

Hampstead Hill School

Independent School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	202/6264
Unique Reference Number	100073
URN for registered childcare	EY356473
Inspection number	329690
Inspection dates	27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Lewis

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). The inspection of childcare was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

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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.

The inspection of registered provision¹ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

Hampstead Hill School is an independent school and childcare provider for boys and girls aged two to eight years, on the southern edge of Hampstead Heath in North West London. The school was originally founded in 1949 but registered under its current name in 1980. It occupies former church buildings on two sites, one housing the older pupils (aged five to eight years). The main site is for children up to five years, who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This includes the childcare provision for the under threes as well and the out-of-school provision, both of which are available for 51 weeks a year.

There are currently 314 pupils on roll. 213 of these are in the EYFS, including 70 under threes and 23 part-time children. The majority of these come from white British backgrounds although a small but increasing proportion come from minority ethnic groups, including a few whose first language is not English. A small number of pupils have additional learning needs including one pupil who has a statement of special educational needs. The school is organised into four departments – under threes, three to four years old (Nursery), four to five years old (Reception) and 'pre-prep' (five to eight years old). The school had its last inspection in 2006 and a childcare inspection in June 2008.

The school's aim is 'the total development of each child's personality and talents' so that they are 'able to stand squarely on their own feet,, confident of who they are, where they are going and of the excitement and enjoyment of it all.'

¹ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

Evaluation of the school

Hampstead Hill School provides a good quality of education and makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children in the EYFS and older pupils in the pre-preparatory department progress and learn well and become enthusiastic learners because of the good teaching. Parents are highly satisfied with the school and in particular with the 'caring and nurturing' environment it provides for every individual. The school has made good improvement since its last inspection and meets all the requirements for continued registration.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good overall. Its strengths are in its excellent support for speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy and the ways in which it promotes pupils' taking responsibility for their learning. In all the departments a thematic approach is particularly successful in engaging pupils' interest. For example good links are made between history, art and English. These often use pupils' different backgrounds as starting points or for exemplification, for example discussing Thanksgiving, life in India, or drawing from holiday experiences to reinforce understanding of different countries or traditions. The school takes good account of the National Curriculum and of the areas of learning for EYFS, ensuring that it covers all that should be covered and that its pupils, therefore, are well prepared for their next stage of education.

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties or needs, and those from other language backgrounds, make good progress. Their starting points are similar to those expected for their age overall on entry, although wide ranging. Pupils achieve well because of the good teaching and support in all lessons, the systematic ways in which English and mathematics are taught in school and the strong foundations for early literacy and numeracy skills laid in EYFS. By the end of EYFS, the Reception children have all exceeded the national early learning goals. By the age of seven, pupils achieve exceptionally well in English and mathematics, where teachers' assessments demonstrate that all reach standards higher than others of their age. Their written work and discussions reflect this and shows that they and the older pupils apply a remarkably mature attitude and determination to their work, saying that the school 'helps you to do your best' and 'to want to'.

A very strong programme of educational visits and good use of local facilities help the school to get around the limitations of the buildings in areas such as physical education and sport for the older pupils. There are visits to local places of interest and beyond, such as Spaniard's Inn, as well as many visitors such as artists and parents. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the 'fun' and interesting things that they do. One said, 'It's easy to learn at this school because the teachers make it such fun'.

There are great strengths in the ways in which the school supports pupils' self-awareness and their self-esteem and allows each child to grow as an individual. However, there is insufficient planned exploration of issues and topics related to personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) in assemblies and in other subjects, or careful tracking of children's experiences in these areas. In information and communication technology (ICT), although the school has increased the number of computers since the last inspection, there are still too few. There is also a lack of tracking of skills and use of computers to support learning in other subjects by teachers in all departments. The school is aware of this and plans to buy more ICT facilities and to introduce more ICT into the curriculum in the near future.

Teaching and assessment are both good. There is a great sense of purpose in lessons and not a moment is lost. Consistently good teaching and support, which are sometimes outstanding, are a feature of all EYFS departments. The range in pre-prep is more varied, though predominantly good and sometimes outstanding. The strongest teaching is lively, builds well on previous lessons, uses all staff well and has slightly different work planned for different groups so that each is challenged, whatever their ability and level. The quality of teachers' presentations, their use of key vocabulary and of questioning are all strengths throughout the school. When pupils have additional learning needs or need some other extra support the school works extremely well with families and with local services to meet their needs. For these pupils, including those with statements of special educational needs, there is good attention to their individual education plans in lessons. Classes have good adult to child ratios and this allows teachers to know their pupils extremely well within all departments. This means that most pupils are 'stretched' well during lessons. However, teachers rarely share the purpose of the lessons with their pupils and there are missed opportunities in lessons for pupils to reflect on how well they understand what they are meant to be learning.

Most assessment is focused on monitoring against National Curriculum levels. It is carried out regularly and strengthened by more formal reading assessments. Pupils are given good verbal feedback about what is successful about their work and what could be improved. Marking is supportive of improvement. This means that although pupils do not have formal learning targets they are clear about what they need to think about next. Staff's knowledge of the pupils is a significant strength, as is the teamwork of all staff within each class and department. Good observational records and good handover arrangements allow pupils to move smoothly through the school and support transition to other settings.

