

The Kensington School

24 Kensington Square, London W8 5HN

Inspection dates

9–11 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not Applicable

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The newly appointed headteacher has a clear vision for the school. She is well supported by the proprietor and together they have made sure that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are good.
- Pupils start school with varying levels of knowledge and skill in English and French. They make good progress in learning both languages.
- Children make a good start to their education in the early years provision. A rich and stimulating curriculum in both French and English ensures that they make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Most children can communicate fluently in both English and French by the end of the Reception, and thus are well prepared for entry to Year 1.
- The school strikes an effective balance between the delivery of the English National Curriculum and the French curriculum. Pupils make good progress throughout the curriculum.
- Pupils are well behaved and feel safe, and relationships between pupils and with adults are strong. They like coming to school, which is evident in their good attendance and punctuality.
- The curriculum successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The range of educational trips and visits from outside speakers further enrich learning.
- The school promotes fundamental British values effectively, particularly those of tolerance and respect.
- Leaders have made sure that all the independent school standards are met.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small minority of lessons, teachers do not set tasks at the right level so that all groups of children can make rapid progress.
- The school improvement plan lacks precision in identifying appropriate priorities and in determining how progress will be measured.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that teachers' planning sets work at the correct level so that all groups of pupils make rapid progress.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership by ensuring that development planning is appropriately focused on measurable improvements to pupils' outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has already made known her strong commitment to moving the school towards excellence. All staff share her vision for the future direction of the school. She is well challenged and supported by the proprietor.
- The headteacher, within a month of her taking up the post, has rigorously monitored the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Arrangements for managing the performance of staff are developing well and plans are in place for staff training to help them improve their skills and meet the targets they have been set. As result, staff morale is high.
- The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is highly effective, and links to both the French and the English curricula. The school takes into account pupils' ages and abilities when determining the most effective provision. Parents are kept well informed. Weekly meetings between members of staff check the progress of all pupils, and additional support is provided for individuals if, and when, needed.
- The school is successful in teaching the early years curriculum in English with French as an additional language. In the primary phase, the school teaches all subjects in French to meet the French curriculum requirements and teaches English as an additional language. The school meets the statutory requirements of the early years curriculum. Pupils make good progress in developing their English speaking and listening, reading and writing skills.
- The school effectively promotes equality of opportunity through its values. Most pupils and their parents come from minority ethnic communities. The school harnesses pupils' cultural awareness effectively to promote respect and tolerance. In celebrating the Chinese New Year, pupils dressed up in Chinese costumes, used chopsticks to taste noodles and compared the size of the Chinese lemons with the lemons they use at home.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Fundamental British values are actively promoted through the curriculum, through the celebration of key events relating to other cultures and through visits to places of educational interest. These have included trips to the fire station, The Natural History Museum and The Royal Albert Hall.
- The welfare, safety and security of pupils are a high priority. All policies and procedures are effectively implemented and updated as required. All staff have received training on how to keep pupils safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Staff involved pupils in discussions about the recent attacks in Paris by extremists.
- The school improvement plan identifies areas for development but these are not prioritised for action or kept under regular review. The success criteria are not linked to outcomes for pupils.
- Parents are highly pleased with the school. Those who spoke to the inspector were very happy with the school's work. The school's own survey of parents' views indicated the same positive views.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The proprietor is highly committed to improving the school. She has the necessary skills and expertise to challenge and hold the school's leaders to account to bring about further developments.
 - The proprietor has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has achieved a good balance between meeting the French and English curriculum requirements.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that all the required checks are made on staff before they start work in the school. The staff have attended appropriate training, and named officers for child protection, first aid and fire evacuation have been appointed. The headteacher has assessed staff members' knowledge of safeguarding through a questionnaire and provided additional training where staff showed gaps in their understanding.
- The school's safeguarding policies and procedures take account of the latest statutory guidance. The school site is maintained to a good standard and all welfare, health and safety requirements are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers use their subject knowledge to plan engaging activities that keep pupils interested in their learning. Pupils of mixed ages are taught in the same class but all have individual learning plans appropriate to their ages as required by the French curriculum. Teachers identify when pupils need support and ensure that this is provided so that all can make good progress.

- Each pupil's progress is closely monitored and staff provide them with useful advice on how to improve. Pupils make good progress in all subjects and their achievement is regularly monitored and reviewed. Pupils new to English are given good support and they make rapid progress in understanding the language. All pupils make good progress in speaking, reading and writing in both French and English.
- There is a strong focus on the development of good literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils practise these skills in other subjects, such as in science lessons where they draw graphs and write up their results. In English, pupils keep diaries, write letters, retell stories and compose their own creative texts. These are well marked according to the school's assessment policy and, as a result, pupils know what they need to do to improve. However, pupils' attention to handwriting and presentation is not always good and teachers sometimes accept untidy and carelessly presented work.
- Teachers use effective questioning skills to check pupils' understanding and identify any misconceptions. Pupils express themselves well and are confident to ask questions when they do not understand. They have good communication skills in both English and French.
- Relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and engage quickly with their work. Mostly, staff have a good understanding of their pupils' needs and this enables them to support behaviour and learning effectively. Lessons proceed without disruption.
- Teaching is not outstanding because teachers do not always match work closely enough to pupils' abilities and some pupils do not make the best possible progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils say that they are safe in school. Parents agree and are pleased with the way the school ensures that their children are kept safe.
- Pupils are confident and have positive attitudes to learning. If any pupil becomes distracted, staff are skilled in ensuring that they re-engage and complete the given task.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, and their attendance and punctuality are good. Discrimination of any type is not tolerated and pupils from different ethnic communities work and play amicably. They raise funds for those who are less fortunate than themselves.
- Safeguarding policies reflect the most recent statutory guidance and are available to parents on the school's website. Staff receive appropriate, and regularly updated, training about safeguarding issues. Pupils are aware of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism at a level appropriate to their age. They know how to keep themselves safe.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in and around the school. They are polite and courteous to each other and visitors. Around the school, pupils follow the rules, and breaktimes and lunchtimes are calm and peaceful.
- Behaviour in lessons is good; pupils listen attentively to their teacher and follow instructions carefully. Most pupils are keen to learn. However, behaviour is not yet outstanding as occasionally, in some lessons, pupils become disengaged and this slows their progress.
- The school has developed effective systems to administer rewards and sanctions. Since opening, there have been no exclusions or incidents of serious misbehaviour.
- Leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards are met for this aspect of the school's work.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- The school's performance assessment information indicates that pupils make good progress in all subjects. This is confirmed by the scrutiny of work in pupils' books and by the progress they make over time. Pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils, having made good progress since joining the school, are working at age-appropriate levels. There is a particularly good focus on learning French, mathematics and science.

