



## Eaton House School

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## **Introduction and summary**

### **Purpose and scope of the inspection**

This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

### **Information about the school**

Eaton House is a non-selective pre-preparatory school for boys which was established in 1897. It is located a short distance from Sloane Square in Belgravia, Central London. It is the original school in a group of three owned by the proprietors.

There are 213 boys on roll between the ages of four and eight years. Forty eight pupils are funded under the Nursery Education Scheme. The majority of pupils transfer to independent boarding or day schools at the age of eight years although a minority transfer at the age of seven.

The school aims to provide 'a happy and stimulating educational experience'. Whilst emphasising its academic tradition, it prides itself on being forward looking and on its ability to meet the needs of individual pupils.

### **Summary of main findings**

Eaton House is a successful school with some very good features. The headteacher is a very good leader who has created an effective staff team. The school provides high quality education ensuring that pupils make good progress and attain high standards by the time they leave. The school is successful in preparing its pupils for the next stage in their education. It fulfils its aims and fully meets all the regulations for registration.

### **What the school does well**

- teaching is good overall and some is very good;
- the curriculum is broad and balanced and enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities;
- provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is a strength;
- the school takes its responsibilities for pupils' welfare, health and safety very seriously; and
- provision for the personal development of pupils is very good.

## **Next steps**

Whilst not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure that pupils listen and respond appropriately to their teachers and each other at all times;
- appoint subject leaders for English and mathematics to assist the headteacher in maintaining high quality teaching and progression in learning; and
- improve standards in handwriting.

## **Compliance with the regulations for registration**

### **1. The quality of education provided by the school**

#### **The quality of the curriculum**

The curriculum is broad and balanced and relevant to the pupils' needs.

The curriculum for the kindergarten has appropriate regard to the national recommendations for this age group. Pupils are given a firm foundation for their future learning. There is an appropriate balance of practical and more formal activities. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the curriculum.

Planning throughout the school is based on the National Curriculum; it indicates precisely what is to be taught each term. Schemes of work ensure continuity and progression in learning. These schemes are underpinned by policies which fully define procedures and practice. A significant amount of time is allocated to English and mathematics. This supports pupils in their preparation for entrance examinations to independent schools. Homework is used effectively to supplement work covered in lessons.

Social and personal targets for individual pupils are displayed in most classrooms. These are often referred to during lessons. The school has an appropriately structured programme for personal social and health education (PSHE).

The provision for pupils with SEN is a strength of the school. Highly skilled specialist teaching supports SEN pupils. The programmes for these pupils are very effectively linked to work in lessons. Rigorous testing each term ensures early intervention for pupils who need additional support. Policy and procedures for pupils with English as an additional language are appropriate.

The curriculum is enhanced by planned visits each term to places of interest, for example to the science and natural history museums and the local fire station. It is further boosted by a wide variety of extra-curricular activities.

#### **The quality of the teaching and assessment**

A large majority of teaching seen was good, and some was very good. There was very little unsatisfactory teaching. As a result, pupils make good progress over time. The very effective teaching of pupils with special educational ensures that they make very good progress. The headteacher is an influential and reflective practitioner who places emphasis on evaluating and

improving the quality of teaching. She undertakes observations of teachers and provides feedback which includes areas for improvement. At present, there are no subject leaders for English and mathematics. Subject leaders for both areas would assist the headteacher in maintaining high quality teaching and progression in learning.

The school has recently introduced new lesson planning formats. Teachers use these to plan effectively and they underpin good teaching. Such teaching is characterised by discussion about the lesson objective, so pupils know what they have to achieve. Considered questioning keeps pupils of all abilities engaged with the lesson and tasks are closely matched to pupils' abilities. During the best lessons, teachers impart an infectious enthusiasm for learning to pupils and make very efficient use of time so that pupils have to work very hard and are very productive.

Several factors contribute to the limited incidences of weaker teaching. These include a failure to check the exuberance of pupils and poor classroom routines. This means that time is wasted and pupils are not actively involved. At times, pupils are not encouraged to listen to each other and they are therefore unable to build on each other's contributions.

