

Hill House International Junior School

17, Hans Place, Knightsbridge, London SW1X 0EP

Inspection dates

16–18 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that the school has improved considerably since the previous inspection. They have created a caring school in which respect permeates all aspects of its work. Pupils are extremely well cared for and achieve well in a supportive climate. However, governance arrangements are not fully implemented.
- Teachers know their pupils well and have secure subject knowledge. As a result, pupils make good progress. However, teaching activities are sometimes not set at the correct level to challenge pupils' thinking and enable them to make the best possible progress, particularly the most able pupils.
- The stimulating curriculum enables pupils to enjoy and succeed in a wide range of activities. The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- Leadership and teaching in the early years are good. Children make good progress and are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Parents wholeheartedly support the school and almost all would recommend it to another parent.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of vigilance that helps to keep pupils safe. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They have excellent attitudes to learning and attend school very regularly.
- A new assessment system is being implemented, but it is too early to judge its effectiveness. Currently, teachers and leaders cannot fully evaluate pupils' progress in all subjects.
- The excellent pastoral care provided by staff promotes pupils' physical and emotional well-being extremely well. The rich music and sports programmes help pupils to develop high levels of self-confidence and self-control, particularly when performing in public, at both individual and team levels.
- Teachers receive helpful training and advice to improve their work. However, the staff training programme is not accurately targeted to have the maximum impact on improving pupils' 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school, including the early years, by ensuring that staff:
 - set work at the correct level to challenge pupils in their thinking, particularly that of the most able, and that enables them to make the best possible progress.
- Further improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the school's assessment system is fully established and contains a broad enough range of information to enable leaders, staff and the board of advisers to check accurately all pupils' progress across the full range of subjects
 - the training and development programme for staff is strengthened so that it has the best possible effect on the quality of teaching and the pupils' progress
 - the proprietors accelerate the process of establishing a board of advisers to provide external support and challenge to the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, proprietors and senior staff have taken robust and successful steps to improve the school over the last three years. They have established a culture of high aspirations and secured provision of good quality. The proprietors and senior leaders are fully aware of what the school still needs to do to ensure outstanding provision.
- During this time, the proprietors and staff have positively approached and successfully tackled the weaknesses identified at the 2014 inspection. The proprietors have commissioned high-quality external support and advice from specialist advisers and consultants, which has ensured that the school continues to improve. In addition, they have recruited new teachers, made new leadership appointments and reorganised staff responsibilities. These actions have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The innovative and stimulating curriculum is enriched further by the extensive range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum successfully balances academic subjects with physical, technological, creative and outdoor pursuits. In line with the school's aims, these opportunities prepare pupils well to be global citizens. The programme for careers education and guidance ensures that pupils are well informed and prepared for the next stage of their education. The rich music and sports programmes are very effective in helping pupils achieve excellent performances at both individual and team levels.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extremely well across the curriculum. Outings to places of interest, together with the regular residential visits to Switzerland, help pupils to appreciate how people from different cultures, faiths, backgrounds and those with characteristics that are protected in law, contribute to life in modern Britain. These activities, together with the many after-school pursuits, further enrich pupils' experience and promote equality well.
- Parents were unanimous in their support for the school's work in educating their children. Of those parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, almost all would recommend the school to another parent. As one parent reported, reflecting the views of many, 'Hill House is a happy school with old-fashioned values and charming pupils.'
- Staff at all levels are very positive about the many training opportunities available to them. They work together in subject teams and they are all involved in observing each other's teaching and in sharing good ideas.
- Effective training and appraisal arrangements have enabled staff to improve their teaching. Leaders are increasingly effective and rigorous in checking the quality of teaching. However, leaders acknowledge that the staff training and development programme still requires some further fine tuning, to ensure that the quality of teaching has maximum impact on pupils' progress.
- In May 2017, leaders introduced a new assessment system designed to track pupils' progress across all subject areas. Currently, the system provides detailed information

and analysis about how well children are achieving in the early years, and in English, mathematics and science in some other year groups. Teachers are using this information effectively to identify weaknesses and improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, the system does not yet contain information about pupils' progress in all subjects. As a result, leaders are relying on staff comments rather than on information that is collected and stored centrally. The system is embryonic, and it is too early to judge its overall effectiveness.

