

# Hill House International Junior School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	207/6188
Unique Reference Number	100518
Inspection number	333809
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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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, the purpose of which is 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

Hill House School is a large co-educational independent school for children between the ages of 4 and 13 years. There are currently 956 pupils on roll with 141 children in 11 Reception classes within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The school's founding family continue to lead and manage the school, which was first founded in Switzerland in 1949 and then in London in 1951. The school is located on five separate sites within the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea with the main school located in Hans Place. The school has an annex in Switzerland which hosts groups of children for courses throughout the year.

The school's motto is that '*A child's mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled.*'

The school was previously inspected in September 2006.

## Evaluation of the school

Hill House provides a good standard of education for its pupils. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although improved since the last inspection, is inadequate overall. This is because, as in the rest of the school, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety do not meet the current requirements. Not enough account has been taken of changes to the regulations since the school's last inspection and there has been a slow response to some of its recommendations. The school currently fails to meet a number of regulations.

Nevertheless, the school has some considerable strengths. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding throughout the school and they make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire reported that they are completely happy with the school.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. The school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' mathematical, literacy, artistic, musical and sporting skills.

Pupils' music and art work are of a consistently high standard. Art adorns the walls and corridors across the whole school and pupils regularly perform technically complex musical compositions with panache. The school bases its curriculum on the Common Entrance Examination Syllabus with the expectation that teaching goes beyond the syllabus. The curriculum is supported further by planning based upon the National Curriculum and National Frameworks. The curriculum provision for linguistic skills is good with pupils developing excellent communication skills and an increasing command of language. The school provides a daily sports session for all pupils in an impressive range of sports and this compensates well for the lack of playground facilities. Specialist teaching from Year 3 onwards provides a good range of high quality subjects which help pupils to become well-rounded individuals. The school has developed an overview of the curriculum to ensure greater consistency and continuity and plans to monitor this in the future. There is a wide variety of activities on offer after school which further enrich the curriculum. The school plans to make greater use of the wealth of local museums, theatres and galleries to plan visits and enhance areas of the curriculum.

Teaching and assessment are good overall and result in pupils making good and often outstanding progress. Teachers hold high expectations of pupils' academic progress and pupils rise to the challenge and respond with a positive approach to learning. Very positive relationships between staff and pupils are evident across the school. Teachers frequently use questions well, challenging pupils to think independently, and give opportunities for pupils to respond. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and this gives them good opportunities to discuss their answers and increase their understanding. Teachers frequently mark work as it is produced and correct misconceptions immediately. Pupils benefit from specialist teachers whose strong subject knowledge results in enthusiastic responses and good academic progress. Teachers keep careful records of assessments and test results. These regular tests and assessments are used to prepare pupils for Common Entrance examinations and to gauge their progress. Some pupils with English as an additional language show good progress through the additional support and attention they receive, made possible by small class sizes.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. There are many valuable opportunities when pupils learn to reflect and experience spiritual awareness. The weekly whole-school service contributes strongly to this and there is a tangible sense of occasion when the school comes together in one place. Pupils spoke about the effect that visiting the Swiss mountains had on their appreciation and understanding of the world.

Staff provide very good role models and this promotes pupils' understanding of right and wrong. The positive relationships throughout the school help to promote pupils' feelings of self-worth and mutual respect.

There is much good social development through the many opportunities to work collaboratively in lessons and as a result pupils show a strong awareness of others. Pupils have extremely positive attitudes towards school and are respectful and courteous. Their behaviour is outstanding. Pupils make strong friendships and many newly arrived pupils from other countries made specific mention of the warmth of the welcome they received and the speed with which they settled in as a result. Staff expect pupils to take responsibility and to become increasingly independent. These arrangements have a significant impact on pupils' personal development, on their willingness to act responsibly, to use their initiative and to express themselves confidently.

### Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The school takes good day-to-day care of its pupils but overall, provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is inadequate. The school is an inclusive school where staff take the time to ensure that pupils feel safe and well cared for. Pupils form close and supportive friendships across the school. They have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles through their regular exercise and understanding of healthy eating; they remark on the improvements to the school meals recently. Several staff have completed first aid training and the well qualified school nurses ensure that training is kept up to date. Physical education teachers take good care of pupils when participating in sporting activities.

Other aspects of the school's provision are inadequate and the proprietors acknowledge that they have not kept up to date with current requirements to safeguard children. A single central record to show the checks made on staff is not fully in place and this does not meet the regulations. The child protection policy has not been fully implemented, training for the designated person is incomplete and formal training for the rest of the staff has not been undertaken. Fire drills are not formally recorded and are too infrequent, especially given the number of pupils and the size and nature of the buildings. The school does not currently have a written policy that complies with the regulations for safety on educational visits. Attendance registers do not comply with regulations. The school has not prepared a written action plan to fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school now completes checks on the medical fitness of candidates as well as their previous employment record and obtains references on qualifications and character prior to the appointment of staff. Not all the appropriate checks have been completed on the proprietorial body. A single central record to record all checks made on staff is not in place and this does not meet the regulations.

