

Hill House School

17 Hans Place, London, SW1X 0EP

Inspection dates

15 September 2015

Overall outcome

Independent school standards not met

Context of the inspection

- This inspection was undertaken at the request of the registration authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan. This was the school's first progress monitoring inspection. It was conducted without notice.
- This inspection monitored the progress the school has made in complying with The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'). Inspectors met with senior leaders, visited lessons, held meetings with pupils and staff, inspected the school's premises and scrutinised the school's documentation.
- In December 2014 the school was evaluated as being inadequate in all areas of its provision. It was also evaluated that numerous independent school standards were not met.
- The school submitted an action plan on 24 April 2015 to the Department for Education, addressing the concerns raised in the December 2014 inspection. The plan was evaluated by Ofsted on 16 June 2015. It was judged to require improvement because the proposed actions did not fully address all of the unmet standards found in December 2014.
- The unmet independent school standards related to the quality of education provided, students' welfare, health and safety, the premises and accommodation at the school, the manner in which complaints are handled, and the quality of leadership and management of the school.

Main findings

- While the school has taken some action in response to the December 2014 inspection, the outcomes still fall short of what is required to meet the relevant independent school standards.
- The school has recently purchased a curriculum framework document from an external commercial provider however, this curriculum is yet to be fully implemented. Arrangements to monitor the effectiveness of the school's curriculum are still not in place.
- The school has introduced standardised termly planning formats for individual subjects. Subject leaders have not completed them consistently, or in some cases at all. As a result, these plans are incomplete. The newly-appointed subject leaders are not being held sufficiently to account by senior leaders for the quality of their curriculum planning.
- The school has not undertaken a detailed curriculum review of each subject. The school decided to replace all previous curriculum planning with the new curriculum framework. Consequently, the school has not identified strengths or weaknesses in its existing

practice.

- Teachers still do not know what is expected of them. Although the introduction of lesson observations is planned, there remains no process for managing the performance of teachers. No coordinated guidance is provided for teachers and subject leaders on how to evaluate the quality of teaching and its impact on learning.
- Inspectors saw no evidence that effective monitoring arrangements are in place to evaluate the school's response to pupils' individual learning needs. The planning framework demonstrates little or no understanding of how to raise the achievement of pupils with special educational needs. The impact of the recently appointed special educational needs coordinator on pupils' learning is therefore unclear.
- Pupils were eager to tell inspectors what they were learning in lessons. Some teachers demonstrate effective questioning skills that develop understanding; however, this was not consistent across all lessons. Inspectors found little evidence that the teachers plan for different levels of pupils' abilities. The quality of marking remains variable.
- The school has access to a tracking system to assess the progress that pupils are making. However, leaders do not have a clear strategy for introducing it because they do not have sufficient understanding of its purpose. Consequently, the system is yet to be implemented.
- Teachers supervise pupils during lunchtime while they serve pupils their lunches. The school did not provide the evidence requested by inspectors at the start of the inspection relating to the management of pupil supervision or the recording of behavioural incidents. As a result, inspectors were unable to evaluate whether the planned actions in these areas have been implemented.
- The school still does not maintain its admission and attendance registers in accordance with relevant regulations and is unaware of key requirements of the regulations.
- Planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage remains uncoordinated and does not give sufficient coverage to the seven areas of learning and development. The planning folder for the Early Years Foundation Stage still lacks detail and organisation. As a result planning and assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not ensure that teaching meets the children's individual needs, interests and stages of development.
- The outdoor space at the Small School continues to be inappropriate for the learning needs of the children. It has recently been repainted and has a soft-surface play area, however part of the paved surface in the garden area is loose and is therefore hazardous. The toys that are available are not of sufficient quality to stimulate learning and help children progress.
- The school has introduced a safeguarding policy which is compliant with the latest guidance from the Secretary of State. However, the contents of this new policy are not fully understood by staff, including the designated safeguarding lead. Some staff have not received any training on safeguarding since starting employment at the school and no training was planned at the time of this inspection.
- The single central record is still not complete because it does not record whether key information has been checked by the school - for example the identity of prospective employees and their right to work in the United Kingdom. Pre-appointment checks, including the taking of references, are not carried out in line with statutory guidance. Therefore the school does not ensure arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.
- The school has a commercial health and safety manual and guidance package. However, there is no evidence that this has been implemented as part of a risk assessment process.

- Some elements of fire risk assessment have been implemented. For example, fire closures have been fitted on some of the internal doors. Records show that fire evacuation practices and fire alarm testing have taken place recently. However, although closures have been purchased for the remaining doors, they are not installed. Fire evacuation routes are not clearly signed in all premises. As a result, pupils and staff are at risk in the event of a fire evacuation.
- The school now has a formal complaints policy which is available on the website. The school provides guidance to parents on how to request information relating to complaints, which directs parents to the headmaster or the head of house.
- It is clear that members of the senior team are well-intentioned and care deeply about the school. However, they do not have the skills and knowledge relevant to their roles. As a result, the ability of the school to take effective action is hampered.
- The senior team do not hold themselves or other members of staff sufficiently to account for the performance of their roles. There is no effective performance management structure for staff. Expectations are unclear and, as a result, planning and delivery of the curriculum are inconsistent. The health and safety of pupils and staff continue to be compromised.
- Members of the senior team were collaborative and open during the inspection. They accept that many standards are still not met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements:

- Ensure that the curriculum is supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work. (Paragraph 2 (1)(a))
- 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 (1) (b) (i))
- Ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to learn and make progress. (Paragraph 2 (2) (h))
- 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 (a))
- Ensure teaching involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time. (Paragraph 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 (d))
- Ensure teachers demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught. (Paragraph 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 (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 such arrangements have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (Paragraph 7 (a) and (b))
- Ensure that there is a record kept of sanctions imposed upon pupils for serious misbehaviour. (Paragraph 9 (c))
- 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 12)
- Ensure that school staff are deployed to ensure the proper supervision of pupils. (Paragraph 14)
- Ensure that admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. (Paragraph 15)
- 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 23 (1) (c))
- Ensure there is suitable outdoor space for pupils to play outside. (Paragraph 29 (1) (b))
- Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently. (Paragraph 34(1)(a))
- Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently. (Paragraph 34(1)(b))
- Ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school actively promote the well-being of pupils. (Paragraph 34(1)(c))

The school must meet the following statutory requirements of 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)

School details

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| Unique reference number | 100518 |
| Inspection number | 10006898 |
| 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 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

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| Type of school | Preparatory |
| School status | Independent |
| Age range of pupils | 4–13 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 848 |
| Number of part time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Richard, Janet, Edmund and William Townend |
| Headteacher | Edmund Townend |
| Date of previous school inspection | 2–4 December 2014 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £10,650 – £14,550 |
| Telephone number | 020 7584 1331 |
| Email address | headmaster@hillhouseschool.co.uk |

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. The previous headteacher retired in July 2015 and his son is the current headteacher. The current headteacher's wife is the director of studies.
- There are four proprietors. One proprietor is the current headteacher and another is his brother, who is also the estates manager. The other two proprietors are their parents.
- There are 848 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 classes on a full-time basis. None is in receipt of government funding.
- There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- There are no pupils eligible for free school meals.
- The school aims to educate pupils to understand that all nations should learn to live alongside each other with respect and tolerance.

Inspection team

Vanessa Ward, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mark Phillips

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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