

# Hampstead Hill School

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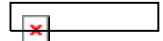
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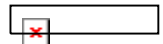
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## Introduction and summary

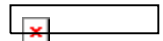


## Purpose and scope of the inspection



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

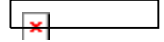


Hampstead Hill School is situated near the southern edge of Hampstead Heath in north-west London. It is an independent non-selective day school for boys and girls. The pupils are admitted to the school at the age of two and, while most leave at either seven or eight years old, a small proportion leave at the age of four. At the time of the inspection 303 pupils were on roll, including 35 who attend part-time. A large majority of the pupils live either locally or in neighbouring boroughs. While most pupils are from white British backgrounds, minority ethnic groups form a small proportion of the school's population. There are no pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language and none with a statement of special educational need.

Although the buildings housed a school during the early part of the twentieth century, Hampstead Hill was founded in October 1949 with 16 pupils on roll. The upper age limit was increased to eight in 1982, since when additional buildings on other sites have been used to accommodate the older pupils. A church building that is located on the school's main site is currently being renovated to provide a full range of accommodation for five to eight year olds. The school has been owned by the current proprietor's family since it opened. The main aim of the school is *'the total development of each child's personality and talents'* through the establishment of a family atmosphere and a

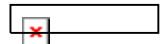
distinctive ethos.

### Summary of main findings



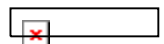
Hampstead Hill School provides a good quality of education for its pupils. It successfully creates a family atmosphere that is appreciated by parents and enjoyed by the pupils. The care and welfare of the pupils are given a high priority in the school's daily life. The curriculum is broad and balanced although pupils' technological experiences are limited. The teaching is good and, as a result, the school enjoys a high rate of success in preparing the pupils for entrance to schools of their choice.

### What the school does well



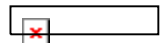
- it enables all pupils to make good academic progress and attain high standards in basic subjects;
- it makes very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- it treats pupils as individuals and seeks to respond to their needs and those of their families; and
- the ethos of the school generates a strong desire for learning among the pupils.

### What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations



- implement fully its child protection policy and provide training for staff; and
- increase the number of washrooms for pupils at the Pond Street site.

### Next steps



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

- devise a programme of further training for staff tailored to the needs of the school; and
- increase the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the curriculum.

## Compliance with the regulations for registration

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

#### The quality of the curriculum

The school aims to give all its pupils *'a broad, balanced and relevant education which provides continuity and progression and takes individual differences into account'*. This is consistent with the school's motto of: *'Mighty oaks from little acorns grow'*. The curriculum is designed to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and *'where possible move beyond them'*. The aspirations of the school's curricular policies are met to a large extent.

Policy documents and schemes of work for all relevant National Curriculum subjects are based securely on national guidelines or commercial publications. Lessons in religious education and in French are provided for all pupils of compulsory school age. The curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for the pupils to be given experience in all the required areas of learning although the modern technological aspects of the curriculum are underemphasised. For example, ICT is not taught as a discrete subject and has only limited use in other subjects. Due account is taken of the entry requirements for the selective schools to which most pupils wish to proceed.

Pupils in the youngest classes are taught a curriculum which is based on the nationally agreed areas of learning for the Foundation Stage. This curriculum is well planned and contains a good balance between adult-directed and child-chosen activities and between care and education. Good use is made of the outdoors to enrich all aspects of the curriculum.

There is a good emphasis on the development of the pupils' oral, literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are given many opportunities to express themselves and to make contributions to discussions. While there is no structured programme of personal, health and social education, it is the school's policy to address such issues through topic areas as and when appropriate for the pupils. There are no pupils with statements of special educational need but the individual needs of pupils are very well known to the staff. Pupils needing extra help receive good quality support on an individual basis.

#### The quality of the teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching is good. In a significant minority of lessons it is very good. Many other lessons of a satisfactory quality have features that promote good progress among pupils of all abilities. The quality of teaching is a significant contributor to the pupils' good achievement.

Lessons are well planned and make good use of national guidance, thus ensuring that the work in lessons is appropriate to the pupils' ages and that it builds on previous lessons. Teachers and

teaching assistants form good teams, whose members respond promptly to the needs of pupils as they arise. They take every opportunity to work either with individuals or small groups of pupils to provide sharply focused teaching. This works well to boost the pupils' confidence, to allow assessment of their progress and to promote sustained concentration on tasks. Classes are small and teachers consequently have a detailed knowledge of the pupils. Staff know which pupils need extra help and the necessary support is provided sensitively to meet individual needs.