Teachers are hard working. They place appropriate emphasis on the teaching of creative and descriptive writing. As a result, pupils attain high standards in these areas. Pupils produce reasonable handwriting during lessons in this subject although this is not evident in other areas of the curriculum. As a result, standards in handwriting overall are slightly below that expected nationally. Reading tests demonstrate that pupils are generally attaining standards above those expected for their age.

Pupils have plentiful opportunities to practise their arithmetic, and as a result, most are highly numerate. The introduction of timetabled mental mathematics sessions is timely. Appropriately, the school is considering how teachers can balance worksheets with investigational activities.

Specialist teaching in information and communication technology (ICT), music and physical education (PE) contributes to high standards in these areas. The school is rightly proud of its tradition of instrumental teaching. Instrumental teachers are skilful in focusing pupils' attention and effort so that they make good progress.

Assessment procedures are thorough. A nationally recognised system is used to track the performance of pupils in the kindergarten and the performance of all pupils is thoroughly assessed as they enter Year 1. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and praise their efforts judiciously. The best marking is diagnostic; it pinpoints gaps in pupils' understanding and helps them to make progress. This good practice should become more widespread.

Staff undertake continuing professional development alongside the staff of other schools in the Eaton House group. In addition, individual staff attend courses run by, for example, the local education authority. These training opportunities help build teachers' confidence and enhance a team approach. The well written staff handbook provides a very good guide for those who are new to the school.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The school makes good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It provides a happy and mutually supportive atmosphere wherein pupils flourish. The development of pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem is promoted through the considered use of praise by staff and the provision of suitable opportunities for them to undertake responsibilities as prefects and monitors. Almost all parents agree that their children enjoy coming to school and

that staff treat the pupils fairly and with respect. Teachers are caring and the positive model they set is one of the key reasons why pupils are happy at the school. Pupils have targets for personal development, some of which they have devised themselves.

Pupils' behaviour is generally sound but, on occasions, pupils are too high-spirited and do not listen in lessons. As a result, some learning objectives are not met and time is wasted. Most teachers manage the pupils effectively. School rules are clear and are regularly reinforced by staff. The pupils know and understand the need for such rules. The school's structured programme for PSHE promotes social and moral development effectively. One assembly each week focuses on particular aspects of PSHE and issues are discussed further in classes.

Assemblies are important moments in the life of this school. The spiritual aspect of assemblies is planned carefully to provide daily opportunities for reflection. Pupils sing hymns, listen to stories which help them to consider different moral standpoints, and they pray. Assemblies reinforce the message to pupils that they are special because all human beings are special.

A valuable contribution to PSHE is made by the 'Headlines' group of Year 3 pupils who meet each lunch time to discuss current affairs. This provides pupils with insights into aspects of local, international and global issues. The pupils have opportunities to debate and form their own opinions. Regular speakers are invited to attend. This term these will include a policeman, a soldier recently returned from the Gulf, and a Queen's Counsel. In the summer term, Year 3 pupils mentor kindergarten pupils and perform in the annual drama production. Such opportunities to experience responsibility prepare them effectively for their next stage of education.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities are well-attended and popular. These include chess, drama, music, cookery, art and judo. These activities promote opportunities for pupils to develop their interpersonal and collaborative skills. Regular visits to museums and other educational venues extend the work done in lessons. A residential weekend is available for Year 3 pupils.

The school is mindful of the need to promote tolerance and racial harmony. An International Day is held each summer, when pupils and parents can wear traditional dress. A variety of cultural foods is available and a florist provides flowers from a range of cultures. Christianity and other major faiths are taught in religious education lessons and many festivals are celebrated. Recently the kindergarten classes studied the festival of Divali.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils**

Provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is very good. The school has appropriate policies to prevent bullying and to protect pupils from any possible abuse. There are satisfactorily implemented procedures in place to promote good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Favourable relationships between staff and pupils underpin the firm foundation for personal development that is laid in the pupils' early days at school. Almost all parents state that their children are helped to settle well when starting school and that the school helps their child to become more mature and take on responsibility. The headteacher keeps appropriate details of the rare occasions when pupils commit more serious misdemeanours. Parents are fully involved when such incidents take place. A thoughtful and sensitive policy for the pupils' pastoral care provides guidance for staff in all aspects of school life. The staff handbook provides full information on how any emergency is to be dealt with. Pupils with allergies or special dietary requirements are identified and clear information is passed to the catering staff. Staffing levels are good and pupils are well supervised at all times.

