

# Hill House School

Hans Place, London, SW1X 0EP

**Inspection dates** 2–4 December 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Leadership and management	Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils	Inadequate	4
Early years provision	Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings

### This is an inadequate school.

- Pupils are not safe because some key aspects of the safeguarding procedures are inadequate.
- Too few pupils make adequate progress across the school, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not plan activities which challenge all ability groups. The work that pupils are set does not build on what they already know and are able to do.
- Leaders and proprietors do not have the capacity to secure essential improvements. They are not taking any action to secure effective teaching. They do not know if pupils are making the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers are given little support and training to improve their practice. As a result, too many pupils are achieving less than they should.
- Leaders do not know what they do well and what they need to do to improve further. They do not plan for improvement.
- Leaders have not clarified key roles and responsibilities. As a result they have not ensured that all the independent school standards or the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met.
- Health and safety are compromised. There are serious breaches in significant areas.
- The early years provision is inadequate. Children do not achieve as well as they should in all areas of learning.

### The school has the following strengths:

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Relationships are positive. The school is a harmonious and cohesive community.
- Some teaching is good, particularly in reading, music and sport. Pupils make good progress in these subjects.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of musical and sporting activities in London and in the school's annex in Switzerland.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are mature, confident, respectful and tolerant.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out without any notice to the school.
- Inspectors observed teaching in 14 lessons; some were observed jointly with the deputy headteacher and the head of early years. Inspectors also carried out short visits to classrooms to observe the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read. They observed pupils during lunchtime and spoke with pupils in a separate meeting.
- Meetings were held with the proprietors, the headteacher and senior leaders.
- There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors took account of additional comments made by parents and carers to whom they spoke at the start of the school day. They also analysed 79 staff questionnaires.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included records relating to safeguarding, health and safety policies and procedures, and the curriculum. Inspectors also looked at the work in pupils' books. The school did not provide information about pupils' progress or attendance.

## Inspection team

Mary Hinds, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sai Patel

Her Majesty's Inspector

## Full report

### 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 four proprietors, of which one is the headteacher and one the deputy headteacher. Heads of school are senior leaders. There is no governing body and there are no middle leaders.
- There are 927 pupils on roll, taught at five local sites. The main school is on Hans Place. The school has an annex in Switzerland which hosts visits by groups of pupils and staff throughout the year.
- The school provides full-time education for both boys and girls. Pupils attend from four to 13 years of age.
- All children attend the Reception class on a full-time basis. None are in receipt of government funding.
- Pupils come from over 50 different countries, although only a few are at an early stage of acquiring English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well below average. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school's last full inspection was in December 2012. At the time of this inspection it was judged to provide a good standard of education for its pupils. The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was judged to be outstanding, as was pupils' behaviour. Almost all of the regulatory requirements for independent schools were met.
- The school aims to educate pupils to understand that all nations should learn to live alongside each other with respect and tolerance.
- In May 2014 the school received an emergency inspection at the request of the Department for Education to assess potential issues arising from a 'point-in time' pupil survey in September 2013. The quality of education for pupils was judged to be effective. However, inspectors found that the school was failing to meet a number of regulatory requirements, including a significant number relating to the welfare and safety of its pupils.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, with a sharp focus on securing good or better progress; particularly in writing and mathematics in all key stages, by ensuring that:
  - teachers plan work which sets out clearly what pupils of different abilities are expected to learn over a term and beyond, including the teaching of phonics
  - teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and regularly, so that work is planned that systematically builds on what pupils know and can do
  - teachers assess pupils' understanding in lessons and consequently adjust the work to secure the right level of challenge for all ability groups
  - teachers provide further support and challenge for those pupils who find learning difficult and those who find learning easy, to secure their full engagement in their learning
  - older pupils study a wide range of subjects in suitable breadth and depth
  - teachers' marking of pupils' work highlights how it can be improved.
- Improve the provision in the early years, by making sure that:
  - teachers plan activities which cover all seven areas of learning
  - children's starting points and subsequent progress are assessed regularly and compared to what children should typically achieve for their age
  - teachers use these assessments to pitch activities at the right level of challenge for all ability groups, including in reading and writing
  - the outdoor area promotes and improves children's achievement in all areas of learning
  - both classrooms and the outside area provide relevant opportunities for children to write on their own for a purpose.
- To strengthen leadership and management, the proprietors and leaders should:
  - as a matter of urgency, put in place procedures to protect the welfare and safety of pupils
  - improve their evaluation of the quality of teaching, monitor teaching regularly and provide teachers with

clear feedback on strengths and weaknesses

use this and other information to have a clear overview of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement

set annual targets for teachers and monitor their progress towards these, making sure there is a strong link between performance and pay

provide tailored support and training for teachers, including opportunities to observe outstanding teaching in other schools

use all information to plan precisely what the school needs to work on next to secure further improvements

check their observations against the Ofsted's evaluation criteria for independent schools, so there is a better understanding of how well the school is performing in relation to national expectations

clarify roles and responsibilities urgently, at all levels of leadership, for the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and for health and safety

make sure that all the independent school standards and early years statutory requirements are met.

