

The Children's House

King Henry's Walk, Islington, London N1 4PB (Upper School)
77 Elmore Street, Islington, London N1 3AQ (Nursery)

Inspection dates

16–17 March 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	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and governors have a clear vision for the school in preparing pupils to have high aspirations for their lives now and in the future. Together they have ensured that teaching and outcomes are good, and that all the independent school standards are met.
- The quality of provision and outcomes in the early years are outstanding. This is the result of very effective teaching based on the early identification of children's specific learning needs.
- Teaching is strong in all subjects at Key Stage 1. Pupils make good progress and achieve above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. This is because of the excellent care they receive from all the adults around them, and regular opportunities to think creatively.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Most work with enthusiasm in lessons and their books are well presented. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very effectively.
- The school provides a very safe environment in which staff ensure the well-being of all pupils.
- All members of staff are committed to the ethos of the school. They enable pupils to make strong progress over time from their various starting points.
- Governors are effective in ensuring that the school works hard to achieve the priorities in the school improvement plan. This sharp focus ensures that the school is good and improving.
- Parents are very supportive of the school as seen, for example, in the high proportion who responded very positively to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not consistently give pupils clear enough advice and guidance on how to improve their work. Some pupils are not, therefore, building further on the good progress they are already making.
- Leaders and teachers are not using progress information, particularly on the most-able pupils well enough to provide the additional challenge needed for these pupils to make even better progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure that teachers' feedback gives pupils sufficiently clear guidance on how to improve their work, and that pupils use this information effectively
 - using a sharper analysis of pupils' progress information to set more precisely targeted challenges for the most-able pupils to further accelerate their progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The work of the school is shaped by its positive ethos which values creativity and encourages both pupils and teachers to think 'out of the box'. All members of the school community actively put this ethos into practice.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and learning. Individual members of staff have appropriate targets for improvement, and they are provided with good opportunities for further training. As a consequence, teachers provide richer learning experiences for their pupils.
- Leaders ensure that pupils actively develop aspects such as respect for, and tolerance of, others. The school's arrangements for developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are very effective. For example, pupils work well together and put a lot of energy into designing projects that illustrate the links between their learning in different subjects.
- The school teaches a broad range of subjects, including music and French, which are taught to all pupils. The design of the curriculum is based on themes and is well suited to pupils' interests and needs. This approach is very well embedded and is successful in stimulating pupils' curiosity and thinking. Excellent adjustments are made for pupils with special educational needs or disability so that they too enjoy the rich and stimulating learning experiences.
- Leaders maintain effective, regular contact with parents, ensuring that any concerns are promptly addressed and resolved. Responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire are extremely positive; parents demonstrate strong support for the quality of teaching and care for pupils.
- Leaders have sharpened their systems and approach to assessing pupils' progress over time. However, further work is required to ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are identified with greater precision, in particular for the most-able pupils. As a result, at times this group of pupils does not receive the precisely targeted challenges needed to further improve their progress.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain, and British values are carefully taught. Pupils learn about the rule of law and the importance of democracy, for example when they work together on school projects that require collective decision making, and also when given the opportunity to vote.
- Leaders ensure that the school's comprehensive safeguarding policy is fully implemented so that pupils are properly protected. Leaders are acutely aware of potential risks that pupils may face and have ensured that staff are properly trained to minimise these risks.
- The strong partnership with Islington's local safeguarding children's board ensures that the school is kept fully up to date with new requirements, for example safeguarding pupils from any potential risk of radicalisation and female genital mutilation. Consequently, the school is a very safe environment for pupils' education.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governance of the school is provided by the Council of Management, which includes past and current parents. Governors, working closely with leaders, have ensured that the independent school standards have been met.
 - The governors share the open and outward-looking vision for the school. They are knowledgeable about the school and pupils' performance in all year groups. They ensure that robust policies and procedures are implemented and regularly reviewed, including those for safeguarding. These are now all easily accessible on the school's new website.
 - Leaders have recently established robust arrangements for the assessment of pupils' progress in the early years provision and Key Stage 1. These assessments provide increasingly useful information to contribute to governors' judgements about the effectiveness of teaching and pupils' learning. Governors recognise that further training is needed for them to use this information to hold leaders to account more effectively, for example in the even better achievement of the most-able pupils.
 - Governors review the school improvement plan on a regular basis, holding leaders to account on the monitoring arrangements and timescales for implementation.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to succeed, for example, when developing their punctuation skills in literacy or their practical skill in playing the violin. Excellent examples of pupils' project work are visible in all classrooms, which reflect their learning in a range of subjects, including mathematics, English, science and history.
- Teachers' excellent relationships with pupils are used well to create an atmosphere in which pupils thrive and build their self-esteem. For example, pupils read confidently in lessons and use appropriate strategies to correct their own mistakes when necessary. Teachers also provide pupils with good opportunities for extended writing, of which there are many good examples in pupils' books.
- Teachers bring topics and learning to life with practical and creative activities. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to make and create, for example designing and creating time capsules and special lanterns to celebrate the Chinese New Year.
- Teaching in mathematics and literacy is strong. This is partly because teachers use questioning well to identify gaps in knowledge and build pupils' understanding. Pupils practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills across a wide range of subjects, sometimes in the context of a real-life problem-solving activity. Adults work very well with targeted pupils to ensure that their learning is equally strong.
- The high numbers of additional adults who work in the school make a strong contribution to the overall quality of teaching. For example, they are skilful in getting pupils with special educational needs or disability, as well as those who are less able, to apply their knowledge and skills to solve problems.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and staff are clear about what pupils have done well. However, sometimes, teachers' feedback to pupils on their work lacks guidance about how to improve. As a result, pupils do not make the maximum progress over time. In addition, pupils have insufficient opportunities to respond to any comments teachers do make, which is an expectation in the school's marking and assessment policy.
- Sometimes, teachers overlook the needs of the most-able pupils by not making the best use of pupils' progress information to plan for their learning. As a consequence, these pupils are not sufficiently challenged to work at the level of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils bathe in the warmth of a caring and nurturing atmosphere which all staff actively promote.
- The school's positive ethos, underpinned by the values of tolerance and mutual respect, sets a context in which pupils can thrive. The frequent and very purposeful interaction between pupils and adults throughout the school day results in pupils feeling very positive and confident about themselves.
- Pupils have excellent opportunities and are encouraged to have a voice in the running of the school. The formal opportunities for this include a school council and ad hoc committees focusing on a particular aspect of the school's work. Leaders listen to and when possible respond to, what pupils say about the school.
- Respect for and valuing others are central to all aspects of the school. Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to become more aware of others in a wide variety of situations. This includes the 'Wonderful World Week' that is celebrated each year and opportunities to engage purposefully with the wider community outside the school.
- The school's systems for ensuring that pupils are safe are very effective. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example when they are crossing a road or when undertaking practical work in class. All parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire agree that the school is very effective in keeping pupils safe and free from harm.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils respond well to the school's high expectations of work and behaviour. They have a strong motivation to learn and show much curiosity in lessons.
- Pupils take pride in their school, as demonstrated, for example, in the care they take to keep their environment clean and to present their work neatly.