An appropriate health and safety policy is in place and the school has undertaken thorough risk assessments of the building, as well as the venue for swimming lessons. There are good procedures in place for fire evacuation with regularly recorded fire drills. All fire equipment and fire alarms are checked thoroughly.

The school has prepared thorough procedures for the pupils' safety on visits out of school with sufficient detail to cover possible eventualities. The headteacher is provided with full details of all visits and gives approval when all safety criteria are met. The policy for First Aid is implemented effectively, with well-detailed records and suitably stocked First Aid boxes. There are at least two currently qualified First Aiders. All staff will undertake First Aid training during the current term.

The admission register and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with regulations.

The school has produced an appropriate accessibility plan in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff**

The headteacher has considerable experience in the independent sector. She is well supported by a newly appointed deputy headteacher who has worked at the school for some years. Together they are committed to providing a high standard of care and educational provision for the pupils.

There are 22 full-time and 2 part-time teaching staff. They are suitably qualified and form an effective team. There is a good balance of experience within the staff. The headteacher receives very efficient support from the school secretary. This enables the headteacher to concentrate on the educational agenda.

The school undertakes all checks required by the regulations regarding the suitability of staff to be employed at the school. These include checks through the Criminal Records Bureau.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation**

The premises and accommodation are of good quality. The school is housed in an adapted Regency building which was originally two adjacent town houses. The school has five floors, including the basement. Although the school has no outdoor play area, very good use is made of Hyde Park and Battersea Park. The pupils visit the parks for break time or organised games each day. Classrooms are just appropriate in size for the current numbers on roll. All areas are well-maintained and the standard of decoration is high. Furniture and fittings are of satisfactory quality and appropriate in size for the age range of the pupils. All areas of the school are clean and tidy with pupils' work displayed attractively.

Washroom facilities meet requirements for the numbers of pupils on roll and cloakroom areas are reasonably sized. A toilet on the ground floor has been adapted for use by physically disabled pupils. The kitchen is well-planned and maintained and enables hygienic food preparation. Meals are served in the well lit and ventilated basement dining room. The spacious hall is used for assemblies, music and physical activities. The library is situated centrally and is easily accessible

to staff and pupils. There are specialist rooms for music, science and computers. The computer suite is in regular use by all classes.

Facilities for pupils who are ill are satisfactory. A folding bed is available in the office and pupils have access to a nearby washroom.

Emergency evacuation procedures are displayed prominently throughout the school. There is adequate access to enable pupils to enter and leave the building safely.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**6. The quality of information for parents and other partners**

The quality of information provided by the school for parents is good. The school meets all the regulations relating to the provision of information to parents. Good relationships are evident between staff and parents.

Parents express a high level of satisfaction with the school. Most feel well informed about the progress their child makes. Reports for parents are provided each term. These valuable documents comment on their child's progress and attainment in each subject. Teachers give suggestions for what pupils need to do next to improve. The reports can be discussed at open evenings, held twice a year.

The prospectus outlines the school's aims and curricular provision. The school makes clear to parents the range of information available to them. Parents are kept well informed about activities and events through newsletters and notice boards.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

**7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints**

The procedure is clearly written and very accessible. However the parents' questionnaires indicate that several know little about the procedure for handling complaints. The school has very recently written to parents to make them aware of its procedure. In addition the school has established a useful complaints procedure for staff so that it may deal with staff complaints in a speedy and equitable manner.

***Does the school meet the requirements for registration?***

Yes.

## School details

Name of school:	Eaton House School
DfES ref number:	213/6045
Type of school:	Pre-preparatory
Status:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	4 - 8 years
Gender of pupils:	Boys
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 213, Girls , Total 213
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 0, Girls , Total 0
Annual fees (day pupils):	£8,550
Address of school:	3 - 5 Eaton Gate London SW1W 9BA
E-mail address:	misslucywatts@aol.com
Telephone number:	020 7730 9343
Fax number:	020 7730 1798
Headteacher:	Miss Lucy Watts
Proprietor:	Mr D Harper and Mrs H Harper
Lead Inspector:	Bradley Simmons HMI
Dates of inspection:	1 - 4 November 2004

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