

Heathside Preparatory School

16 New End, Hampstead, London, NW3 1JA

Inspection dates	22–24 May 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- Pupils make outstanding achievements across all areas of the curriculum. They are highly motivated to learn, enjoy school and embrace all aspects of school life.
- The promotion of pupils' welfare, health and safety is excellent. The school offers an extremely nurturing environment where every child is known and valued. Meticulous attention to detail ensures all pupils are consistently kept safe.
- The breadth and depth of the curriculum is exemplary and provides pupils with an exceptionally rich, diverse programme for learning and development.
- The headteacher is an inspiring leader with a clear focus on supporting the specific educational needs of each pupil. As a result, all pupils achieve exceptionally well and excel in their own field.
- Teaching is exceptional throughout the school. Lessons are extremely well planned and engage the individual needs of every pupil.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Across all age groups pupils are kind, courteous and respectful of others. This creates a very homely, positive atmosphere in all classes and throughout the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a one-day notice period.
- Inspectors observed all year groups from the pre-nursery (Cygnetts) class to Year 6. In total, 18 lessons were observed, covering six hours 40 minutes of inspection time. This included observing 18 teachers.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and evaluated the quality and implementation of the school's policy documents. Meetings took place with the proprietor/headteacher, school manager, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils.
- Information gathered from Parent View, letters and emails from parents and carers, online surveys and staff questionnaires was used to inform inspection activities.

Inspection team

Jo Caswell, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Tahir Alam	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Heathside Preparatory School is a co-educational, non-denominational school for boys and girls aged from three to 11 years. The aim of the school is to develop each pupil as a confident, independent learner and an active, responsible citizen of the school, local community and beyond.
- There are currently 249 pupils on roll. Of these, 34 attend part time. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school population reflects the ethnic diversity of the local community. The school uses nearby Hampstead Heath for outdoor play and learning provision. Local leisure centres are used for sports activities.
- The school is split between two sites, which are walking distance apart.
- Breakfast clubs and after-school care is offered to all pupils and a play scheme operates during school holidays.
- The school was last inspected in January 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Refine the procedures for assessment across the school to provide a more systematic approach towards monitoring the outcomes of all cohorts and groups, for example, summer-born pupils, and girls and boys, to enable the school to accurately track the rates of progress of all pupils.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Upon entry to the Cygnets class and throughout the school, pupils make exceptional progress. This is due to excellent teaching and the strong promotion of personalised learning. The proprietor is instrumental in working with teachers, support teachers and parents and carers to address the educational needs of every pupil. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and her team of specialist staff work throughout the school with teachers to ensure each pupil is supported appropriately. This means adult deployment is excellent in all lessons and enables all pupils to achieve extremely well, especially those who may have disabilities or specific learning needs and may require additional support.

The quality of pupils' work is exceptional and evidence from books indicates excellent progress is made across all subjects. Pupils' high achievements are evident from the youngest age. Clear assessments are carried out when children start in the Nursery and information gained from these is fully incorporated into planning. Children's interests, skills and abilities are consistently built upon and extended through high-quality learning experiences. Consequently, from a very young age, children develop a real thirst and enthusiasm for learning and this continues throughout the school. Children in Reception make an excellent start with reading and numeracy and progress well across all areas of learning and development. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results indicate that pupils frequently exceed the early learning goals.

On-going assessment throughout Key Stage 1 show that pupils consistently exceed expected levels of progress in literacy and numeracy. Work is presented exceptionally well and indicates the care, effort and attention all pupils apply to their work. This is reflected in the excellent literacy work seen in Year 2, where pupils imagined themselves to be Florence Nightingale writing in her diary.