■ The school must meet the following independent school standards:

Ensure that the curriculum is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work (paragraph 2(1)).

Ensure that the subject matter is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those pupils with a statement of special educational needs (paragraph 2(2)(b)).

Ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress (paragraph 2(2)(i)).

Ensure teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 3 and 3(a)).

Ensure teaching involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time (paragraph 3 and 3(c)).

Ensure teachers have a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of pupils, and ensure that these are taken account of in the planning of lessons (paragraph 3 and 3(d)).

Ensure teachers demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught (paragraph 3 and 3(e)).

Ensure there is a framework in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3 and 3(g)).

Ensure that there is a framework for pupils' performance to be evaluated, by reference either to the school's own aims as provided to parents and carers or national norms, or to both, in place (paragraph 4).

Ensure arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and these arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State (paragraph 7, 7(a) and 7(b)).

Ensure there is a written policy on compliance with the relevant health and safety laws and which is implemented effectively (paragraph 11).

Ensure that the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 is complied with (paragraph 13).

Ensure that school staff are deployed to ensure the proper supervision of pupils (paragraph 15).

Ensure that there is a record kept of sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour (paragraph 16).

Ensure that admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

Ensure there are suitable changing facilities and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraph 23A (1) and 23A (1) (c)).

Ensure there is suitable outdoor space for pupils to play outside (paragraph 23G (1) (b)).

Ensure that the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year is made available to parents and carers of pupils and parents and carers of prospective pupils (paragraphs 24(1), 24(1) (b) and 24(3) (g)).

■ The school needs to meet the following statutory framework requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage:

Ensure that all the seven areas of learning and development are covered with teaching that meets the children's individual needs, interests and stage of development (1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8 and 1.9)

Ensure that children's progress is accurately assessed and recorded and information from this used to

shape the learning experiences for each child (2.1, 2.6 and 2.7)

Ensure that the safeguarding and welfare requirements are met (3.1, 3.2, 3.54, 3.55, 3.58)

