

Clifton Lodge School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett

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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

Clifton Lodge is an independent preparatory school for boys and girls aged three to 13 years. It was opened in September 1979 and currently provides education for 94 pupils. The school is part of the Cognita Group and occupies a large Victorian detached house in a residential area of Ealing. Pupils are prepared for a range of public and scholarship examinations and nearly all transfer to the senior school of their choice at 13. A few pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders, specific learning difficulties and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. A small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are educated in a single Reception class. No children in the class are in receipt of government funding.

The current headteacher was appointed in May 2011 following the sudden resignation of the previous headteacher. The school was last inspected in May 2008.

The school's motto is 'Optime', which means 'always do your very best'. It aims to provide 'an education that is vibrant, focusing equally on the core skills in literacy, numeracy and the sciences, whilst producing civilised human beings who fully appreciate the arts and culture.'

Evaluation of the school

Clifton Lodge provides a good quality of education and is an improving school. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is also good. Leaders have dealt well with the recommendations identified in the last report. The school now meets all of the regulatory requirements for independent schools. As a result of good teaching and a broad and engaging curriculum, pupils make good progress in their learning and personal development, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Safeguarding arrangements are good and pupils are well looked after; nearly all say they enjoy school and this is endorsed by parents and carers. Behaviour is good and pupils take part enthusiastically in all the school has to offer.

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good and meets pupils' needs effectively. It is based on the National Curriculum and there is a strong emphasis on sports and music. Pupils are also able to study French and Latin and take additional instrumental lessons if required. Pupils are prepared successfully to sit a range of national and local entrance examinations for the move to their next school. All areas of learning are suitably covered, including a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills, science and information and communication technology. However, insufficient emphasis is placed on developing pupils' handwriting and presentation skills and, as a consequence, they do not make as much progress in this aspect as in other areas of English. A good programme is in place to promote pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE), which also contributes effectively to improving their spiritual, moral and cultural development. Pupils' artistic talents are nurtured well and a high standard of artwork is achieved. Music is also an important strength and the school choir performs to a high standard. The extra-curricular programme is strong, with pupils being able to choose from a range of lunchtime and after-school activities including politics, chess, sports and drama. The curriculum provides the opportunity for all pupils to learn well and make good progress.

Teaching and assessment are good, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and pupils say that they mostly enjoy their lessons. Teachers have thorough subject knowledge and prepare resources well. Their planning ensures that they take account of the broad range of pupils' needs and class sizes are small enough to ensure excellent levels of individual support. A special needs coordinator provides interventions outside the classroom in reading, writing and numeracy, usually on a one-to-one basis. This ensures that lower attaining pupils progress well and are able to achieve at least age-related expectations by the time they leave. Expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour are high. Pupils say they enjoy lessons most when they are involved in practical activities. Several instances of outstanding teaching were seen, notably in music and mathematics. The best lessons move at a brisk pace and engage the pupils because the subject matter is relevant and interesting. There was one instance when behaviour management was over-reactive, pupils lost concentration and the pace of the lesson slowed. Since the last inspection, teachers provide a greater range of opportunities for pupils to learn collaboratively and use their own ideas. Resources are mainly of good quality and are sufficient in quantity and range to ensure the current curriculum can be implemented, although outdoor resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not as wide-ranging as they could be.

Progress in lessons and over time is good. This is shown by pupils' work in books and by regular assessments made by the school. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, make good progress against their individual targets because they receive effective learning support. The same is true of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Work is marked well and teachers' comments usually indicate what pupils need to do to improve. Good use is made of standardised tests to track pupils' attainment and progress. The school also sets its own internal examinations, which prepare pupils effectively for their future education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school continues to provide a strong emphasis on building pupils' confidence and raising their self-esteem. Their increasing maturity is evident as they progress through the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are well focused, serving as good ambassadors for the school. Almost all pupils say that they enjoy their time at Clifton Lodge. Their attendance is good and they are aware of the high expectations placed upon them. Strong relationships exist between staff and pupils and between the majority of pupils themselves. Behaviour is good overall. However, pupils informed the inspection team of some occasional rough play at break times and inspectors observed some minor incidents of this nature themselves. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong, and the few who struggle to conform to the school rules are supported well. There are many opportunities for pupils to take on additional responsibilities and they take these very seriously. For example, pupils are chosen by their peers to become school council members and are chosen by staff to be prefects and monitors for particular tasks. There are strong links with other schools in both the independent and maintained sectors. This provides opportunities for sports fixtures and tournaments and for helping others who may have different needs from themselves.

The school encourages pupils to become involved in various charitable events, including fundraising. School assemblies celebrate pupils' achievements in all areas of their development, not just their academic achievement. Opportunities for reflection occur regularly in the PSHE syllabus and in assemblies. Religious studies and the Scripture Union club enable pupils to examine their own beliefs and those of others. The school makes good use of the multicultural nature of the school to celebrate different festivals and 'special days'. Their cultural awareness is raised through the curriculum, the regular visits out of school and the range of visitors to the school. The programme for developing pupils' knowledge of public institutions and services is an appropriate one, and it is enhanced through the politics club and PSHE and citizenship lessons.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Pupils' welfare, health and safety are good. There are effective procedures in place for child protection, which are covered well by members of staff who have been appropriately trained. The school has the full range of policies in place as required by the regulations and they are implemented effectively. Pupils confirm that they feel safe and know whom to turn to if they have concerns, and that these are appropriately and quickly dealt with. The school has good arrangements for supervising visitors to the site. Pastoral support from form tutors is good. There are

regular risk assessments of all areas of the school, including those used by the Early Years Foundation Stage, and prior to school visits. Pupils are taught how to conduct themselves responsibly and to work and play safely around others. There is a good level of fire safety, and fire drills have been regularly practised and are suitably recorded. The attendance and admissions registers are kept in accordance with regulatory requirements. The school's safeguarding and safer recruitment policy and practice are in full accordance with the regulations. The school fulfils its duties under the Equalities Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