The provision for the school's youngest pupils in the nursery classes is good and strikes a carefully judged balance between care and education. Activities are chosen successfully to develop all areas of the pupils' learning and to cater for their physical and social needs. These pupils, and others in the nursery classes, make a very good start in acquiring basic skills in all aspects of English and mathematics. This is an outcome of the effective teaching of the early stages of literacy and numeracy. Regular practice in the names and sounds of letters means that the pupils build up a secure knowledge and understanding of the alphabet and quickly learn to write independently. The teachers have good backgrounds of training and expertise in the education and care of young children. This is a significant factor in raising the quality of learning and the pupils' achievements.

In the best lessons, particularly but not exclusively in Years 1 and 2, the teaching is dynamic and helps the pupils make rapid progress. The lessons are imbued with a clear sense of purpose and a sharp focus on what the pupils should learn. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and provide a fitting context in which the pupils are strongly motivated to produce work of a high quality. The lessons achieve a suitable balance between teaching for the whole class, the completion of tasks set for the pupils and time set aside to review work and assess what has been learned. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson about time, the level of interest of the tasks and the challenge they presented inspired the pupils' enthusiasm to learn more about the relationship between the movements of the hands on a clock. In this and other highly successful lessons, the teachers monitored the pupils' work closely and took opportunities to provide further explanations and to question pupils in order to assess their understanding.

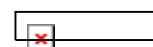
In a small number of lessons, securing a good response and close attention from the pupils posed occasional problems for teachers. Where this occurred, the pace of the lessons slowed and the pupils' exuberance spilled over to create an inappropriately noisy atmosphere. While teachers have high expectations that the pupils will behave well and work hard, rewards and sanctions are not always used to best effect to manage the pupils effectively. Many teachers attend training courses to enhance their professional expertise, but the school has not adopted a co-ordinated approach to training in order to address whole-school issues.

The school has suitable systems to assess the pupils' standards of attainment and to measure and monitor their progress. Judicious use is made of a range of tests, for example to assess standards in reading and to check that the pupils are on course to achieve the required entry standards when they leave for other schools. Teachers mark the pupils' work carefully. The best examples of marking make reference to the achievement of learning objectives and set targets for further improvement.

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

Yes.

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



The school makes very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. There is a very strong and pleasant family atmosphere; pupils enjoy coming to school and are happy there. Their parents report that they feel that the school is an important community resource. Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive and the pupils respond by

trying hard and behaving well. Pupils are encouraged to value each other's individuality and to help each other. In some lessons they set behavioural targets for themselves. They have a strong sense of fairness and know the difference between right and wrong.

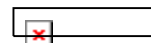
Spiritual awareness is raised mainly through assemblies and religious education (RE) lessons. Pupils visit the local church as part of their scripture studies, and the vicar and other religious leaders have visited the school to talk to pupils. The pupils acquire a sense of wonderment when, for example, they test which objects will sink and which will float having made predictions. There is a strong emphasis on supporting charities and helping others. This encourages pupils to consider the circumstances of others less fortunate than themselves. Pupils readily accept minor responsibilities to help with the running of the school.

Pupils are encouraged to appreciate cultural diversity and respect the values and beliefs of others. At an appropriate level for the age of the pupils, this is achieved through the school's programme of RE, and subjects such as art, history and geography. All the major world faiths are included in the RE programme and some parents visit the school to talk about their home countries and their cultural traditions. Other visitors, such as the local member of parliament and members of health and service organisations, help the pupils to develop an understanding of the institutions and services of wider society. Visits to museums, such as the British Museum, and other places of interest help to extend pupils' awareness of their cultural heritage.

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

Yes.

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



The school is successful in promoting the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. A good range of appropriate policies guide the school's principles and practices to ensure that all staff implement procedures consistently. Parents report that the school is particularly successful in making their children feel safe and secure from the earliest days of their schooling. The pupils are closely supervised throughout the school day and every effort is made to ensure that the school is a safe place in which to work and learn. The arrangements for First Aid are satisfactory and each site has named and trained First Aiders. The school takes a particular interest in promoting the pupils' understanding of road safety and liaises with local police and road safety officers to provide a programme of safety education in school.

The behaviour policy is strongly in tune with the school's ethos and is implemented successfully in most lessons and throughout the school day to encourage high standards of behaviour and prevent bullying. The pupils generally behave well and, although arrangements have been made for sanctions to be used for serious misconduct, teachers rarely have recourse to using them. The school is fully committed to child protection and has identified a child protection officer. However, it has not ensured that staff are up-to-date with training to help them recognise the signs of possible child abuse. This is currently being rectified.