- Pupils are making effective progress in acquiring English and can sustain conversations in both French and English with adults and classmates. Pupils who have a different home language also make good progress in French and English.
- Pupils read simple storybooks fluently, understand the concepts and are able to retell the stories in their own words. They read widely and take books home from the school and from the local library, which they visit fortnightly.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards related to pupils' outcomes are met.

Early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress in each of the areas of learning and in French. This is because a wide range of activities supports their learning effectively, and their progress is assessed regularly against their individual targets. Children currently in the Reception class are making strong progress towards achieving a good level of development by the end of the year. This is preparing them well for their learning in Year 1.
- Most children have skills typical for their age when they join the Nursery, although their communication and language, and personal, social and emotional skills are a little below what is typical for their age. Children make good progress throughout their time in the early years.
- About half of the cohort are learning English as an additional language. They make swift progress in developing speaking and listening skills; after a short time in the Nursery they communicate confidently in both French and English.
- Teaching is good. Activities are purposeful and ensure that children have a range of opportunities to develop learning in all seven areas. Bilingual staff support children appropriately in both languages, which helps new learners to make rapid progress in developing their communication skills. Teaching assistants support learning effectively and a good staff to child ratio helps in meeting children's needs appropriately; this contributes to their good progress.
- There is a good focus on developing children's phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) skills. Some more-able children can read simple storybooks using their knowledge and skills in linking sounds and letters. However, sometimes this work is too easy for them and too difficult for others, which limits their progress.
- Reception children have good opportunities to use the 'activities room' to explore and engage in their own chosen activities. Staff help to deepen children's learning effectively through skilful questioning. During the inspection, children enjoyed making fairy cupcakes with a parent who came to share her skills.
- Nursery children engage in a range of activities to develop their mathematical language and scientific enquiry, such as mixing ingredients to make biscuits and observing changes.
- All children in the early years go to the nearby park every day. Robust risk assessments to keep them safe are conducted and followed.
- Children are well behaved; they take turns and share resources when choosing activities. However, some younger children are still learning to share fairly with their classmates.
- Parents report that they are very pleased that the school provides so much for their children's needs. They say that their children feel safe at the school, and are happy that children are taught to look after themselves and understand everyday risks. Parents emphasised that the communication with the school is very good and that they value the opportunity to talk to their child's teacher regularly. Many parents were seen to talk to the staff at the end of the day when they came to collect their children.
- The early years provision is led and managed effectively. The headteacher has ensured that there is a strong staff team, with adults working very well together to provide good teaching and learning. Staff keep a detailed record of the work children complete in the early years, and of the progress they make.

School details

Unique reference number	141753
Inspection number	10008620
DfE registration number	207/6010

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Day
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Number of part-time pupils	3
Proprietor	Marie-Laurence Edmonstone
Headteacher	Damiana Cornacchia
Annual fees (day pupils)	£17,000 to £17,400
Telephone number	020 7373 7020
Website	www.marie-laurence.com
Email address	ml@marie-laurance.com
Date of previous inspection	N/A

Information about this school

- The school opened as The Kensington School in February 2015 and is registered for 50 pupils. Currently there are three pupils in the primary phase, all of whom joined the school last term.
- There are 24 pupils in the early years classes; sixteen children are in receipt of government funding.
- There are no pupils with a statement of special needs, or education, health and care plan.
- The school is based in a self-contained wing of Heythrop College, part of the University of London, situated in a square just off Kensington High Street in West London.
- The proprietor has been operating The Kensington Nursery School since 2012, when it provided childcare for children aged from two to eight years, from the present premises.
- The headteacher took up her post in January 2016 but previously worked in the school as a nursery manager.
- The proprietor runs five other schools in London.
- The school's principal language of instruction is French for the primary phase and English is taught as an additional language. It follows the French curriculum, Centre National d'Enseignement à Distance (CNED) which is validated by the French Ministry of Education.
- For the under-fives, the main language of instruction is English, and French is taught as an additional language. The English Early Years Foundation Stage framework is implemented.
- The school aims to provide a 'happy and thriving environment for pupils to develop self-esteem and confidence'.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed five lessons, three of these jointly with the headteacher. Additional short visits were made to all classes, jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector reviewed the school's website, key documents and policies, including those related to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, assessment and the curriculum. All documentation is held in English except that about the French curriculum, its schemes of work and related lesson planning.
- Primary phase pupils' work in English, French and mathematics was scrutinised with the headteacher. Early years children's work from each of the areas of learning was analysed.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed during breaktimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the proprietor. Informal discussions were held with pupils. Two pupils from the primary phase and two children from the early years were heard reading.
- The views expressed in five responses to the staff questionnaire were analysed. The inspector considered the views of two parents who came to see her.

Inspection team

Kanwaljit Singh, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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