

# Hill House School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

Hill House School is an international preparatory school in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London. It is registered to admit boys and girls aged four to thirteen years. There are currently 986 pupils on roll. They are taught at five different sites. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in Reception classes. There is no nursery provision. No children are in receipt of government funding. The school is much larger than most preparatory schools. Current pupils come from over 50 different countries, although few are at an early stage of acquiring English. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The school was founded in Switzerland in 1949 and established in London in 1951. It aims to educate the children for a world community by helping them to understand that all nations depend on one another, to learn to live alongside children of other nationalities, and to gain respect for that which is unknown and often very foreign to them, and thus open the doors to belong to a world which each day becomes smaller. The school was last inspected in 2009. It received visits in March and September 2010 to monitor progress on the regulations that had not been met.

## Evaluation of the school

Hill House School continues to provide a good quality of education and to meet its aims. The good curriculum and good quality of teaching enable pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to make good progress. Most pupils go on to high attaining public schools. Pupils' behaviour and their personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. The school's provision for safeguarding pupils, and for their welfare, health and safety, has improved and is now good. The regulations not met at the time of the last inspection are now met. All regulatory requirements, except two, are met. Those not met relate to the premises and the provision of information.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It incorporates an exceptionally broad range of enrichment activities and subjects that are mostly taught by specialist teachers. The range includes English, verbal reasoning, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, geography, history, religious knowledge, physical

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

education, art, music, drama, Latin and French. Swimming, squash and fencing are some of the sports that are timetabled. Friday afternoon clubs include a wide range of activities such as football, cricket, tennis, squash, horse riding, art, chess, singing and cooking. Pupils can learn to play a variety of musical instruments or join the choir. They perform for the local community and engage in sports fixtures with other schools. The standard of attainment in music and sport is high. Pupils frequently visit the school's annex in Switzerland. The school is increasing its provision of visitors and visits to help pupils to see the relevance of their studies, for example, through links with the Science Museum. The curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage covers all of the required areas of learning. Pupils are prepared well for the Common Entrance Examinations at 11 plus and 13 plus.

While the breadth of provision is exceptional, the curriculum overall is not outstanding. This is because schemes of work and lesson plans, while satisfactory, vary in quality and do not promote consistently rapid progress throughout the school and across all subjects. Curriculum planning, including for personal, social and health education (PSHE), does not provide for continuity and progression across all school sites. Suitable provision is made for PSHE in subjects such as science and life orientation lessons.

The quality of teaching and assessment is mostly good, although it ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Teachers are highly committed. They stated in the questionnaires they returned to inspectors that they would value more professional development. They have excellent subject knowledge and high expectations, and promote pupils' positive attitudes to learning. They nurture mutually respectful relationships. This gives pupils the confidence to contribute to lessons. In the most effective lessons, pupils are challenged to think and learn independently through practical tasks such as investigation and by the teacher's probing questions. One example is a science lesson in Year 8, where pupils investigated the reactions of different acids and carbonates, and tested for carbon dioxide gas. They organised their work efficiently in teams, and made good use of literacy and numeracy skills, as in measuring the amount of chemicals, recording and presenting their findings, and in writing word equations.

Pupils say that they enjoy investigating, researching and presenting their findings, for example in science and in using the internet to research topics for geography. They would like more opportunities to apply their independent learning skills, and more varied resources in other lessons. Inspectors found some over-use of worksheets in some lessons. Pupils also say that they make most progress in subjects such as English, where the teacher's written feedback enables them to know what to do to improve their work. The quality of teachers' marking across subjects varies and leads to some variation in rates of progress. A few of the 101 pupils surveyed indicated that some teachers did not explain how they could achieve more. However, pupils were overwhelmingly positive about the quality of teaching.

Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage assess children's progress appropriately using the Foundation Stage Profile. They use the assessments to match work to the differing needs of the children in lessons, enabling all to make good

progress. However, they do not evaluate the profiles to show the proportion of children attaining expected or better scores for each early learning goal, to monitor whether progress is consistent across all areas. The progress of older pupils is assessed through regular testing. Most, although not all, teachers make effective use of the test results to challenge individual pupils in lessons to make good and sometimes outstanding progress. The assessments are not recorded at whole-school level to promote consistent progress across all subjects.

While progress in lessons varies from satisfactory to outstanding, it is mostly good and enables pupils to pass the Common Entrance Examinations and attain places at high attaining public schools. Specialist support for pupils with additional needs or who speak English as an additional language is too recent to secure their outstanding progress. Policy and procedures are not developed fully to increase teachers' confidence and skills in meeting the needs of all pupils, as indicated in the staff questionnaires. The 56 parents and carers who completed Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were very positive about the quality of teaching and progress.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Provision for pupils' personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' attitude to school is exceptionally positive, as shown in their attendance, obvious enjoyment and willingness to participate in lessons and the broader range of school activities. They are very courteous to others and proud of their contribution to the school and the wider community, especially in music and sport but also in raising funds for charity. Their knowledge of their own and other cultures is particularly strong and in this the school meets its aims. Pupils show high levels of care, respect and consideration for each other's cultural traditions and viewpoints. In a whole-school church service, they engaged very well in reflecting on the importance of helping others. The wide range of activities develops pupils' interests very well and provides opportunities for individuals to find something in which they can excel and develop their self-esteem. Their growing self-confidence is demonstrated in their willingness to use their initiative, to take responsibility and to make decisions about their future. Older pupils show confidence and maturity in their conversations with adults. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop strong relationships with others and respect and tolerate each other's differences. All children show that they are developing a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Older children say they feel safe at school and they are confident to share concerns with their teachers. This is confirmed by pupil, parent and carer surveys.

