

North Bridge House Junior School

Independent school inspection report

DCSF registration number	202/6174
Unique Reference Number (URN)	100068
Inspection number	344605
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Wendy Forbes

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A¹ of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², 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

North Bridge House Junior School is an independent co-educational day school for pupils aged from five to eight years. The school was opened in 1938 and is based in a large detached house which has been adapted to meet the needs of its pupils. It is located in a residential area of Hampstead. Currently there are 184 pupils on roll organised into 11 single-aged classes. The full junior school comprises 14 classes, spanning Years 1 to 3, as three of the school's Year 1 classes are accommodated within the nursery building on another site close by. These three classes were inspected in March 2010 as part of a separate Nursery inspection. Pupils who attend represent a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, the largest being of White European heritage. A small number of pupils have English as a second language. However, very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. There are a few pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and no pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school aims 'to provide a stimulating, happy and secure environment in which each child is treated as an individual'. The school was last inspected in March 2007.

Evaluation of the school

The overall quality of education at North Bridge Junior School is good with many outstanding features. The school is successful in achieving its aims and pupils thrive in the family atmosphere. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment and pupils' behaviour are good. As a result, pupils become confident and articulate learners who make good progress. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in meeting all the regulations that were previously not met. It now meets all the regulations and benefits from improved facilities for pupils who are ill and a new information and communication technology (ICT) suite. It has rigorous procedures in place to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are very effective, providing outstanding welfare, health and safety for its pupils.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. It is underpinned by a good topic-based curriculum that provides well-developed coverage of the core skills of literacy and numeracy. The use of specialist teachers throughout the school for music, French, and physical education is a particular strength. Further enrichment is provided by visits to places of interest, visitors to school and exciting curriculum themed events such as Greek and Roman Days. Pupils were enthusiastic about the recent Africa Week, enjoying playing African drums, making African-style traditional dolls and finding out about their twinned school in Ngalia. Information and communication technology provision has improved since the last inspection and ICT skills are developed well by the new skills-based curriculum enhanced by the new ICT suite. The personal, social, health and citizenship programme includes a wide variety of activities, such as guidance on how to adopt healthy lifestyles and an understanding of public institutions which successfully promote pupils' good personal development. Pupils are enthusiastic about the range of extra-curricular activities, appreciating the opportunity to develop their skills in sport, mathematics, science, Italian, chess, singing or playing an instrument.

Teaching and assessment are consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, so pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress in their learning. Pupils in the early stages of learning English or those who need extra help benefit from good, well-targeted support and, as a result, make good progress in their basic skills. Pupils are well motivated, they behave well and have good attitudes to learning. The good and sometimes outstanding teaching observed has some common features. Throughout these lessons, teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning skilfully to assess the learning and development needs of individual pupils. In the most successful lessons teachers have high expectations of pupils. They plan exciting and interesting activities that are carefully matched to the individual needs of all learners. This was most notable in an outstanding Year 1 English lesson where pupils were captivated by the dramatic recounting of the tale of 'Little Red Riding Hood' by their teacher. Pupils' literacy competencies were developed extremely well by the teacher who generated much excitement as the class discussed their thoughts about each of the characters and picked out 'scary' vocabulary. In this type of lesson pupils forge ahead because the work is both challenging and fun and the pace is brisk.

However, in less effective lessons, activities sometimes do not cater for all abilities well enough, particularly the most able. This has a particular impact in writing, where occasionally teachers miss opportunities to consolidate and develop pupils' skills. Consequently, standards of writing in a few classes, although above average, are very slightly lower than in reading because writing activities do not always challenge and extend pupils in their learning. By contrast, recent innovative developments in the way in which mathematics is taught has provided good opportunities to engage pupils in open-ended investigations and problem-solving activities. As a result standards are higher in this area.