Governance

- Since the previous inspection, the proprietors have engaged several professional advisers who work effectively with leaders to provide support and challenge on an informal basis. This has helped the school to improve rapidly.
- More recently, the proprietors have taken steps to elect a chair to oversee the work of an independent board of advisers. The chair is in the process of convening this group, which is due to meet shortly. The membership of the group will draw on the expertise and experience of advisers from a range of fields including education, finance, health and safety, human resources and law. Some of these advisers have already provided helpful support to the school, on a consultancy basis.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's caring, nurturing and family ethos effectively promotes a strong culture of vigilance to help to keep pupils safe. The school's safeguarding policy, which is published on its website, is appropriate and reflects the Secretary of State's latest guidance.
- Across all four sites and during outings and visits, high levels of staff supervision help to keep pupils safe. The proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are suitable. The school provides a safe and caring haven where pupils report that they feel safe and secure and are comfortable about sharing their concerns. The imaginative curriculum enables pupils to learn about risks and how to keep themselves safe in a range of different situations.
- Staff receive regular training on safeguarding issues from a number of providers, including the local authority. Leaders are keen to ensure that staff know how to spot signs of neglect, possible harm and the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- Strong partnerships with parents ensure that pupils receive early help should they need it. Parents attend well-considered safeguarding workshops led by school leaders to enable them to help keep their children safe, particularly when using social media. Parents who responded to Parent View are confident that their children are kept very safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress because they are well taught by specialist teachers who have a very secure subject knowledge. This is used effectively to

develop pupils' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, and their understanding in mathematics and other subjects. Pupils become confident learners because of their strong communication skills.

- For those pupils who require additional support in their learning, provision is also effective. Stimulating tasks and resources enable pupils to make good progress and overcome any barriers to their learning. For example, staff successfully help the least able readers to make effective use of their phonics skills and to persevere in sounding out unfamiliar words. Pupils' reading abilities have improved because of the effective teaching of phonics.
- Pupils learn well because of the stimulating curriculum they receive. For example, as part of an extended project, Year 3 pupils learned about the geographical and historical development of ancient Egypt, and in particular the interpretation and meaning of different hieroglyphics. During this time, pupils produced extended pieces of writing, based on their research. Scrutiny of pupils' books showed that they produced art and written work of good quality.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are warm, respectful and extremely positive. Teaching encourages pupils to explore and learn in a calm and purposeful way. Pupils are highly motivated, as they want to be fully involved in learning that is made enjoyable by their teachers.
- Sometimes, activities do not challenge pupils in their thinking as fully as they might, particularly the most able. This is because teachers do not have detailed information about pupils' progress and attainment in all subjects to enable them to set, adapt and refine activities so that pupils make the best progress possible.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The pastoral care provided by staff promotes pupils' physical and emotional well-being extremely well. Enrichment activities such as yoga, and the presence of a qualified school nurse on each site, make a strong contribution to pupils' welfare. Throughout the week they have many opportunities to reflect on their learning. This activity is very beneficial in improving pupils' self-esteem and helping them to understand which strategies help them to learn successfully.
- Through interesting assemblies and personal development lessons, pupils learn about the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. For example, a variety of healthy eating options is available, having been prepared by in-house chefs. Children in the early years also grow their own herbs. These opportunities make a strong contribution to pupils' physical and emotional well-being in learning the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- Staff provide effective role models to pupils and help to ensure that they are protected from extreme views, and have a mature appreciation of what is right and wrong.

- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Those who discussed the subject with inspectors say that they feel safe because the different buildings are secure, and they feel happy and confident in approaching their teachers if they are worried about anything. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying. Those who spoke with inspectors said that bullying is rare and, if it does occur, it is dealt with quickly by teachers. The school's records indicate that bullying is extremely rare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- In classrooms and around the school, pupils are polite, friendly and well mannered, showing respect for each other and their teachers. They have very positive attitudes to learning and work together extremely well.
- The very helpful rewards system motivates pupils to adopt the highest standards of behaviour. The high expectations of staff and their effective management of classroom activities ensure that poor behaviour is extremely rare.
- Pupils attend school regularly. When asked why they enjoy school, several pupils said that they love being there because they enjoy all the many exciting opportunities available to them.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Because they are well taught, pupils in all year groups make good progress in acquiring knowledge and skills. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education. In 2017, pupils aged 11 and 13 successfully passed entrance examinations and all gained places in competitive fields at independent secondary schools.
- The school's information indicates that a large majority of pupils achieve standards that are above expectations for their ages in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' work across a wide range of subjects is typically of a high standard.
- Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds make the same good progress as others. So, too, do those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, from their starting points. This is because staff know them well and plan stimulating activities that motivate them and help them to overcome barriers to learning.
- Pupils read very well. Teachers skillfully incorporate appropriate phonics teaching to ensure that all pupils make strong progress in their reading skills at key stages 1, 2 and 3. Attractive displays in classrooms and around the school are rich in language. Together with the well-stocked library, they help pupils to develop a love of reading.
- Pupils write well for different purposes. Overall, standards of presentation are good and pupils take pride in using accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar in their writing.
- The school's information shows that pupils' skills in mathematics are also strong and develop well during their time there. Interesting problem-solving activities deepen pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts, and engage their interest because they are often related to real-life situations.

- Pupils make good progress overall in academic, physical, technological, creative and linguistic subjects, including French and Latin. For example, in key stage 3 science, pupils were examining plant and animal cells under a microscope to identify the key components of cell composition. They thought deeply about the investigations they had undertaken and were able to engage confidently in discussion about cytoplasm and mitochondria.
- During their time at Hill House, pupils achieve particularly well in music, art and sport. Almost 600 individual music lessons take place each week, involving a range of musical instruments, including the organ. Pupils regularly exhibit their art work in galleries across London. Those who attend off-site sporting activities make strong progress, often adding to their experience and skills by taking part in competitive fixtures. Large numbers of pupils develop their confidence by participating in concerts and productions in London, elsewhere in the United Kingdom and overseas. These experiences help pupils to develop high levels of self-confidence and self-control, particularly when performing in public.
- A number of pupils achieve prestigious awards to continue their studies at well-known independent schools. Nevertheless, pupils, particularly the most able, are not consistently set challenging tasks to enable them to them to achieve the very highest standards of which they are capable.

Early years provision

Good

- Children benefit greatly from the nurturing, family ethos of the setting. As a result, they settle in well, they are happy and they make a good start to their schooling.
- Children join the early years with a range of skills that are broadly typical for their age. Teachers respond well to individual needs by planning interesting activities. As a result of effective teaching, children make good progress overall, across all areas of learning. Children particularly enjoy their learning in art, drama, music, French and sport because they receive skilled and specialist teaching. They are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Children enjoy working together and display high levels of maturity towards staff and each other. They are keen to learn, display high levels of concentration and behave extremely well.
- Children are encouraged to explore new ideas in different ways to enhance their understanding. For example, they listened to two pieces of classical music and were required to identify whether the extract was 'fast' or 'slow'. They explained further what 'fast' and 'slow' meant and successfully recalled the meaning of 'tempo' from previous learning. Children thoroughly enjoyed this activity and learned much about what musical ingredients contribute to making a piece of music sound 'fast' or 'slow'.
- Parents are very involved in their children's education and welfare. Effective induction arrangements ensure that staff have a good knowledge of children's abilities and skills before they join the early years. The staff use the information well to help children establish good routines for their learning.
- Safeguarding practices meet all the relevant independent school standards and the statutory requirements of the early years are met.