Pupils' consistently thoughtful and outstanding behaviour is a key factor in their successful learning and creates an extremely positive school ethos. Pupils are highly considerate and very supportive of each other in lessons and around the school. They encourage each other to conduct themselves well. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage demonstrate exceptionally positive behaviour and high levels of self-control.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Good quality care is seen in the high level of commitment of staff and their competence in promoting pupils' health and safety. Pupils are well supervised in school and on trips. Many staff have been trained in first aid and pupils are supported effectively by the school nurses. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, all adults are well deployed to support children's learning and welfare and all requirements are met. Safer recruitment checks have been carried out appropriately. Pupils have made strong friendships. They say that incidents of bullying are rare and if any do occur, teachers deal with them swiftly and effectively. Procedures to promote outstanding behaviour are very effective and result in a calm environment for learning. Since the last inspection, arrangements for the safeguarding and health and safety of pupils have been improved. The child protection policy is up to date and all staff have been trained at the appropriate level. Risk assessments, including for fire and educational visits, are carried out carefully. Fire drills are completed and recorded in all buildings, and rigorously in most. Admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained in accordance with requirements. Given that the school is housed in listed buildings with many stairs, its accessibility plan includes reasonable adjustments for potential pupils with disabilities.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

All of the required checks on the suitability of staff and the proprietors to work with children, including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks, have been carried out and they are recorded appropriately in a single central register. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The school is housed in five attractive, appropriately maintained and secure separate sites in central London. It makes effective use of the small classrooms and well-equipped science laboratories. Nutritious meals are prepared and served on site. While there is no outside space, pupils engage daily in physical exercise at a range of local venues. Since the last inspection, suitable facilities for pupils who are ill have been provided on all sites; suitable furniture and fittings have been installed in the 'upper school' and, in the Early Years Foundation Stage, creative activities are made available in the dining area when it is not used to serve food. Due to an increase in the number of pupils, one site has insufficient washroom facilities for pupils. All other regulatory requirements for the premises and accommodation are met.

## **Provision of information**

The school provides, or makes available, all of the required information for parents, carers and others, with the exception of particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils who require additional support or who speak English as an additional language. The information provided is clear, accurate and mostly up to date. A few parents and carers would like more information about their child's progress. Inspectors found that while the annual reports are of satisfactory quality,

they vary in format and detail, with the best indicating how well the pupil is achieving and what further improvement is required.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The complaints procedure meets regulatory requirements.

## **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.<sup>3</sup>

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 there are sufficient washrooms for pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs and disability, which take account of regulations 3 and 4 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(j)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- make available to parents, carers and others, particulars of educational and welfare provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs and for pupils for whom English is an additional language (paragraph 24(1)(b)).

## **What the school could do to improve further**

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
  - making more effective use of assessment during lessons to promote rapid progress for all pupils
  - informing pupils how they can improve their work in all subjects
  - ensuring curriculum planning provides for continuity and progression across all school sites
  - increasing the opportunities to develop pupils' independent learning skills in lessons.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/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

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Preparatory		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1951		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–13 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 613	Girls: 373	Total: 986
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£9,600 - £12,900		
<b>Address of school</b>	17 Hans Place London SW1X 0EP		
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7584 1331		
<b>Email address</b>	headmaster@hillhouseschool.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Townend		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Richard, Janet, Edmund and William Townend		

**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.**



7 December 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Hill House School, London SW1X 0EP**

Thank you for the support you gave to inspectors when we inspected your school recently, and for completing the online survey. It was a pleasure to talk with you and to see you at work.

You told us how much you value your school and the teachers. We agree that the school provides you with a good quality of education. The range of subjects, activities and clubs the school provides for you is amazing. We were very impressed with your behaviour and your personal development, which we judged outstanding. You are very courteous to others. The school has improved the way it keeps you safe and healthy and this is now good. It meets all the government's requirements, except for two. These are to provide more toilets for you and to make sure that information is made available to parents and others about any additional needs that you might have. To help the school to become even better, we have made the following recommendation.

- Make more lessons outstanding by:
  - assessing your progress during lessons and informing each of you how to improve your work, to help all of you to make rapid progress
  - making sure subjects and topics are planned well so that you make very good progress in them all the way through the school
  - giving you more opportunities to develop independent learning skills in lessons, such as investigating, researching, discussing, role playing and presenting your findings.

You can help by asking your teachers how you can improve your work. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Frater  
Her Majesty's Inspector