The school works well within the restrictions of the building and has good resources overall, with the exception of ICT. It has improved parts of the accommodation and will be on one site from September 2009.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils make exceptional progress in their self-awareness and self-esteem. There is a great air of

celebration and respect for the individual in lessons and throughout school life. Parents comment on the ways in which each individual thrives, from under-threes upwards, and how each of their backgrounds is celebrated. Every pupil and parent questionnaire indicated how much the pupils enjoyed school. Pupils say, 'we don't fight at our school' and their good attendance reflects their very high level of enjoyment of all aspects of school life. The wealth of visits, the assembly programme and the school's strategy of drawing on the experiences of parents and others promotes an exceptional cultural and spiritual programme. This makes pupils highly aware and respectful of others' cultures, backgrounds, beliefs and needs. A strong moral code and sense of fairness are promoted. From the earliest days they learn to get on with adults and other pupils and form excellent, trusting relationships.

Pupils take up all opportunities to contribute to the school community and broader community life with enthusiasm, although the school recognises even more could be done here. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are polite, enthusiastic and happy to talk and share with others. The careful support for social play and working together from the earliest ages pays off. The result is highly sociable, respectful pupils who will 'have a go' at all sorts of things and are open to learning. All this and their high levels of academic achievement set them up very well for the next stage of their education and prepare them well for the future.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good overall. Staff have had recent training in relation to child protection, health and safety, pupil management and first aid. A strong induction programme, including a 'buddy' system, supports new staff's understanding of what to do. The childcare provision is also well provided for. Staff have appropriate levels of training, including in paediatric first aid. They have clearly designated responsibilities and know well the procedures to follow. Designated coordinators for child protection on both sites have appropriate training at a higher level. The school draws well on local authority services and private trainers to support staff understanding and to ensure systems and procedures are followed. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and ensure that pupils are protected from harm.

There is a good focus on healthy eating with nutritious meals produced by the school's kitchens. There is a good programme to support pupils' understanding of what healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle means. Pupils say they feel safe. The very youngest pupils and new arrivals quickly settle in and develop strong trusting relationships. There are good arrangements in place with local schools that support pupils' transfers well.

The school has all the elements required in place relation to safe recruitment of staff and the relevant Criminal Records Bureau checks and their recording. It has a three year plan which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for children within EYFS, including the childcare and out of school provision, is good overall. There is an appropriate balance between activities that the children initiate and those led by adults. Children under three are well provided for. Staff dealing with these children are well trained and qualified and highly responsive to children's learning and development needs. They are meticulous in keeping them safe and yet giving them the freedom to explore and learn. There are extremely good relationships with families which support children's development and well-being further. Outstanding relationships with children, high staff vigilance, strong procedures and a strong leadership of all EYFS departments mean that children quickly learn to trust staff, feel and are safe.

Planning for all groups is based on the national EYFS curriculum and its six areas of learning. The curriculum promotes equal opportunities and enables all children to engage and achieve. Even the very youngest children show great joy in their learning and in other's achievements too. They progress and develop well within all areas of learning. A strength is the way in which the planning and the good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching supports children's speaking and listening skills and their thinking skills to problem-solve extremely well. As a result, the children make outstanding progress in communication, language and literacy and in personal and social development. Teachers' use of humour ensures children are on task, able to express their ideas and feelings appropriately, are interested and apply themselves well. Children know that what they have to say is valued and listen remarkably well to each other. For example, in a Nursery class, children talked about their holiday plans to visit other countries, showing awareness of different times, cultures and people. Access to music, actions, dance and Christmas rehearsals enrich the curriculum and support children's spiritual development.

Staff assess and monitor children's development appropriately and are currently developing this further to inform future planning and assessment and track the steps children make. The school has invested considerably in staff training at all levels and this is helping it to adapt well to the new EYFS requirements. It is particularly mindful of family pressures and parents are highly complimentary about the out-of-school and holiday care available. Documentation seen shows this to be managed well and with due attention to risk assessment and safeguarding. Out-of-school sessions observed demonstrate that the provision adds well to pupils' learning overall.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006.

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:

- develop further its planning and tracking for ICT and PSHCE, including the ways in which these progressively build up pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding
- ensure that the purposes of lessons are shared with pupils and are consistently identified in teachers' planning.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?		✓		
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?		✓		
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	✓			
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?		✓		
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?		✓		
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?		✓		

School details

Name of school	Hampstead Hill School		
DCSF number	202/6264		
Unique reference number	100073		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY356473		
Type of school	Day school for children aged 2-8 years		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	March 1980		
Age range of pupils	2-8 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 184	Girls: 130	Total: 314
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 12	Girls: 11	Total: 23
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys:32	Girls:38	Total:70
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£10,395-£12,870		
Annual fees (childcare)	£10,395- £12,430		
Address of school	St Stephen's Hall Pond Street London NW3 2PP		
Telephone number	0207 435 6262		
Fax number	0207 433 1272		
Email address	enquiries@hampsteadhillschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Andrea Taylor		
Proprietor	Ms Andrea Taylor		
Reporting inspector	Susan Lewis		
Dates of inspection	27 November 2008		