Fire drills are held regularly and records kept of their outcomes. Fire risk assessments are made and the school takes expert advice on its procedures, acting promptly on recommendations.

An admission register and attendance registers for each class are kept and administered to comply with the regulations. All staff make considerable effort to make sure that the pupils are treated fairly and have equal opportunities to gain access to all aspects of the school's provision. The school is conscious of its responsibilities towards pupils who have disabilities and takes a principled stance to ensure that they have the same chances as other pupils. A three-year written plan provides an

outline of proposals to improve accessibility to the buildings and to the curriculum.

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

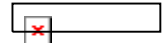
The school meets almost all the requirements for registration.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- o fully implement its policy on child protection and provide further training for staff (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

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



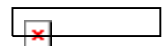
The school has appropriate and effective procedures for the appointment of staff. Prior to their appointment, checks are instituted to confirm their suitability to work with children, their prior experience, medical fitness and qualifications.

The teachers are well qualified and suitably experienced to help the school fulfil its aim to provide 'a sound, traditional and happy education' for its pupils.

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

Yes.

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



The Pond Street site is an old church hall. It has a central hall area which is used for office and administrative purposes, music, drama and assemblies. Off this central area there is a small, clean kitchen and a series of classrooms, some of which are very small. Further teaching areas are located in temporary buildings outside along with hatted teachers' rooms and equipment stores. The outside play area has climbing facilities and a fenced-off wild area. The site is next to a boarded-up, listed former church building; the first phase of renovation is complete and the building is leased to the school. The rear perimeter wall to the site is crumbling and in danger of collapse; this wall is not accessible to the pupils and is being investigated by the site owners.

The Courthope Road site is also a church hall leased from the parish church. It has classrooms on two floors, a small, well-maintained kitchen and a teachers' area. There is a separate room for individual reading lessons. This room can also be used for any child taken ill. Some of the class bases are very small but the numbers of pupils using these rooms are adjusted appropriately. The outside play area is in a well between the church and the hall. Playtimes are staggered so that the numbers outside at any one time are not excessive. This section of the school uses the nearby heath for recreational purposes and a local sports hall is used for physical education lessons.

The fabric of both buildings is in a good state of repair and all the classrooms are appropriate in size for the numbers of pupils using them and they are well furnished and decorated. Displays and

celebrations of the work and achievements of the pupils enliven most public areas and classrooms. There are appropriate arrangements on both sites for pupils who are taken ill. There are an adequate number of washrooms at the Courthope Road site but at the Pond Street site there are insufficient washrooms for the number of pupils. Building plans are in hand.

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

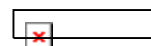
The school complies with all but one of the regulations.

***What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?***

In order to comply fully with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- ensure there are sufficient washrooms at the Pond Street site for pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs, which take account of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5(k)).

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



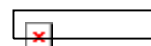
Prospective parents are given a prospectus that includes information about the school, its proprietors, its aims and the curriculum. Once pupils have been accepted, parents are given a welcome pack which explains various school policies. There is very regular and frequent contact between the staff and parents and carers at the beginning and end of the school day. A very large majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire reported that they were very happy with the information they receive from the school and feel welcome there. Many commented favourably, in addition, on the accessibility of the principal and staff.

The school provides a written report on each pupil in reception at the end of the year. This increases to twice a year for pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3. The reports contain information on the work the pupils have covered and on their progress and attainment in each subject. They do not give the results of tests or assessments.

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

Yes.

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



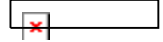
The school's procedures for handling complaints place a suitable emphasis on informal resolution but clear arrangements are included for addressing them, if necessary, through formal stages. The school has established good systems for logging the progress of actions taken and to ensure that complaints are resolved promptly.

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



Yes.

## School details



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Name of school:	Hampstead Hill School		
DfES ref number:	202/6264		
Type of school:	Pre-preparatory		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	2 - 8 years		
Gender of pupils:	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 175,	Girls 93,	Total 268
Number on roll (part-time pupils):	Boys 15,	Girls 20,	Total 35
Annual fees (day pupils):	Free - £10,802		
Address of school:	St Stephen's Hall Pond Street London NW3 2PP		
E-mail address:	hampsteadhill@aol.com		
Telephone number:	020 7435 6262		
Fax number:	020 7435 6262		
Principal:	Mrs A Taylor		
Proprietor:	Mrs A Taylor		
Lead Inspector:	Mr John Evans		
Dates of inspection:	6 - 9 June 2005		

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