School report

La Petite Ecole Française

73 St Charles Square, London W10 6EJ

Inspection dates 28 February–2 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Senior leaders and the proprietor have been successful in achieving their vision of developing a 'nurturing and homely environment in which the children can thrive'. Leaders strive for excellence in all areas of the school's work.
- The headteacher has worked very successfully to intertwine the French curriculum with pupils' acquisition of English language skills.
- Parents and staff unequivocally support the leadership team of the school. Staff morale is exceptionally high and they benefit from a strong programme of training.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for the small number of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Consequently, these pupils are fully included in the school and make very strong progress.
- Pupils leave La Petite Ecole Française exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education. They have a high level of proficiency in both French and English.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They demonstrate a high degree of resilience and extremely positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils are safe and very well cared for.
- Teachers set high standards, with an unwavering focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- A highly engaging curriculum contributes to pupils' strong progress in all subjects and supports their development as well-rounded individuals. Pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is actively promoted through excellent learning opportunities.
- Teachers provide pupils with a high level of challenge and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding very well. However, there are times when pupils wait too long for adult guidance when they finish their work.
- The early years section is very well led. Children develop well academically and socially as the result of the excellent teaching and care they receive.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that, when pupils have finished their work ahead of others, they are provided quickly with new challenges.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding

- An inspirational headteacher, working closely with the proprietor and other leaders, has successfully created a learning community in which pupils and staff can thrive. A high level of care, staff collaboration and expert teaching enable pupils to benefit immensely from a French curriculum that works seamlessly alongside the English curriculum.
- Staff are inspired by the headteacher's vision and share her ambition for continuous improvement. They speak very positively about the nurture and guidance given by leaders. For example, a member of staff said: 'I drive to school in the morning to see happy children and staff.' Staff praise the school as 'a special place to work in'. All staff who responded to Ofsted's survey said that they feel proud to be part of La Petite Ecole Française.
- Staff excel in their roles due to a culture of robust accountability and the 'open door' approach of leaders. Performance management reviews are meticulously lead by the headteacher. Teachers' performance is evaluated through routine observations and discussions about pupils' progress. Staff receive individual targets that leaders review and link with opportunities for further professional development.
- Leaders carefully assess individual pupils' progress against the requirements of the French curriculum. This contributes to the school's excellent links with secondary schools for transition arrangements. Leaders review pupils' reports when they go to secondary school, demonstrating the school's care for pupils' well-being even when they leave the school.
- The curriculum is planned carefully. Pupils excel in learning the French curriculum requirements, including art and civics. The school's approach enables the majority of pupils to be fluent in English and French by the time they leave for secondary school. Pupils told inspectors that they also enjoy lessons in swimming, climbing and tennis, which take place in a nearby sports centre.
- The proprietor and headteacher have successfully balanced the restrictions in the French curriculum regarding the teaching of other religions with the requirement in England to learn about other cultures. This prepares pupils well for living in modern Britain.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are taught about the importance of laws in society. They learn about cultural differences through the many visits to the school of parents of different nationalities. The curriculum is enhanced by trips to places including museums and the Tower of London. Pupils in Year 5 (Cours Moyen 1) visit Edinburgh as part of their learning about British culture.
- Leaders have a thorough understanding of the small number of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils are supported well and leaders and staff pay particular attention to their individual needs.
- Parents put immense trust in the school's leadership team because of staff's regular communication with them. They speak highly of 'fantastic staff' and the school's supportive leaders. All parents that met with inspectors and completed the online survey, Parent View, would recommend this school.

Governance

- The proprietor holds responsibility for governance. She rigorously oversees the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- The proprietor is highly effective in her role. She is unwavering in her vision for the school, supported by an incisive knowledge of the school's strengths. She demonstrates a first-rate understanding of policies and procedures and provides a high level of support to staff.
- The proprietor takes an active role in the school's performance management arrangements. She works extremely well in partnership with the headteacher, and together they look closely at individual targets before reviewing them. Consequently, the school has a strong sense of accountability, with everyone excelling in their roles.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders receive up-to-date training reflecting the latest guidance, including the 'Prevent' duty and knowing how to recognise the signs that pupils may be at risk of neglect. They have an in-depth understanding of pupils in their care and know how to follow up any issues with appropriate support. Leaders make very good use of external safeguarding specialists to ensure that they have access to the correct support if necessary.
- Staff demonstrate a robust understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures. Leaders ensure that they regularly update staff about any safeguarding concerns. A collegial and trusting relationship between staff and leaders enables staff to share potential concerns immediately.
- Staff ensure that pupils are kept safe within the multi-user site. Leaders work closely with both the French and British police to ensure that they have a deep understanding of potential risks and how to deal with them effectively. Risk assessments are thorough and well thought through.
- Every parent who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their child is kept safe and is well cared for.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment — Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding because, during their time at the school, pupils make excellent progress in their learning.
- A striking feature of the teaching is the school's approach to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. As pupils get older, teachers encourage them to debate and share their thinking with others. For example, in a mixed Year 2 and 3 class, pupils learned about masculine and feminine determiners in a French grammar lesson; individual pupils were encouraged to share their reasons for choosing the gender of different words, while other pupils listened attentively. This enabled a pupil to correct his mistake immediately and change his original answer.
- Teaching at the school is underpinned by a culture of mutual respect in which children are not afraid to share their thinking. Classrooms are calm and orderly. Adults have high

expectations and this helps pupils to develop into resilient learners who take responsibility for their learning and want to succeed. All pupils, including the most able and lower-ability pupils, thrive because of the level of challenge in their work.

