progress in relation to their different starting points. For example, children happily become absorbed in activities, showing excellent perseverance and concentration skills, for example when using tweezers to pick up and move small pompoms. They love sharing books with carers. Toddlers can sort and match simple shapes, and play sessions develop focus and hand-eye coordination with the youngest babies, as they handle and post objects into a cylinder, as well as introducing early counting skills. Children show a high level of independence, such as when they eat their lunch using a fork, they scrape their plates and stack them, wiping their own mouths afterwards.
- 2.48 Children meet, and most exceed, the level of development that is typical for their age. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Compliance with statutory requirements

- 2.49 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.**

Recommendation(s) for further improvement

The school is advised to make the following improvement(s) to its provision for children in the early years.

- Provide more opportunities to promote imagination and encourage exploration in the outside area.

3. INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mrs Kate McCarey	Reporting inspector
Mrs Karen Stroud	Compliance team inspector (Compliance officer, ISA school)
Mrs Bridget Forrest	Co-ordinating inspector for early years