

North Bridge House Prep School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	202/6400
Unique Reference Number	135140
Inspection number	321015
Inspection dates	18-19 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

North Bridge House Prep School is an independent school for pupils' aged from 8 to 13 years. It is a well-established school, which opened in 1987 in the current premises in Gloucester Avenue, Camden, north London. At the time of the inspection there were 280 pupils on roll. The school is divided into the Lower Prep for boys and girls aged from 8 to 11 years, and the Upper Prep, for boys only from the age of 10 to 13 years. Girls are prepared for 11-plus and boys for Common Entrance and scholarships at 13. The school is part of the North Bridge House School group run by Cognita Limited. This is the first inspection of the school under section 162A of the Education Act 2005.

The school aims to *'treat each child as an individual and to help them to be confident, fulfil their academic potential and to be prepared for entry to their senior school.'*

Evaluation of the school

North Bridge House Prep School is successful in meeting its aims; it is a happy, friendly school where pupils enjoy their school life. It provides a good standard of education and care. As a result of an outstanding curriculum with good and often outstanding teaching, pupils make good progress. Much of this success is due to the vision and enthusiasm of the recently appointed head teacher, supported by the senior management team. The school meets all but one of the regulations for registration.

Quality of education

The curriculum is outstanding and meets the needs of the pupils. The school has recently devised a comprehensive set of curriculum documentation. The content is implemented effectively by the staff and monitored carefully. There is a good balance of subjects taught throughout the week, with a strong emphasis on the arts and physical education to balance the academic rigour needed to prepare pupils for the examinations they take for entry to their next school. The National Curriculum forms the basis of the curriculum in Year 4 and 5 with the addition of religious education (RE) and French. In the Upper Prep, Latin and Greek are also taught to some of the older boys in preparation for Common Entrance and scholarship examinations. A very wide range of school clubs and activities outside school, such as local and residential visits, further enhances the pupils' learning.

The provision for pupils who need additional help is satisfactory. Pupils identified as requiring learning support are referred to specialist staff. Access to these staff is subject to parents paying additional fees. Some individual education plans (IEPs) have very clear targets for success, others do not and lack precision. Monitoring of the implementation of IEPs is largely informal and is not yet sufficiently systematic to ensure their effectiveness.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and teaching is often outstanding, consequently the pupils make good progress. Many pupils are admitted performing at or above the national average and they continue to make consistent progress. The staff are knowledgeable and are well prepared for their lessons; their classroom management is good. Relationships are good at all levels, with staff providing effective support and guidance. They offer pupils frequent opportunities to express their ideas which gives them increasing confidence and self-esteem. Lessons are well planned and are conducted at a brisk pace, with staff keeping the pupils on target and they culminate in effective plenaries. Those staff who convey their enthusiasm for their subject effectively are rewarded by the pupils' eager response, hard work and focus on their tasks. Expectations for both work and behaviour are high and pupils respond positively. One older pupil described the work as *'fun but fair'*. The majority of pupils are motivated to learn, they approach their work with a positive attitude and many pupils report that they really like coming to school with one saying *'it's a great school with a nice, relaxed atmosphere...the teachers really respect you.'*

The regular homework and the systems for monitoring it are of good quality. Space in classrooms is at a premium and in some of the larger classes the limited space provides fewer opportunities for collaborative learning. Pupils are prepared well for the examinations they take for their next school and parents are kept informed about the whole process. Resources are good and are used effectively to support learning, including some good use of information and communication technology, which is being expanded. The teaching assistants give good support in the limited time they have available.

The quality of assessment is good overall. Teachers' marking enables the pupils to receive constructive feedback about how to improve their work. Currently, the lower and upper schools use different procedures to assess progress. The school recognises the need to establish one system to track pupils' progress throughout all year groups to ensure that all achieve as well they can. The school has considerable data about pupils' achievements but does not yet analyse this fully.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have very positive attitudes to school and eagerly take part in all additional activities, for example sports, clubs and residential trips. Their very good attendance, punctuality and cheerfulness indicate how much they enjoy being at school. They conduct themselves extremely well and pay good attention to safety, especially where space is tight and when using staircases. Their behaviour is outstanding. The

life-skills programme has been in place in the Lower Prep for a number of years. It has recently been introduced into the Upper Prep and includes citizenship education. This successfully enables pupils to learn about how society works and what it takes to lead a purposeful life. They are strongly encouraged to take responsibility within school, through roles such as prefects and membership of the school council. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education through the curriculum provision and the advice and support provided to manage the transition to secondary schools.

Pupils contribute to the lives of those less fortunate than themselves by enthusiastically fund-raising for charity. Their cultural development is especially strong. Music and drama feature regularly in assemblies, performances and clubs. These productions serve as a good indication of the pupils' developing confidence and maturity. The school gives pupils frequent opportunities to increase their enjoyment with, for example, the General Knowledge Quiz and X Factor at the end of the Spring term. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to learn about their own culture, as well as the public institutions and services in England. The school is a harmonious community where pupils show tolerance and respect for other cultures. Pupils have good literacy, numeracy and inter-personal skills; these make an effective contribution to their well-being and prepare them well for later life.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. The school has devised and implemented a wide range of policies, which include those relating to anti-bullying, the health and safety of pupils on visits outside school and behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily and the school provides a wholesome cooked lunch. Pupils take very regular exercise. The school is fully aware of safeguarding issues and reacted very promptly when told that the named child protection officer has yet to attend the most recent training to comply with current guidance; the school immediately booked her on to an appropriate course. The school is very vigilant about the health and safety of pupils both in school and on visits. Most staff are trained in first aid and any accidents are recorded correctly. Pupils are supervised well. The school has very high standards of fire safety. The admission and attendance registers are kept according to regulations. The school has fulfilled its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school has made appropriate checks on staff to ensure their suitability to work with children and holds the information on a single central register.

School's premises and accommodation

The school's premises and accommodation are suitable to ensure safe and effective learning. The former Convent buildings are shared with the senior school. Overall, the school is maintained well and most classrooms are attractive learning

environments. Some of the classrooms have reached maximum capacity and space throughout the school is at a premium. It is a credit to the staff that they make many of their lessons practical and interactive in the limited space available. There is an ongoing programme of refurbishment throughout the building. The school has a very small play area where the use is staggered and there are plans in place for improvement. The school uses local sports facilities and Regents Park to full advantage for recreation and games activities.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides parents, carers and others with a good range of information through the prospectus, handbook and website. Parents are given informative written reports twice each year and have regular opportunities to meet with staff. The vast majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the school. They made comments such as *'My son has been very happy at the school...the teachers are passionate about their subjects and eager to pass their knowledge on...we are extremely pleased.'*

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a set of procedures which meet all of the regulations.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of that listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that all staff receive safeguarding training and update the policy in line with Department for Children, Families and Schools guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education (2007)* (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- improve the use and analysis of data on pupils' achievements
- formalise the monitoring arrangements for pupils who need additional help with their learning.

School details

Name of school	North Bridge House Prep School		
DCSF number	202/6400		
Unique reference number	135140		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1987		
Age range of pupils	8-13		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll	Boys: 182	Girls: 98	Total: 280
Annual fees	£11,250		
Address of school	1 Gloucester Avenue London NW1 7AB		
Telephone number	020 7267 6266		
Fax number	020 7284 2508		
Email address	prep@northbridgehouse.com		
Headteacher	Mr Brodie Bibby		
Proprietor	Cognita Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Jill Bainton AI		
Dates of inspection	18-19 March 2008		