

Inspection of Hill House School

Hans Place, Knightsbridge, London SW1X 0EP

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 July 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very happy here. They thoroughly enjoy their learning and the vast range of exciting opportunities on offer. For instance, pupils take part in musical productions and many sporting events. Staff encourage pupils to 'have a go'. This includes trying out new foods on the menu, learning musical instruments and going on school journeys to the Swiss Alps.

Staff are ambitious for pupils' academic and individual success. They have high expectations of all pupils. Extensive enrichment opportunities foster pupils' interests and curiosity.

Staff celebrate pupils' many achievements. For example, pupils showcased their successes of the year while rehearsing for 'Field Day'. Pupils spoke highly of the caring nature of adults who help them to achieve their best. They feel safe in an environment where respect, friendship and equality are highly valued. Pupils are kind and respectful to each other and adults. They are welcoming towards the many pupils that join the school part way through their education. Pupils are confident and articulate. Teachers encourage pupils to express their views while being mindful of others.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Bullying and poor behaviour are extremely rare. Staff deal with any concerns quickly. Pupils know who to talk to should they have a concern.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders ensure that pupils study a broad and rich curriculum. Curricular thinking is well thought out and ambitious. Leaders identify what key knowledge pupils should learn and when across all subjects. This helps pupils to learn a deep body of knowledge. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 could confidently explain the consequences of significant events in Britain and the world. This included changes to international relations, trade, and the relationship between rulers and the populace.

Teachers develop pupils' vocabulary well. For instance, in Reception, children learned to use the word 'chrysalis' when discussing the life cycle of a butterfly. In mathematics, teachers focus on pupils' correct use of strategies. Pupils develop strong arithmetic and calculation skills. This helps pupils to solve increasingly complex problems.

Leaders ensure that teachers have increased opportunities for professional development. However, this is not consistently the case across all subjects and year groups. This means some teachers do not have the precise skills to check that pupils have fully understood what they have learned. As a result, some pupils do not have sufficient knowledge to tackle more difficult concepts.

The development of pupils' reading is treated as a key priority. Leaders have ensured that they have successfully implemented a new phonics approach. Children in Reception learn to use phonics knowledge to read, write and spell accurately. In Years 1 and 2, teachers identify pupils who may struggle with reading. These pupils receive effective additional support with phonics to help them to segment and blend sounds. However, pupils who struggle with reading do not receive regular practice in applying phonics knowledge when reading books. This limits the development of reading fluency for these pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive strong support. Adults receive regular training to help them to meet these pupils' individual needs. Leaders work diligently with external specialists.

Pupils have highly positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen and take part in lessons without wasting learning time. Good manners begin in Reception where adults' clear expectations help children learn how to be polite and follow routines.

Pupils' personal development is promoted extensively. They have many opportunities for visits, clubs and to learn about the world around them. For example, in social studies, pupils learn about different beliefs and views. Pupils learn about the importance of maintaining their physical and mental health. They value taking on responsibilities. Leaders have successfully implemented the statutory guidance to teach relationships and sex education.

The proprietor body has a deep oversight of the school's work and provides a clear direction. Staff are well supported with their workload. Leaders ensure the school complies with the independent school standards, and the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

Leaders have a detailed overview of safeguarding procedures. They keep up to date with the latest statutory requirements. As a result, leaders know how to manage concerns, including using external agencies if required. The school's safeguarding policy is available to parents on the school's website. Staff receive regular training. They know how to identify and follow up on concerns.

Staff teach pupils about how to keep safe. Pupils are taught how to keep safe online. They are taught about the importance of personal boundaries and consent in an age-appropriate way.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Pupils who struggle with their reading do not get as much practice to apply their phonics knowledge to reading books. As a result, these pupils do not catch up in their reading as quickly as they should. Leaders should ensure that pupils who struggle with their reading have regular opportunities to read books so that their reading fluency is improved.
- Professional development of teachers across all subjects is not consistent. As a result, some staff do not check pupils' prior knowledge before they move on to more difficult concepts. Leaders should ensure that high-quality subject-specific training is provided in all subjects, and that leaders check the difference that this is making to pupils' readiness to move on to more difficult concepts.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	100518
DfE registration number	207/6188
Local authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	10210755
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	553
Proprietors	Richard, Janet, Edmund and William Townend
Headteacher	Richard Townend
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,000 to £18,600
Telephone number	020 7584 1331
Website	www.hillhouseschool.co.uk
Email address	info@hillhouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 to 18 January 2018

Information about this school

- Hill House School is an international preparatory school located in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The school provides full-time education for boys and girls aged 4 to 13 years. The school was founded in Switzerland in 1949 and opened in London in 1951.
- The founding family are the four proprietors and they manage the school. One proprietor is the headmaster, and his two sons are also senior leaders. Their mother is the fourth proprietor.
- 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 uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in the evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the proprietor body, a member of the advisory group, senior leaders and subject leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in four subjects: reading, social studies, French and mathematics. Other subjects were also considered as part of this inspection. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read. Meetings with pupils and teachers to gather their views were also held.
- During the inspection, inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, pupils' personal development and behaviour. Inspectors considered the school's policies and procedures to check

compliance with the independent school standards. The views of parents and staff were also considered, including through Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

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