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They work hard and cooperate to ensure that everyone can learn. Occasionally, however, some boys in particular have lapses in their concentration when the teaching does not engage them well enough.
- Pupils say that there is very little, if any, bullying in the school. In addition, they are confident that, should issues of any type arise, staff would respond quickly to ensure that they are resolved. The school's records of more serious misbehaviour indicate very few incidents of any kind. These records also confirm that such incidents are followed up in a way that is likely to reduce any future re-occurrence.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils currently in the school learn quickly and make good progress. Inspectors saw this across different subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Leaders make sure that a starting point is established for each pupil as they arrive at the school, using their own assessments. They then set targets from these starting points. These targets challenge most pupils to make rapid progress and reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2014 and 2015, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was above average by the end of Year 2. The school's achievement information shows that current Year 2 pupils are also on track to achieve above-average standards by the end of this academic year. This is supported by the standards of work seen by inspectors in a range of pupils' books and in lessons.
- Pupils' development of wider learning skills is strong. They are confident and articulate in describing their work and opinions. Pupils' reading skills improve rapidly; they enjoy learning to read, and older pupils make full use of the wide range of books available to them.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability typically make progress at a similar rate to their peers. This is in large part the result of high-quality support at the right level by skilled teaching assistants who help to create the conditions for these pupils to learn well.
- The few disadvantaged pupils make similarly good progress as a result of a clear understanding of their learning needs and making the right provision to address them.
- Although the most-able pupils make good progress overall, sometimes the work provided does not challenge them enough, resulting in learning that is not as deep as it could be.
- Themes such as 'houses and homes' or 'transport' provide pupils with a strong, real-life context to build and consolidate their literacy and mathematical skills. The links between subjects are strong, resulting in better understanding for most pupils.
- The school ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their learning by building their character and resilience through a wide range of imaginative learning experiences. As a result, many pupils pass their additional seven-plus assessment to join a good or outstanding independent school in Year 3.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Most children have skills typical for their age when they join the Nursery class, although their communication and language, and personal, social and emotional skills are a little above what is typical for their age. The school builds extremely well on this and, as a result, children make outstanding progress throughout their time in the early years.
- Children make excellent progress in each of the areas of learning. 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 very well for their learning in Year 1.
- Year on year, children's attainment by the end of Reception is above average. The small proportion of children who speak English as an additional language receive appropriate and well-targeted support. As a result, they make swift progress in developing their speaking and listening skills so that by the end of Reception they have met at least the required expectations.
- Very effective teaching ensures that all activities are purposeful, providing children with an excellent range of opportunities to develop learning in all seven areas. Moreover, teaching assistants support learning equally effectively: a good staff-to-child ratio, coupled with an in-depth knowledge of children's needs, make a strong contribution to the very strong progress they make.

