

Hill House School

17 Hans Place, London, SW1X 0EP

Inspection dates

6 May 2014

Context of the inspection

The inspection was conducted without notice to the school, at the request of the Department for Education, registration authority for independent schools, to assess potential issues arising from a 'point-in time' pupil survey in September 2013.

The purpose of the inspection was to look at the quality of education, the effectiveness of policies and procedures to safeguard pupils and assess regulatory requirements in the school's premises and accommodation. The inspection also reviewed health and safety of pupils and the provision of information for parents, carers and others.

Conclusions

- Teaching in the school is effective. Teachers show a good understanding of the needs and aptitudes of pupils. Specialist teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Lessons are planned well so pupils make progress. The school places a strong emphasis upon attainment; teachers ensure pupils are thoroughly prepared to move on to a secondary school of their choice. Pupils' attitudes to school are consistently positive. Pupils show an eagerness to learn and to do their best. Pupils' behaviour is good and relationships between staff and pupils are respectful. This is in accordance with the school's policy and principles of good behaviour.
- The proprietors have not taken all of the required actions to ensure the necessary procedures are in place to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding, welfare, health and safety policies and school risk assessments are out of date. The proprietors do not undertake an annual review of safeguarding policies or procedures. Risk assessments for outings, sports activities, educational visits, including those to the annex in Switzerland, are not routinely carried out. This places pupils at risk.
- The child protection policy does not meet the latest guidance. Senior members of staff are alert to the signs of abuse. Staff attendance certificates confirm their participation at required safeguarding training. Current systems, however, are not up to date and therefore insufficiently rigorous and robust.
- School records show that timed fire drills and the evacuation of school premises do not occur regularly, fortnightly testing of fire alarms are infrequent. The fire risk assessment in 2010 has not been reviewed or monitored.
- The school systems for checking attendance are lax. Registers showed some incomplete entries. Parents are encouraged to report their child's absence using an online form, but the school does not routinely contact parents to check reasons for non-attendance until the second or third day. This does not ensure pupils' immediate safety when absent from school.
- The school manages safer recruitment systems for new staff appointments. Checks are made on staff identity, enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) criminal records and information for those previously employed or living overseas. Personnel files, however, are not well managed. In a sample of records scrutinised, thorough medical fitness checks were not undertaken, staff references lacked detail and gaps in service were unaccounted for.

- The school does not routinely check the quality of its premises. Inspectors found shortcomings in fixtures and fittings and aspects of security. There is no clear system to ensure that the school's premises, accommodation and facilities do not present a risk to pupils.
- The information about the school made available to parents does not meet all the required regulations because much of the information is out of date, particularly policies in relation to safeguarding, health and safety, educational visits, staff employed at the school including their qualifications.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school requires improvement and must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 ('the Regulations'), and associated requirements.

Ensure that arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school are effectively implemented and have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State	Paragraph 7
Ensure that there is a written policy which complies with relevant health and safety laws, and that the policy is implemented effectively	Paragraph 11
Ensure that there is a compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005	Paragraph 13
Ensure that the attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006	Paragraph 17
Ensure that the checks specified in 19(2)(b) are completed before a person's appointment	Paragraph 19(3)
Ensure that, in future, the single central register shows that all checks have been made and that the entries are signed and dated	Paragraph 22 (3)
Ensure that the school's accommodation and facilities are maintained to a sufficient standard to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils	Paragraph 23(C)
In relation to the information for parents, carers and others, provide details of the number of staff employed at the school, including temporary staff, and a summary of their qualifications, particulars of policies and the arrangements for tackling bullying, health and safety on the school premises and on educational visits	Paragraph 24(1)(b)
Ensure that the safeguarding children policy (as required under part 3, paragraph 7) is published on the school's website	Paragraph 24(1) (c)

Inspection team

Ann Debono, Lead Inspector
Adam Higgins

Her Majesty's Inspector
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about this school

- Hill House School is an international preparatory school in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London. The school was founded in Switzerland in 1949 and established in London in 1951.
- The school's founding family continues to lead and manage the school.
- There are 990 pupils on roll, taught at five local sites. The main school is in Hans Place.
- The school has an annex in Switzerland which hosts visits by groups of pupils and staff throughout the year.
- Pupils come from over 50 different countries, although only a few are at an early stage of acquiring English.
- No pupils are in receipt of a statement of special educational needs.
- The school was last inspected in 2009. It received visits in March and September 2010 to monitor progress on regulations that had not been met.

School details

Unique reference number	100518
Inspection number	443096
DfE registration number	207/6188
This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.	
Type of school	Preparatory
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	4–13 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	990
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Richard, Janet, Edmund and William Townend
Headteacher	Richard Townend
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 December 2013
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,600–£12,900
Telephone number	020 7584 1331
Email address	headmaster@hillhouseschool.co.uk

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