- Leadership of the early years provision is effective. The early years and senior leaders understand the children's learning well. Together, they check individual children's progress carefully. Nevertheless, as in the main school, sometimes activities do not always challenge children in their thinking, particularly the most able. This is because there are occasions when teachers do not set, adapt and refine activities so that children achieve their potential. In addition, while previous staff training has been effective in improving the quality of teaching, more work is required to ensure that children make the best possible progress.

School details

Unique reference number	100518
DfE registration number	207/6188
Inspection number	10038150

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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	690
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Richard, Janet, Edmund and William Townend
Chair	Richard Robinson
Headteacher	Richard Townend
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,200–£16,400
Telephone number	020 7584 1331
Website	www.hillhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	info@hillhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–4 December 2014

Information about this school

- Hill House International Junior School is located in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The school was founded in Switzerland in 1949 and opened in London in 1951.
- The school is located on four sites in the residential areas of Knightsbridge and Chelsea, in south-west London. The Reception classes are located at Hall of Remembrance, Flood Street, London SW3 5SY. Pupils in Years 1 to 4 are taught at 17, Cadogan Gardens, London SW3 2RJ. Pupils in Years 5 to 8 are taught at 17, Hans Place, London SW1 0EP, which is the main school site. For music, drama and art pupils attend the

Founders' Hall, 2 Radnor Walk, London SW3 4BN. The school has an annex in Switzerland which is visited by groups of pupils and staff during the year.

- The school is registered for up to 990 pupils aged four to 13. Currently there are 690 pupils on the roll. This total is made up as follows: 63 children in the Reception classes, 355 in Years 1 to 4, and 272 pupils in Years 5 to 8.
- All children attend the Reception classes on a full-time basis. None of them is in receipt of government funding.
- The members of the founding family of the school are the proprietors, who also lead and manage the school. There are four proprietors. One proprietor is the headteacher, and his two sons are also senior leaders. Their mother is the fourth proprietor.
- There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. There are no pupils eligible for free school meals.
- Around half of all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the remainder being White British. There are pupils of 48 nationalities; 27 languages are spoken. Pupils speak a variety of home languages; many are bilingual, and some are trilingual.
- The school was last inspected in December 2014, when it was judged to be inadequate. There followed two progress monitoring inspections in September 2015 and June 2016. During the second monitoring visit the school was judged to meet all the independent school standards.
- Off-site training is made available for pupils to extend their learning experiences. The school offers the following activities:
 - swimming at these three venues: The Queen Mother Sports Centre, 223 Vauxhall Bridge Road, Pimlico, London SW1V 1EL; Latchmere Leisure Centre, Burns Road, London SW11 5AD; Chelsea Sports Centre, Chelsea Manor Street, Chelsea, London SW3 5PL
 - tennis at Queen's Club, Palliser Road, London W14 9EQ
 - squash at South Bank Club, 124–130 Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2LD
 - cricket at Ken Barrington Cricket Centre, The Kia Oval, Surrey County Cricket Club, Kennington, London, SE11 5SS.
- The school aims 'to offer the finest possible education a young life can enjoy'.
- When they leave, most pupils transfer to well-known independent schools.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across all four sites, almost all jointly with senior staff. They spoke to pupils informally throughout the inspection. All inspectors attended a whole-school assembly at St Columba's Church.
- There were 227 responses to Parent View and 141 text comments from parents. Inspectors considered the school's analysis of its own survey of the views of pupils and parents. Inspectors also considered the 58 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors held discussions with the proprietors, senior and middle leaders, staff and the chair to the board of advisers.
- Inspectors reviewed key documents and policies, including those related to safeguarding, to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. They scrutinised pupils' books and the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection team

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Jo Franklin	Ofsted Inspector

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