Key Stage 2 assessments demonstrate all pupils make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy, where some results far exceed expected levels, especially in mathematics. For example, a total of seven Year 6 pupils obtained national Gold Maths Challenge awards, usually awarded to secondary-school-aged students. The success of the current Year 6 pupils in gaining scholarships and entry into a range of highly respected London independent schools reflects the outstanding achievements pupils make within the school.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Pupils' behaviour and personal development is outstanding. One of the most significant features of the school is the happy atmosphere evident in all classes. Parents and carers noted this and confirmed this has a positive impact on pupils' learning. In total 91% of parents and carers strongly agreed their child is happy at school. Many parents and carers commended the school and the way in which teachers positively engage all pupils. Behaviour is excellent throughout the school. As a result, pupils are kind and courteous to one another and relate to adults extremely well. Behaviour in lessons is excellent. This means pupils' learning is not disrupted and pupils are highly motivated to learn. Pupils clearly take pride in their work and achievements. They have high levels of confidence and self-esteem and this is reflected in their very high attendance levels. Pupils confirm how safe they feel at school and state bullying and negative behaviour is not an issue. The vast majority of parents and carers confirm this view. The proprietor has ensured that where political issues are brought to the attention of the pupils, steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils frequently reflect on the needs of others and explore different aspects of personal development through the curriculum and weekly assemblies. Recent topics included 'Celebrating our Differences', encouraging pupils to

develop awareness of the lives of others. Pupils learn to behave responsibly through different roles in school, for example, becoming a member of the school council or carrying out roles in class. Regular specialist teaching enables pupils to develop skills in first aid and computer safety. All pupils develop awareness of the wider world through the school's many international links. The school is linked to a primary school in South Africa and there are strong links in place with schools in Japan and France; pupils correspond with one another and enjoy regular exchange trips. The school community reflects a multicultural population and all pupils and staff work together harmoniously. The school council recently led the environmental-awareness campaign 'Switch Off Fortnight' and all pupils clearly adopt the Heathside Eco-Code, promoting recycling and energy efficiency. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is fostered through many visits to places of interest such as London museums and through the celebration of different festivals such as Rosh Hashanah and Diwali.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding overall and this leads to pupils' outstanding achievements. Teachers have exceptional subject knowledge and are keen and enthusiastic in their approach to teaching. Lessons are extremely well planned and appropriately paced. This means pupils consistently remain engaged, enthused and interested. Specialist teaching support is available in all lessons. The special educational needs coordinator manages a team of highly qualified staff, including a speech and language therapist who regularly visits all classes and assists pupils who may require additional support. This means excellent systems are in place to meet the teaching and learning needs of every pupil. Adults are highly motivating and provide exceptional levels of praise. Consequently, pupils feel valued and acknowledged.

Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding overall as staff provide an excellent range of practical learning opportunities which capture children's interests and imagination. Continuous provision within the Nursery classes is extremely effective and enables children to fully explore their ideas and become active, curious learners. In an outstanding Year 1 numeracy lesson, pupils took an extremely active part in comparing capacities. The lesson was exceptionally well planned and all pupils were actively engaged in making predictions and comparisons, demonstrating an excellent understanding of the mathematical concept. Similarly, a Year 6 literacy lesson enabled pupils to offer highly imaginative and thoughtful responses whilst discussing Shakespearean poetry.

The teaching of French throughout the school is excellent. Pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards enjoy French lessons with a native French speaker and the lesson is taught entirely in French. All lessons are extremely well resourced and teachers make excellent use of technology such as interactive whiteboards to support their teaching and make pupils' learning more engaging.

Assessment information is used extremely well in all lessons. This means lessons are continually pitched at the appropriate level. Planning is comprehensive and clearly demonstrates how teaching is adapted to meet the differing learning needs and styles of all pupils. Consequently, lessons run smoothly and all pupils consistently remain fully engaged. All lessons are planned extremely well to build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. This means pupils continually make excellent progress.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding and this results in pupils' outstanding levels of achievement. The richness, breadth and diversity of the curriculum enable pupils to develop an extensive range of knowledge and skills. Curriculum planning is intrinsically linked throughout the school, enabling pupils to build on their knowledge and expertise and make exceptional progress across all subject areas. Lesson planning and all schemes of work show clear progression for all

pupils, irrespective of their individual learning needs. There is a strong focus on literacy, numeracy, science and information and communication technology (ICT) across the school. Lessons are taught by subject specialists. This means lessons are delivered by teachers who demonstrate expertise and passion for their chosen subject, which has a very positive impact on enthusing and engaging all pupils. For example, music lessons are taught by a highly skilled musician who demonstrates exceptional expertise and the ability to adapt his teaching to all age groups. Consequently, pupils develop a strong interest in music and performing. This was seen during the inspection in the Nursery concert performed for parents and carers, and in the high levels of confidence demonstrated by the youngest pupils.