- Teachers take time to listen carefully and give precise guidance when appropriate. This encourages pupils to express their views confidently. For example, in a Year 4 writing lesson, pupils enthusiastically shared their understanding of how characters from different French and English books would communicate with each other. The teacher was able to guide these pupils to ensure that they included specific character traits, enabling pupils to make strong progress.
- The teaching of reading is very effective. Pupils develop a high level of sophistication in their understanding of French and English novels. For pupils who learn most of their lessons in the French language, this is a considerable achievement.
- Teachers clarify unfamiliar words with great care and this helps pupils to acquire new vocabulary extremely well. In English lessons, teachers are highly effective at developing pupils' language skills. For example, while reading the English version of 'Little Red Riding Hood' to pupils in Year 1, the English teacher skilfully used repetition and words from the French language to help pupils' understanding of the story.
- Pupils have fluent and legible handwriting because teachers focus on pupils' precise use of punctuation in French and English. Pupils are given opportunities to apply the strong language skills they acquire through class discussions to produce increasingly extended pieces of writing. For example, pupils in Year 6 used a range of sentence openers and exciting vocabulary while writing a diary entry about the Second World War.
- As a result of very effective teaching of mathematics, pupils make excellent progress. For example, in a Year 1 (Grande Section) lesson, a teaching assistant used counters with a small group and carefully checked that each child could count accurately. The adult then used pictorial 'arrays' and number cards to challenge children to match numbers with diagrams, to which they responded successfully and with enthusiasm. Pupils solve complex tasks while collaborating with their peers extremely well.
- The use of additional adults to support pupils' learning is highly effective. Sometimes, it is hard to distinguish between teachers and teaching assistants because both lead learning groups so well. A common sight across the school is of all adults leading group sessions with a particular learning focus.
- Pupils excel in the wider curriculum. They have many opportunities to learn about art throughout the school and this is often interlinked to other subject areas, which helps pupils acquire a deeper understanding.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils' understanding. Adults have excellent working relationships with pupils that enable them to check pupils' understanding and clarify any misconceptions. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress. However, on occasions, when pupils have finished their tasks, they wait too long for adults before moving on to more challenging work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare — Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.

- Rich curriculum opportunities enable pupils to develop excellent knowledge and understanding about keeping healthy. For example, pupils across the school learned about the amount of sugar in commonly available drinks. Younger children used this understanding to learn about dental hygiene and nutrition as part of their science lessons.
- Pupils' well-being and mental health is taken seriously. The high level of adult support and vigilance enables pupils to become expressive and confident individuals. In Year 6, pupils have lessons in relaxation techniques to learn about how to keep a relaxed body and alert mind. Pupils value these lessons immensely and share mature responses about the importance of sleep and methods to keep themselves calm.
- Positive relationships between pupils, parents, carers and staff create a strong sense of community. Staff meet with parents about any potential concerns and together they agree solutions. Regular communication, including the use of 'yellow books' ('cahiers jaune'), allows for strong two-way interaction.
- Pupils feel safe at the school and trust the adults who work with them. Pupils said that bullying was not an issue at their school. They have a very good understanding of keeping safe online, including the potential risks of social media and sharing pictures on mobile phones.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils need little reminders about making positive behaviour choices. They are very respectful of each other and are quick to offer help, for example when putting on their coats. Pupils show great maturity in the way they take responsibility, reflecting adults' high expectations and their encouragement of pupils to choose the right thing to do. This was exemplified when pupils were allowed to play in the snow, where they could slide and play with their friends in an extremely safe manner.
- Adults deal swiftly with any minor misunderstandings between pupils. They listen to pupils' views attentively and then provide solutions involving both parties. For example, on occasions, contracts are agreed between pupils with clear targets to help them to avoid any further disagreements.
- Pupils' attendance is strong and remains above the national average. They are punctual to lessons and begin working immediately.

Outcomes for pupils — Outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress throughout their time at the school.
- Pupils develop their knowledge and understanding exceptionally well in the French curriculum. They rapidly develop their speaking and listening skills and, by the time they leave the school, have mastered most objectives and work well above the expected standards. Assessment information from pupils' first term in their secondary schools clearly demonstrates that these pupils work well above other pupils of a similar age group.
- The small proportion of pupils who speak French or English as an additional language make excellent progress. They gain fluency in spoken French and English rapidly and, by

the time they leave the school, are bilingual.

