

North Bridge House Prep School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Elizabeth Linley HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

North Bridge House Prep School is a selective independent day school for pupils from eight to 13 years of age. It is one of four schools in the North Bridge House School group that are run by Cognita Limited. The school was opened in its current premises in Camden, north London in 1987 and shares the site with North Bridge House Senior School. There are 289 pupils on roll and none has a statement for special educational needs. The school is divided into Lower Prep for boys and girls in Years 4 and 5, plus girls in Year 6, and the Upper Prep for boys in Years 6, 7 and 8. Girls are prepared for the 11 plus examination and boys for Common Entrance and scholarships at the age of 13. The school aims to treat each child as an individual and to help them to be confident, fulfil their academic potential and be prepared for entry to their senior school. The school was last inspected in March 2008.

Evaluation of the school

North Bridge House Prep School provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils and successfully meets its aims. As a result of outstanding teaching and an outstanding curriculum, pupils make outstanding progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, their behaviour and the provision for their welfare, health and safety are also outstanding. At the time of the last inspection, one regulation was not met which was addressed immediately so that procedures for safeguarding, and their implementation, are now rigorous. All regulatory requirements except two are met. Currently the school does not have sufficient shower facilities for the number of pupils aged 11 years or above and it does not have appropriate facilities to meet the needs of pupils who become ill while at school.

Quality of education

The school provides an outstanding curriculum that is rich and varied for all pupils. It is made up of a wide range of subjects, including French, plus Latin and Greek which are taught to the older boys in preparation for Common Entrance and scholarship examinations. The pupils' interest and participation in art is developed through art

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

competitions, an art club, and exhibitions of their work in school, while local artists are invited to take part in the art education programme. Music is an integral part of the school curriculum with a large choir, an orchestra, over 150 children playing instruments and a series of informal and formal concerts'.

Sports education has been enhanced through expanding the range of sports on offer, the purchase of new equipment and by increasing the number of competitive matches. Pupils enjoy many enrichment and extra-curricular activities that include day and residential visits, after-school clubs such as music, debating, chess, street dance and science, and set themes during the year for the Lower Prep such as science week and book week.

Provision for personal, social and health education is delivered through a life-skills and citizenship programme plus the school's pastoral system. This produces confident, well-motivated and enthusiastic pupils who display a maturity often beyond their years. The school has developed a comprehensive set of policies and detailed schemes of work for the curriculum. They are reviewed annually to ensure they continue to meet pupils' needs. A rigorous academic approach is applied to the curriculum; classes are streamed from Year 5 upwards. Although the school is selective, it will accept pupils with learning needs that are assessed as 'mild'. Where appropriate, individual education plans are developed and reviewed weekly by the class and subject teachers, and then reviewed with parents, carers and pupils at the start and end of term. The head of study support oversees this process and maintains regular dialogue with the pupils and teachers to ensure that targets for improvement are appropriate to pupils' needs, and are followed up. Additional support when required is provided by study support teachers and teaching assistants. The curriculum overall has a clear impact on teaching and pupils' progress and helps to secure high standards in both.

Teaching and assessment are outstanding; central to achieving this outcome is the drive for improvement provided by senior leaders in school. For example, the staff are supported by a substantial training programme and influence its priorities through professional development groups. Staff appraisals are rigorous and involve self-assessment and the pupils' assessments of their teachers, when they consider whether lessons are fun and where teaching could be better. Such action underpins the high quality of teaching and the outstanding progress that pupils make. Strengths of teaching include: very good subject knowledge; excellent pace to lessons; the promotion of pupils' thinking skills through probing questioning and pupils' assessment of their own and others' work. Pupils confirm that they find the very challenging tasks fun, and their work shows that very good links are made between subjects to enhance their learning. Pupils' engagement and attitudes are excellent and this secures rapid progress in lessons. Their achievements are exemplified by the results; for example, annually, every child taking external exams gains entry to a senior school and in the majority of cases to the school of their choice and many pupils obtained scholarships to other schools

Assessment has improved since the last inspection. Assessment data is rigorously recorded and analysed by senior leaders to identify where pupils need support, and conversations are held with staff to ensure that pupils are making the required progress to pass the assessments and tests they will take. Lessons are modified as required and support is planned where needed. However, access to the assessment recording system by all staff is in development and, as with the use of assessment strategies to aid pupils' learning in lessons, some staff are more confident than others and are not yet fully involved in the analysis of the data gathered.