There is a well-maintained electronic single central record. All of the required checks are carried out on staff and others, including a Criminal Records Bureau check, to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. The school has also been diligent in ensuring that foreign nationals are eligible to work in this country and have been cleared by their own safeguarding authorities where necessary.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises and accommodation used for the school are appropriate for effective learning. The main school is housed on three floors, with suitable specialist rooms for special educational needs, science and art. There is a small hall at the front of the school that is used for assemblies and music lessons. A small library is also used for individual music tuition. A smaller internal hall is used appropriately for dining. There is also a well-equipped kitchen that is kept scrupulously clean and meets high standards, as confirmed by the local environmental health officer.

The school has a reasonable-sized playground and uses an adjoining park for some outdoor activities. There is appropriate provision in the main building should pupils become ill. Site security is effective and maintained efficiently.

Provision of information

All of the required information is provided, or is made available, to parents, carers and others. The school provides a good amount of clear information for parents and carers, for example, through its prospectus and its helpful website which signposts more detailed information available in school. Parents and carers say they are happy with the opportunities available to them to discuss their children's progress, and they report that there is daily and close contact when required. Written reports fulfil requirements to keep parents, carers and others informed about their children's attainment and progress. Almost all of the parental questionnaires returned were positive in their response. There were no discernible trends in the negative responses, although some isolated concerns were expressed on the quality of homework and playground behaviour. There was praise for how closely the school works with parents and carers when a problem arises. Most parents and carers believe their children are happy and that the school is meeting their needs well. A typical comment was, 'We are very happy with the school; it is a real community.'

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints policy and procedures meet regulatory requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children's individual starting points are broadly typical for their age and they make good progress. Outcomes are good. By the time children enter Year 1, their skills and abilities usually exceed those expected in the required six areas of learning. Children learn to become independent and make choices about their learning. They progress particularly well in their understanding of the links between sounds and letters and in early reading because of the rigorous way in which these skills are taught.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Adults know the children well through the regular assessments of their needs and interests. Staff provide positive role models and ensure that children are secure and are cared for well. There is a good range of learning activities in the Reception classroom, which is well adapted to the needs of young children. However, while the activities offered in the outdoor area are satisfactory, they are not wide-ranging. There are occasions when children do not have sufficient opportunities to initiate their own learning outdoors. Parents and carers are involved in their children's education, and feel well informed and part of the school family. Leadership and management are good and staff increase their expertise by undertaking relevant training. Leadership at the strategic level evaluates how well children progress in each area of learning throughout their time in this phase and ensures that improvements are driven forward as quickly as possible. There are ambitious plans to improve the learning environment and expand the school's provision.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Improve pupils' standards of handwriting and presentation so that it matches the otherwise good attainment in English, by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to practise their handwriting skills across the curriculum
 - placing greater emphasis on ensuring that pupils present their work neatly in books and when it goes on display.

- Eliminate the small amount of rough play at break times, by:
 - ensuring that pupils are directed to more worthwhile activities
 - providing more playground equipment to engage their interest.
- Improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage outside area, by:
 - introducing a wider range of activities
 - offering more opportunities for the children to initiate their own learning.

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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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage		✓		

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Date school opened	1 September 1979		
Age range of pupils	3–13 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 77	Girls: 15	Total: 92
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 1	Girls: 1	Total: 2
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,930 – £10,755		
Address of school	8 Mattock Lane Ealing London W5 5BG		
Telephone number	020 8579 3662		
Email address	info@cliftonlodgeschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	David Baldwin		
Proprietor	Cognita School Ltd		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

3 December 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Clifton Lodge School, Ealing W5 5BG

Thank you so much for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed looking at what you do and how well you are learning. The school council was very helpful by honestly telling us what it thought. In nearly all of the lessons we went in to, we saw you working hard and enjoying what you were doing. Yours is a good school and your teachers do a good job. They make sure you have an interesting curriculum and plenty of exciting clubs to go to. Everyone makes sure you are kept safe and that you develop well personally. I was especially impressed with your singing and the good art work around the school. The children in the Reception class enjoy their activities and get on well with each other.

We have asked the school to think about improving a few things. First of all we noticed that quite a few of you have untidy handwriting and do not set your work out neatly. This spoils your otherwise good work in English. We have asked your teachers to help you by giving some extra support to help you write neatly and make your work look tidy. You can help them by practising your handwriting patterns and thinking hard about how to make your work look attractive. Another thing that you yourselves mentioned was rough play during break time. We noticed this too and have asked the school to provide you with more games equipment and interesting things to do. You can help them, as you suggested, by organising games yourselves and avoiding getting too rough. The last thing we have suggested is that the school reorganises the outdoor area for Reception by providing more outside activities. Children in Reception can help by making good choices about which activities they do.

I am sure that you all want to make your school better, so I am sure you will want to do the things I have suggested. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Dennett
Lead inspector