- Pupils' writing in French and English is of a high standard. They have a very strong grasp of vocabulary, reflecting their reading of a range of texts and opportunities to discuss their ideas. Pupils write neatly and present their work to a high standard. By the time they leave the school they can write extended stories and poetry accurately in both languages.
- Reading is promoted extremely well across the school. Building on their strong phonics foundations early in the school, pupils learn to read fluently and expressively in both English and French. They have an excellent understanding of famous novels in both languages and demonstrate insightful understanding of different authors and text types.
- In mathematics, pupils make excellent progress. Pupils develop great proficiency in calculation skills and these are regularly extended through problem-solving tasks. Pupils are encouraged to apply skills that they have learned in different topic areas in revision lessons. For example in Year 6, pupils demonstrated a range of skills in being able to solve problems involving decimals, fractions and logic problems.
- Pupils' progress in the wider curriculum is enhanced through a series of projects. These include short projects, for example that link mathematics and science, and the longer 'Projet d'école' where they build targeted skills, including those related to art and culture. This helps them to gain knowledge and understanding of history and geography topics to a high standard.

Early years provision	**Outstanding**

- Leadership of the early years (Maternelle) is highly effective. Leaders are ambitious for the children and know them well. They maintain strong relationships with parents and ensure that children's well-being is a priority. The provision is well resourced.
- In the Nursery and Reception Years, there is a sharp focus on building children's self-esteem and developing their skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Good routines are established, to which children respond very well. They are respectful and kind to staff and each other. As a result of excellent provision, children are very well prepared for Year 1.
- Staff focus on children's language acquisition. In the Nursery, children develop excellent spoken French skills. At the same time, staff encourage them to speak English clearly and in full sentences, through excellent role models. As a consequence, children are increasingly fluent in the English language by the time they progress through to the primary school.
- Regular story times act as a catalyst for children to develop strong reading comprehension skills. Adults read with love and expression, enticing even the youngest children to engage fully with stories. French stories are shared with the same level of enjoyment as English ones. Younger children read with fluency, building on their strong French phonics skills.
- The teaching of writing is equally effective. Teachers systematically embed children's basic skills, including their development of French phonics and handwriting. Teachers encourage children to regularly practise letter formations using a range of media such as sand, and precisely check each child's ability before they begin their formal writing.

- In mathematics, children make excellent progress because of well-planned opportunities for children to practise embedding their skills. Teachers use resources extremely well to clarify misconceptions. For example, children learned about counting using egg boxes and small toys, with careful adult supervision. When a child struggled to recognise a number, the teacher immediately used displays and a range of strategies to help him gain a better understanding.
- Adults develop children's knowledge and understanding exceptionally well through careful questioning. For example, a teacher systematically challenged children with increasingly complex tasks when learning about edges and corners of shapes.
- The early years curriculum develops a wide range of skills. Children progress well in art and creative skills using a range of media, such as making collages and working with paint. For example, children designed creative portraits using the techniques of the Italian artist Arcimboldo, which linked to their science topic on healthy eating. In Reception, children extend their basic reading and writing skills while developing their scientific knowledge through 'discovery of the world' lessons.

School details

Unique reference number	100545
DfE registration number	207/6387
Inspection number	10020733

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Devika Malik
Headteacher	Marjorie Lacassagne
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,600
Telephone number	020 8960 1278
Website	www.lapetiteecolefrancaise.co.uk
Email address	lapetiteecolefrancaise@gmail.com
Date of previous inspection	18 November 2010

Information about this school

- La Petite Ecole Française is an independent French school that follows the French national education system. It caters for pupils aged 3 to 11 years.
- The school was founded in 1983 and moved to its present location in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea in 2010.
- The school is part of the AEFE (Agence pour l'Enseignement Français à l'Etranger) and has been awarded 'homologation' status that confirms the school follows the learning objectives of the French curriculum.
- There are currently two Petite Section classes, a Moyenne Section class, a Grande Section class and a double-level Moyenne-Grande Section class. In the primary section, there are also two double-level classes, Cours préparatoire (CP)/ Cours élémentaire 1 (CP1) and

Cours élémentaire 2 (CP2)/ Cours Moyen 1 (CM1) and a single Cours Moyen 2 (CM2) class. There are no off-site units run by the school.

- Pupils in the Petite section have two to three hours of English weekly. Those in the Primaire section receive six hours of English per week.
- There are pupils of 17 different nationalities in the school. The majority speak French as a first language. There are currently no pupils with an education, health and care plan. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and or/disabilities is well below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, the headteacher, the head of administration and members of staff to evaluate the impact of their work.
- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups, some of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Work in pupils' books and folders was reviewed during visits to lessons.
- A range of documentation was considered, including assessment information and safeguarding and attendance records.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and talked to pupils informally throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 27 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and of information gathered from discussions with parents during the inspection. There were 11 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Noeman Anwar, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rosemarie McCarthy	Ofsted Inspector

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