## School's premises and accommodation

The various school premises provide a suitable environment for pupils. All classrooms and corridors are well decorated and enlivened by the displays of pupils' work. Although space is at a premium, the school makes good use of the room available and classrooms are tidy and clean. Whilst the majority of furniture is suitable, the desks and chairs for pupils in Years 3 - 5 'Upper School' are not suitable for their ages. The facilities for pupils who are ill do not meet requirements. Although well trained nursing staff take good care of pupils who are unwell, facilities are not suitable for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1. The school has increased the number of washroom facilities and these are now sufficient for staff and pupils.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a range of information for parents and carers through its prospectus and the annually updated information sheet for parents. These include information about the curriculum and make clear the aims and ethos of the school. There is a range of information which is available to parents on request and the school is now planning to ensure that this is more readily available. Parents are supportive of the school. However a significant proportion of parents report that they are unclear about the school's complaints procedures. A small minority of parents, whilst appreciating their children's visits to Switzerland, express the view that they would appreciate the opportunity for their children to participate in more trips and visits to places of interest.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The school has produced a complaints procedure that complies with all regulations. There have been no formal written complaints in the last academic year.

## Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Many elements of the provision are good but, as in the main school, staff are inadequately trained in safeguarding procedures. This means that the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate.

Children's personal development and wellbeing are outstanding; they enjoy coming to school and are very happy. They are encouraged to eat healthily, take regular exercise, make friends and join in school activities. The children have regular opportunities for outdoor activity; they are taken to the park for lunchtime play and have regular games, swimming and dance. There are very positive relationships at all levels. Staff know all the children very well and treat them as individuals. The children who have joined the school with limited English are well supported.

Behaviour is well managed and the children move carefully and sensibly around the building. Children play well on their own and with others and communicate well.

Children's learning and development are good in relation to their starting points. They make good, and in many cases better, progress. By the end of Reception year the majority are working securely in the early learning goals, and in reading and mathematical understanding some are working beyond expectations. Teaching is generally good. Teachers use assessment information to ensure that children achieve as much as they can in relation to their capabilities. Staff make careful observations but not all staff are secure in linking these to the planning and assessment procedures required in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The staff make effective use of all the space but the building has reached maximum capacity and restrictions of space impact on children's learning and result in a lack of spontaneous activities. There is some purposeful play and exploration but due to space restrictions this has to be planned carefully. Children's creative work is restricted and they are limited in their opportunities to make free and independent choices. There is some freedom to play in the small outdoor play area, but this does not allow for a free flow of activities in all weathers.

Those in charge are focused on helping all children to make good progress in their learning and development and promoting their welfare. The provision runs smoothly on a day to day basis. Parents confirm that the head of the Early Years Foundation Stage has built up effective links with parents and carers who feel well informed; she makes herself available at the beginning and end of each day.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), with the exception of those listed below

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

- update the written policy to safeguard the welfare of children to take account of DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) and arrange appropriate training for all staff and the designated officer on each site (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- prepare and implement a written policy for the health and safety of pupils outside the school which has regard to DCSF guidance *Health and Safety of pupils on educational visits (reference HSPV2)* (paragraph 3(2)(c))

- ensure the school has a satisfactory level of fire safety by completing and recording regular fire drills in all buildings (paragraph 3(5))
- maintain attendance registers in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 3(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- ensure that all appropriate checks have been completed on the proprietorial body to confirm that they have undergone an enhanced CRB check (paragraph 4B(4&5))
- keep a single central record that complies with the regulations (paragraph 4C(2 &3))
- ensure all those on the proprietorial body are included on the single central record (paragraph 4C(6&7))
- ensure that a legible copy of the single central record can be produced (paragraph 4C(9)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- provide facilities for pupils who are ill and are in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 'Lower school' in accordance with the Education School Premises Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5 (l)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- make available, and parents aware that they can request, particulars of the policies on bullying, child protection, health and safety and behaviour (paragraph 6(2)(h))
- make parents aware they can request particulars of the school's complaints procedures together with details of the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year (paragraph 6(2)(j)).



In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended (DDA) the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

## What the school could do to improve further

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

- ensure all furniture and fittings are suitable for the age of pupils in the 'Upper School'
- encourage the physical and creative development of children through the provision of all weather covering for the outdoor area
- improve the planning and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring all staff have the opportunity to attend suitable training.

## 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	Hill House International Junior School		
DCSF number	207/6188		
Unique reference number	100518		
Type of school	Preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1951		
Age range of pupils	4–13 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 587	Girls: 369	Total: 956
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees	£8,400–£10,500		
Address of school	17 Hans Place London SW1X 0EP		
Telephone number	020 7584 1331		
Fax number	020 7591 3938		
Email address	r.townend@btconnect.com		
Headteacher	Richard Townend		
Proprietors	Richard and Janet Townend		
Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI		
Dates of inspection	10–11 June 2009		