- There is an excellent focus on developing children's phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) skills. As a result, many children can read simple story books using their knowledge and skills in linking sounds and letters.
- Staff help to deepen children's learning effectively through skilful questioning. During the inspection, children enjoyed role playing the story of Little Red Riding Hood and constructing sentences about the key characters involved.
- Children are very well behaved; they take turns and share resources when choosing activities. These expectations are modelled very well by all the adults who work with them.
- Nursery children engage in a range of activities to develop their mathematical language and scientific enquiry, such as mixing ingredients to make cakes and observing changes. Robust risk assessments to keep children safe are conducted and followed.
- 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.
- The early years provision is led and managed very effectively on both sites. Leaders have ensured that there is a strong staff team, with adults working very well together to provide excellent 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	130243
Inspection number	10006034
DfE registration number	206/6383 (Upper school) EY 365297 (Nursery)

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	Nursery and day pre-preparatory school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Proprietor	The Children's House School Limited
Chair	Robert Edge
Headteacher	Kate Orange
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,795–£13,545
Telephone number	0207 3542113
Website	www.thechildrenshouseschool.co.uk
Email address	kateorange@childrenshouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 May 2009

Information about this school

- The Children's House operates across two sites which have a distance of 0.7 miles between them. Both buildings are situated in quiet residential streets in Islington.
- The Children's House was set up in 1973 as a Nursery school and moved to its current site in Elmore Street in 1991. The Upper School was set up in September 2005, when the school began to extend its provision to children aged seven.
- The school is owned by the Children's House School Limited, a charitable trust and company limited by guarantee, whose members are the parents and parents of former pupils of the school.
- About 40% of the pupils are of White British heritage. The majority of pupils come from a mix of ethnic backgrounds and some are bilingual and speak English as an additional language.
- There are several pupils who have an education, health and care plan; in addition, the school provides additional support for some pupils who have moderate learning difficulties.
- The school has a few disadvantaged pupils who benefit from the school's bursary scheme.
- The school places a strong emphasis on helping children to develop as 'creative, independent thinkers' and to 'develop genuine feelings of concern and respect for others and their environment'. The traditional values of courtesy, consideration for others and good manners are central to its ethos.
- The Upper School was last inspected in May 2009; the Nursery was inspected in 2008 as a provision for three- to four-year-olds. The current headteacher, very recently appointed as an 'acting up' arrangement, was the previous substantive deputy headteacher of the school.
- This inspection did not inspect provision for the children aged under three on the Elmore Street site as this provision is inspected separately under the early years framework.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- It was found at the time of the inspection that the school considers the 61 rising four-year-olds who are educated on the separate Elmore Road Nursery site to be part of its overall early years provision. After referring this matter to Ofsted, it was decided to inspect this setting and use the evidence obtained to feed into the overall judgements for the early years provision. This was not the case at the previous inspection. Governors and leaders have been strongly advised to contact the Department for Education after the current inspection to explain these changes.
- Learning was observed in 11 lessons; three of these were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Samples of pupils' work and children's learning journeys were scrutinised.
- Inspectors spoke to teachers, the headteacher and three members of the Council of Management, including the Chair of this Governing Body. There was also a discussion with a wide range of pupils in Key Stage 1.
- Inspectors took account of the 55 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View.
- Documentation and policies were checked for compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Nasim Butt, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Vale	Ofsted Inspector

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