Formal assessments provide staff with a clear record of reading ages, spelling, writing and mathematical skills, although data to track pupils' progress have yet to be fully interrogated to provide a clear picture. The use of this data is most effective where it is well analysed and targeted to ensure the appropriate balance of support and challenge. However, it is not consistently used. As a result, some activities planned for the most able lack sufficient challenge.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils have a clear grasp of what is right and wrong. The personal, social and health education curriculum provides very valuable experiences for pupils to develop a wide range of social skills. Pupils enjoy opportunities to celebrate their achievements and this does much to promote their self-esteem. Members of the newly formed Children's Council take their roles very seriously in representing the views of their peers. Pupils willingly take on responsibility to look after new pupils. They contribute significantly to the wider community by their involvement in local projects, the school's recycling project and raising funds for children at Great Ormond Street Hospital and victims of international disasters. Cultural development and racial harmony are promoted well through the curriculum and the celebration of different festivals such as Diwali and through the links the school has developed with an African school in Ngilai. As a result, pupils' understanding of different cultures and traditions is well developed; this promotes their understanding of diversity and respect for differences.

Pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education and for their future lives. This is aided by the good progress they make in their basic skills, their ability to engage in teamwork through sporting and drama activities and by their high levels of confidence and self-esteem. Pupils enjoy school very much, as one pupil remarked, 'We like school. It's like one large family; we have lots of fun.' They are keen learners, which shows in their good attendance and behaviour.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Since the last inspection provision has improved. The school has developed appropriate medical facilities for pupils who feel unwell at school. Recruitment procedures now fully comply with statutory requirements on safeguarding. Robust procedures for child protection are effectively supported by well-documented policies, clear procedures and frequent staff training. Staff take their responsibilities very seriously and, as a result, exemplary systems are in place to promote and monitor the welfare, health and safety of everyone in the school. Risk assessments of the building and when pupils go on visits are meticulous; nothing is left to chance. As a result, pupils, staff and parents report that they appreciate the safe, caring, family environment provided by the school. All the pupils interviewed said that they felt safe in school and say bullying is a rare occurrence. The designated members of staff, and all other

staff, have undergone child protection training and the majority have received appropriate first aid training. Pupils are encouraged to lead healthy and safe lives. This is well supported by the provision of high-quality sporting activities including swimming and gymnastics sessions which take place at a local sports centre. The school is fully inclusive and complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2000.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school undertakes the full range of checks to ensure the suitability of all permanent, temporary and peripatetic staff and volunteers to work with children, and the single central record of such checks meets requirements.

School's premises and accommodation

School buildings and the playground are in a reasonable state of repair for the age of the building. A building project to improve the school's facilities is imminent to provide new and upgraded dual-purpose dining and teaching facilities. The school provides a safe and effective learning environment. The availability of specialist rooms for the teaching of music and ICT helps to extend the curriculum and support pupils' personal development successfully. Although classrooms vary in size they are adequate for the purposes of teaching and learning because the school limits the number of pupils taught in the smallest of rooms. The indoor areas are made attractive by stimulating displays of pupils' work and other learning resources. Although the outdoor play area for pupils is small it is well developed within the limited space with a range of appropriate large play apparatus and space for small equipment use.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

Provision of information meets all the requirements. The school maintains very good contact with parents by regular telephone calls, emails and face-to-face meetings. The prospectus, the parents' handbook, the file of school policies available from the school office and the school's website provide an excellent range of well-organised information. Parents are regularly given information on school events and know that they can find out what is being taught from the curriculum information available on the school's website. Throughout the year at appropriate times, parents are invited to meetings to discuss their children's progress. Twice-yearly, written reports give good information on pupils' progress. The vast majority of parents were entirely satisfied with the quality of the information received and the education provided.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a detailed written complaints policy. It contains information on all the specific elements required by the regulations. There have been no official complaints from parents in the last academic year.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Make effective use of assessment information in order to plan teaching and learning activities that will consistently challenge all pupils, but particularly the most able, to extend their learning.
- Further interrogate and analyse whole-school assessment information in order to provide a clear picture about how well all pupils are doing in their learning.

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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School details

Name of school	North Bridge House Junior School		
DCSF number	202/6174		
Unique reference number (URN)	100068		
Type of school	Junior		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1939		
Age range of pupils	5–8		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 92	Girls: 92	Total: 184
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,390		
Address of school	8 Netherhall Gardens London NW3 5RR		
Telephone number	0207 4352884		
Fax number	0207 7941337		
Email address	junior@northbridgehouse.com		
Headteacher	Robyn Allsopp		
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Group		
Reporting inspector	Wendy Forbes		
Dates of inspection	23–24 March 2010		