Pupils' self-assessment is a strong feature of the school's work from Year 4 to Year 8. Pupils measure their progress against their targets. They assess each other and, by talking to partners or through group discussion, they probe what they have achieved and what could be done better. Marking is effective, providing support and an evaluation of work against the targets set. Pupils know how to improve their work and say that reports home to parents and carers also provide a clear indication of what their attainment and effort are and how they can get even better.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' attendance is good and their attitudes to school are exceptionally positive, as shown in lessons and their participation in the many after-school clubs, year group musicals, adventure camps and sporting activities. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They get on very well with each other and know whom to approach in school on the rare occasions when they fall out. Pupils have pride in their school and enjoy showing visitors around and making them feel welcome. They also contribute to school life through the school council and the posts of responsibility held, for example in the different houses.

Pupils are respectful and considerate of each other and their teachers. They show an appreciation of the diverse needs of the local community; their involvement in charities such as 'QK House' and 'Noah's Ark' and their initiative to organise and run fundraising events are particularly impressive. Through the life-skills programme, pupils learn about national institutions and public services and they develop an understanding and appreciation of major faiths, beliefs and other cultures through the wider curriculum. There is a special international day to celebrate the different nationalities represented in school and this contributes very well to the promotion of tolerance and harmony among groups with different cultural traditions. The pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education. They demonstrate their knowledge of a wide range of issues very well and clearly develop the independence and ability to develop and pursue new interests to a high level.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Staff training in safeguarding, first aid and fire safety is rigorous. Similarly, the school's approach to

conducting risk assessments is equally as thorough, for example for fire safety, the premises, educational visits and off-site activities. Pupils receive a highly effective level of supervision both on and off site, as shown when using Regent's Park, which is local to the school, at break times and for sporting activities. Pupils confirm that they feel very safe in school and appreciate the security that the school provides, for example to gain entry to the site. Equally, they appreciate the high quality pastoral care which they receive if they become ill at school and the way in which any behavioural issues are dealt with; action taken reflects the very effective implementation of the school's policies for the promotion of good behaviour and anti-bullying. Pupils talk with confidence about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They understand the need to have a balanced diet and confirm that the lunches provided reflect this requirement. Equally, they know the importance of keeping fit and they very much enjoy the range of sporting activities the curriculum provides and the many extra-curricular sporting activities that are available.

The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

All appropriate checks for the appointment of staff and others are carried out to ensure their suitability to work with children. The checks are recorded in a single central register as required.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school's premises provide a suitable environment that is safe and secure and enables pupils to work and have recreational time. Although the playground is small, use is made of the nearby Regent's Park to facilitate games and break times. Since the last inspection, much investment has been made by Cognita to develop and refurbish areas of the school. This includes: a new reception area, two music rooms, two suites for information and communication technology, two music practice rooms, a new study support room, and a refurbished gym, chapel and library. However, facilities to meet pupils' needs should they become ill at school do not meet requirements. Similarly, there are insufficient showers available to be used after sporting activities for the number of pupils aged 11 years and over.

Provision of information

The provision of information for parents and carers meets all requirements. A broad and effective range of information is provided, for example through a helpful booklet for parents and others and a website that keeps parents and carers regularly updated about the school's work. Parent and carer representatives for each form also regularly meet with the headteacher. Through questionnaires, parents and carers expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school. However, they are concerned

that they find it difficult to make contact with the school by telephone. Senior leaders are aware of this issue and are seeking to remedy the problem as soon as possible.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's procedures for handling complaints meet all the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations') with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure that appropriate facilities are provided for pupils who are ill, in accordance with regulation 5 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(k))
- ensure that sufficient showers are available for pupils aged 11 years of age and above, which take account of regulations 3 and 4 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(j)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- develop the staff's expertise to access the systems used to track pupils' progress so they are fully involved in the analysis of the data gathered
- develop the teachers' confidence to use a wide range of assessment strategies in lessons so that all lessons reflect the best practice in school.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education	✓			
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs	✓			
How well pupils make progress in their learning	✓			

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils	✓			
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Independent day school		
Date school opened	1987		
Age range of pupils	8–13 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 172	Girls: 117	Total: 289
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,390		
Address of school	1 Gloucester Ave, London, NW1 7AB		
Telephone number	0207 267 6266		
Email address	Brodie.bibby@northbridgehouse.com		
Headteacher	Brodie Bibby		
Proprietor	Cognita		