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are inadequate

- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are also the proprietors of the school. They, together with the other proprietors and leaders, do not focus well enough on making sure all pupils achieve as well as they should from their different starting points. This is particularly so in writing and mathematics in all year groups.
- The proprietors and leaders are not adequately focused on improving the quality of teaching to secure excellence for all, both for pupils and staff. Senior leaders' roles are predominately taken up with the day-to-day running of their schools. No one has a specific leadership role or responsibility to make sure that the quality of teaching improves, or that pupils achieve what they are capable of in every year group. As a result, these key functions are not carried out.
- Teachers have no training or support to help them improve their practice. There are no opportunities for them to observe outstanding practice so that they can model their practice and hone their skills. The staff questionnaire responses confirm this lack of support. More than half of the teachers either disagreed or disagreed strongly that leaders promote their professional development.
- Teachers' performance is not monitored. Teachers do not have feedback on what they do well and what they need to do to improve. They are not set targets to improve their practice. The link between performance and pay is not clear. There is no evidence to show that good teaching is rewarded. Leaders do not know what impact teaching has on pupils' achievement because there is no progress information available.
- Leaders, including the proprietors, do not monitor key aspects of the school's work. They do not use any national yardsticks to check how well they are performing, including the guidance outlined in the *Independent School Standards* documents. They are not able to identify strengths or areas for improvement. Discussions with leaders following paired observations reveal that they have little insight into what constitutes effective teaching. There are no plans for improvement. This severely limits their ability to move the school forward at an appropriate rate.
- The safeguarding of pupils is inadequate. There have been recent improvements in child protection procedures and safer recruitment. The premises are suitably maintained. However, there remain significant failings in the security on some of the school sites. Visitors are not asked to sign in and out of the buildings. Supervision of pupils is sometimes lax.
- The health and safety of both pupils and adults in the main school are severely compromised. The health and safety policy is not being implemented across all sites. No one has overall responsibility for health and safety or has had suitable training. Some of the facilities breach health and safety rules. Risks are not readily or routinely identified. There are no showers for older pupils in Key Stage 3.
- No fire safety policy has been implemented. Fire risk has not been carried out effectively. No training on identifying fire risk or tackling fires has been completed. There is no nominated person to undertake the duties relating to the Regulatory (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Some fire exits are hazardous; they represent an ever-present danger to pupils and staff. The quality of recording information linked to fire procedures is not always detailed or acted upon.
- Proprietors and leaders have ensured that a complaints procedure has been drawn up. However, they were unable to satisfy inspectors that this was implemented effectively. They provided no record of the number of complaints received in the previous academic year.
- The range of subjects offered by the school curriculum is broad and provides pupils with exciting opportunities to work in their community and in Switzerland. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. Achieving success in music, art, drama and sport secures pupils' confidence and enjoyment, all of which raises their self-esteem. Pupils undertake geography field trips, perform in concerts and raise funds for those less fortunate. This creates a sense of responsibility and a maturity beyond their years. Nevertheless, there are too few opportunities for pupils to mix with other pupils from different social and economic backgrounds.
- The school has a strong culture of ensuring that good behaviour can flourish where pupils from a wide range of nationalities get on with each other. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of the many cultural and ethnic heritages of their friends, through music, celebrating different festivals and working in harmony with each other. The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- These good relationships and lack of discrimination promote pupils' personal development well.
- The impact of a large number of unmet independent school standards on pupils' welfare, health and safety is serious and significant.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Behaviour is not outstanding because in a few lessons pupils do not always engage fully in their learning. This limits their progress. Nevertheless, even when the work is dull most pupils often show perseverance and a good work ethic.
- Pupils have excellent manners and are almost always polite. They show consideration to each other and all adults. Relationships are very positive. Everyone gets on well with each other.
- Records on how the school deals with instances of poor behaviour are not kept. Therefore an analysis of trends in behaviour over time is not possible. However, observations during the inspection indicate that any poor behaviour is rare. The pupils confirmed this when talking to inspectors.
- Parents, carers and the very large majority of staff view behaviour as being good, and many cite it as a strength of the school.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and appreciate the individual care and attention they get from the staff.
- Pupils told inspectors that they value what they believe is the uniqueness of their school. The fact that there are over 50 nationalities, they say, makes them value differences and makes them open-minded.
- The ethos of the school instils a sense of responsibility for others. For example, pupils learn about civil and criminal law through topics and visits from the police. Pupils have a good understanding of public institutions through visits to famous landmarks in London, including the Houses of Parliament.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is inadequate.
- Leaders do not pay due regard to matters pertaining to health and safety, and aspects of safeguarding. The safety of pupils and adults is compromised on some of the school sites. Risk assessments relating to health and safety, and also to fire, have not been carried out thoroughly. No individual has been trained on these aspects and it is unclear who has responsibility for them.
- Existing procedures for checking fire evacuation routes are flawed, and records often lack detail. There is no evidence to indicate that these policies have been implemented effectively. Members of staff have not received specific training for health and safety: no-one has had training for preventative and protective measures, including fire-fighting and evacuation procedures.
- Processes for safer recruitment are now more effective and comply with statutory guidance. However, safeguarding is compromised through some inadequate security arrangements.
- Pupils are aware of the many different forms of bullying and know how to report any concerns they may have. They are confident that staff will deal with any issues they may have. This is corroborated by the views of parents and carers, together with evidence that this has improved in recent years.

**The quality of teaching is inadequate**

- There is a written statement about how subjects will be taught but it is not implemented effectively. Long-term plans for all subjects do not spell out precisely what skills or body of knowledge pupils will be taught within a term, over an academic year or from year to year.
- Teachers do not use their tests to plan effectively in order to pitch activities at the right level of challenge for all different ability groups. As a result pupils make slow progress in writing and mathematics. Subsequent planning does not build on what pupils already know and can do, because there is no on-going assessment of pupils' learning and progress.
- Teachers do not routinely assess pupils' progress in lessons. They do not ask searching questions to probe pupils' understanding in order to adjust the activity and secure pupils' better engagement and progress. Too often, more-able pupils simply do more of the same work and are not challenged to deepen or extend their thinking. Those pupils who find learning difficult are not always given useful support and guidance to secure effective learning.
- Older pupils do not learn in depth across a range of subjects. They spent much of their time practising test papers to secure a place in the school of their choice.
- There is little marking of pupils' work. Pupils are not given effective guidance on how to improve their

work further.

- Teachers are adept at developing pupils' reading skills. All pupils read daily to their teachers, as well as in groups to develop their ability to read for meaning and pleasure. Reading books are well matched to individual pupils' interests and abilities.
- Pupils are taught handwriting well. Younger pupils join up their letters and present their handwriting neatly. Pupils' presentation is good.
- The specialist teachers for music and sport have good subject knowledge, as do a small minority of other teachers. Their passion for their subject motivates pupils to work hard and meet their high expectations. These teachers model excellence, ask probing questions, and carefully build up pupils' skills and confidence. As a result pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress in these subjects.
- Most teachers have had little or no training or support to help them improve their practice since they started to work at the school. They say that they are very keen to improve their practice and to help pupils achieve their full potential. The lack of guidance and support has a significant impact on the progress pupils make.

