

Inspection of St John's Wood Pre-Preparatory School

St John's Hall, Lord's Roundabout, London NW8 7NE

Inspection dates: 28 to 30 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school enormously. They said that they 'love the school' because teachers make lessons fun. They delight in learning new facts and explaining these to visitors. For example, they know lots of things about Queen Elizabeth 1 and Queen Victoria, and about different artists, such as L S Lowry.

All this happens because of the dedication of staff. They have worked methodically to improve the curriculum. Teaching programmes for all subjects set out the school's expectations for learning from Nursery to the end of Year 2. This helps to ensure that pupils move from one class to the next smoothly.

Pupils behave well in class and around the school. Staff help them develop their social and personal skills right from the start. As a result, pupils learn how to work by themselves and with others. They share equipment without fuss, and are respectful of others and polite to adults. Strong relationships between pupils and staff help to create a happy and welcoming atmosphere where bullying is rare and not tolerated.

Pupils feel safe and are kept safe. This is because the school has robust arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. Leaders and staff keep a tight watching brief on every pupil, enabling them to spot and support those who may need extra help.

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

The school has tackled the areas highlighted in the last full inspection successfully. The curriculum is planned effectively to ensure that it is suitably ambitious. It includes a programme for phonics in early years and relationships education. The school is successful in ensuring that pupils achieve well and are prepared effectively for the next stage of their education.

Nevertheless, leaders and staff recognise that more work is needed to tighten the curriculum further and ensure that pupils reach the pinnacle of their achievements. Although curriculum thinking highlights what the school wants pupils to be able to do by the end of the programme, there are instances where the curriculum does not set out clearly the steps needed to reach these goals. In history, for example, pupils study Guy Fawkes twice, but curriculum thinking does not set out clearly how the work in Year 2 builds logically on that undertaken in Year 1. This means that, at times, pupils do not deepen their knowledge and skills consistently.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported carefully. Staff are quick to pick up those who may need additional help and they work with parents and carers to provide support, such as speech and language therapy. As a result, pupils with SEND do as well as their peers, especially in the way in which they are successfully prepared for moving on to their next school.

The teaching of reading has improved significantly, and the phonics programme is front and centre of the school's work. This ensures that pupils learn how to use the sounds that letters represent to read new or unfamiliar words. Staff pick up quickly on pupils who fall behind and get them back on track. Pupils read, and are read to, regularly. They take home books that tie in with the sounds that they are learning in class. Pupils become increasingly fluent and confident readers as they move up the school.

There is a range of professional development opportunities provided for staff, especially for safeguarding. Nevertheless, training to keep staff up to date with current curriculum practice is less well developed. As a result, there are a few gaps in staff's knowledge and skills related to the curriculum, particularly in how to break down the overall learning goal into a succession of small, logical steps.

The early years curriculum links closely to that in Years 1 and 2, ensuring that pupils move from class to class smoothly. Suitable emphasis is placed on developing children's personal, social and emotional skills. Routines are consistently reinforced, with expectations appropriately high. The curriculum covers all the early years requirements, giving children the understanding and skills that they need to move into Year 1. Staff keep a running check on children's learning, allowing them to identify and support those who may need extra help.

There is a range of opportunities to develop pupils' personal skills. For example, the personal, social, health, citizenship and economics education programme includes teaching on relationships, health and well-being, and keeping safe. Internet safety and equalities are also embraced. Assemblies on topics such as Black History Month, Diwali and disabilities help to develop pupils' awareness of life in Britain. Educational visits to museums and, for example, to Hampton Court Palace, extend pupils' experiences well.

There are effective arrangements to promote pupils' attendance. The school maintains clear records of attendance and punctuality. Absences are followed up carefully, and staff emphasise the importance of attending school every day. As a result, overall attendance is strong.

Leaders ensure that staff workload is manageable. Teamwork is a strong feature of this small school and supports staff's well-being well. It means that everyone contributes to the school's development. Staff appreciate that leaders are approachable, listen and are understanding.

The advisory board acts effectively as a critical friend to the proprietor, ensuring that responsibilities are clear. Leaders, including the advisory board, ensure that the independent school standards (the standards) are met consistently. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. The statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage are also met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Although planning for the curriculum identifies the end-points, there are times when curriculum thinking does not routinely show the smaller steps in learning that are needed to reach the final goal. In addition, staff have had little training in how to break down the overall learning goal into a succession of small, logical steps. This affects how effectively pupils deepen their knowledge over time. The school needs to ensure that the identified outcomes for each subject are consistently broken down into the essential components that pupils need to learn so that they can achieve the intended outcomes. The school should ensure that the programme of learning is sequenced logically and provide further opportunities for professional development to help update staff with current practice, especially in relation to curriculum sequencing.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	101174
DfE registration number	213/6333
Local authority	Westminster
Inspection number	10299151
Type of school	Day pre-preparatory school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	34
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Adrian Ellis
Chair of the advisory board	Gill Bilbo
Headteacher	Adrian Ellis (Principal)
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,600 to £19,290
Telephone number	020 7722 7149
Website	www.sjwpre-prep.org.uk
Email address	adrian@sjwpre-prep.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 December 2022

Information about this school

- St John's Wood Pre-Preparatory School is an independent day school located in St John's Wood in the City of Westminster. The school shares the building with St John's Wood Church.
- The school is registered to provide full-time education for up to 124 pupils aged three to seven.
- The school's last full inspection was in March 2022, when its overall effectiveness was judged to require improvement and some of the independent school standards were unmet. An additional inspection in December 2022 found that the school met all the independent school standards that were checked.
- Leaders do not make use of any 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.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, humanities (geography and history), and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at the wider curriculum and visited provision for other subjects.
- Meetings were held with the principal, the associate headteachers, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with the chair of the advisory board by phone.
- Inspectors considered 12 responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- Meetings were held with Year 2 pupils to discuss their views about different aspects of their school. There were seven responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and four to the staff survey.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Guy Forbat

His Majesty's Inspector

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