### The achievement of pupils

**is inadequate**

- Work in pupils' books and observations of pupils working in class show that they are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- The proprietors and leaders do not assess or track pupils' progress. They do not know what progress different groups of pupils make in different subjects. As a consequence, they are not able to identify underachievement quickly or put in place appropriate interventions to secure at least expected progress, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers test pupils using the school's own system which focuses on attainment. It is not possible to compare these tests results with the attainment of pupils nationally. Pupils' workbooks are not scrutinised by leaders. As a result, staff were unable to confirm whether attainment in school is in line with, above or below the national norms.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books. Most work reflects at best average attainment in writing and mathematics. The school does not assess pupils' starting points. Observations suggest that children start school in the Reception Year with skills that are above the levels typical for their age, particularly in their personal and communication and language development. From their starting points this reflects slow learning and progress. Pupils are underachieving.
- There is a 'one size fits all' approach where all pupils often complete the same work in writing and in mathematics. Sometimes, pupils repeat work that they have covered in the previous year or term. There is insufficient time for pupils to learn new things. This slows progress still further.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as well as those pupils who find learning hard, are not always given the support they need. The teacher in charge for these pupils liaises with class teachers and external professionals to identify their specific needs. However, there is no planned programme of strategies to support pupils or boost their progress. The teacher in charge has had no up to date training for the role and consequently lacks the expertise to raise pupils' achievement.
- The most able pupils are not routinely given work to make them think hard about their learning. They spell simple words and draw pictures, like the other groups, but when prompted they put these words into sentences (with capitals and full stops) and turn them into questions without any effort.
- In most subjects, including in writing and mathematics, teaching focuses too much on ensuring older pupils are successful in passing entrance examinations, at the expense of providing more opportunities for pupils to learn in greater depth. Nonetheless, pupils are successful in gaining places at/or scholarships to the secondary school of their choice.
- Pupils' achievement in music, sport, art and drama is good. Both music and sport are taught by specialist teachers. Pupils engage in a wide range of sporting activities and games. Pupils have many opportunities to sing in choirs and to play and perform different musical instruments, both as soloists and in ensemble, within the local community and in Switzerland.
- Pupils' achieve above average standards in music. This is in stark contrast to the standards they achieve in writing and mathematics.

### The early years provision

**is inadequate**

- The provision for the youngest children is inadequate. It is not well led and managed. The head of school



does not check the quality of provision or track children's progress. She does not know what this year group does well and what it needs to do to improve.

- Teachers do not follow the early years statutory requirements. Planning does not cover all seven areas of learning. Evidence presented by the school, including the children's profiles, shows a lack of coverage and identification of what different ability groups are to learn. Children of all abilities complete the same activities.
- Members of staff do not assess what children can do when they enter the school. They do not know the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development in 2014. Assessments are based on what children are expected to achieve at the end of the Reception Year, and not on the skills children typically display for this age. As a result, assessments are not accurate or precise enough. Teachers are not able to use this information well enough to plan accurately for the children's next steps. Children's reading and writing skills are not assessed. As a result, activities are not pitched at the right level of challenge for all ability groups. This slows children's learning and progress significantly.
- Observations show that many children start school with skills that are at least typical for their age, with many working at higher levels. This is particularly so in children's personal development and in their language and communication skills. Children are more than ready to achieve well in Year 1.
- Children are confident, cooperative and happy learners. Most are extremely articulate, and some speak two languages fluently. The children play and work very well together and are happy to pursue their own learning interests through the activities planned for them.
- The outdoor area is drab, uninspiring and does not enable the children to learn and make progress well enough. There are too few opportunities for children to write on their own. There are no designated writing or role play areas, either inside or outside the classroom. Children are given too few opportunities to write independently for a purpose.
- Members of staff have high expectations of behaviour. The children are self-assured, cooperative and well mannered. They listen well and are confident to ask questions, and offer answers when asked a question.
- Members of staff are keenly aware and responsive to children's needs. However, lapses in aspects of health and safety and security of the premises compromise the safety of the children.

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	100518
<b>Inspection number</b>	454804
<b>DfE registration number</b>	207/6188
<b>Type of school</b>	Preparatory
<b>School status</b>	Independent
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–13
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	927
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	NA
<b>Proprietor</b>	Richard, Janet, Edmund and William Townend
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Townend
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	May 2014
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£10,350 – £14,100
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