Visitors and outings play an exceptional part in supporting the curriculum. For example, Year 4 pupils visited the Victoria and Albert Museum to support their Indian artwork topic. Many authors have visited the school to support pupils' literacy development. A visit from a professional footballer enabled pupils to improve their football skills. Younger pupils have visited Paradise Wildlife Park as part of topic work on animals. The school's extra-curricular activities are strengths of the school and the programme has an exceptional impact in supporting pupils' learning. Pupils take part in an extensive range of activities, including choir, gymnastics, Latin, Chinese club, yoga, philosophy club and capoeira. The school has enjoyed much success with its chess club. Recently, the school celebrated becoming the first school ever to represent England in the European Schools Under-14 Team Championships in Russia and pupils have played for England in the World School Chess Championships in Greece.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and all of the regulations are met. Pupils confirmed to inspectors how safe and secure they feel at school. They described the school as 'fun' and they recognised that the small class sizes enabled the teachers to know them well as individuals. The high quality of relationships evident between staff and pupils means that pupils always have someone to talk to if they have any concerns. It was noted how caring staff are towards pupils throughout the school. Parents and carers also commended this feature and confirmed it was an important part of the school's ethos.

The school has a full set of welfare policies, including those for child protection, health and safety, behaviour and anti-bullying. They are well written and are fully understood by staff. Pupils confirmed to inspectors that bullying is not an issue in school and that if they needed help, they knew teachers would support them.

The procedures for checking the suitability of staff to work with pupils are robust and are also rigorously applied to other adults, such as extra-curricular staff. All checks are clearly recorded, as required, on a single central register. The designated person and two deputy staff responsible for overseeing safeguarding, including child protection, have attended the higher-level training. In addition, all staff frequently update their knowledge each year on child protection issues and complete an appropriate level of first aid training in line with requirements.

Robust risk assessments are regularly carried out on both school sites and on all school activities and any issues that arise are dealt with swiftly. Meticulous procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are safe when they attend any off-site activities or trips. This is particularly evident as the school uses nearby Hampstead Heath for outside play on a daily basis. The attention paid towards promoting pupils' safety and supervision is excellent. Pupils clearly demonstrate awareness of potential dangers and behave extremely well when walking to the Heath or to Swiss Cottage for sports activities. A high number of staff are trained in paediatric first aid and fully understand the school's procedures for administering specialist medication if needed. The school employs specialist contractors to monitor health and safety provision throughout the premises. All the necessary fire risk assessments and maintenance are carried out on a regular basis and electrical appliances are regularly checked by appropriately qualified personnel.

Leadership and management**Outstanding**

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher is an inspirational leader who is highly regarded by parents and carers, staff and pupils. She leads a dynamic team of highly qualified staff, all of whom share her vision in providing education of the highest standard. One parent/carer summarised the view of many by describing the school as 'a unique and wonderful school'. Many staff commended the headteacher to inspectors, confirming that she places the needs of individual pupils at the heart of the school's ethos and that no pupil is ever turned away, irrespective of their individual learning needs. Extensive strategies are put in place to enable all pupils to achieve and excel. Assessment information is used meticulously to plan for the individual needs of all pupils and the school accurately tracks all pupils' progress. However, procedures are not yet refined to enable the school to track cohorts and groups of pupils, enabling it to systematically monitor the rates of learning of different groups.

The headteacher and school manager frequently review and reflect on their practice and work tirelessly to make continuous improvements throughout the school. All areas for development raised at the previous inspection have been met. The headteacher has an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and plans for many future developments. There are stringent performance management systems in place and all staff embrace the opportunities for continuous professional development. Many staff have undertaken extensive training to enhance their existing strong practice. The school engages the services of professional consultants to advise on practice and curriculum issues and readily seeks help from experts to address all pupils' personal needs. For example, the special educational needs coordinator has recently received professional training from an expert in dyscalculia to support an increasing number of pupils who may require specialist help. The school's premises are maintained to a high standard and provide a safe and secure environment.

The leadership team successfully creates an extremely positive ethos in which all staff and pupils strive to do their best. The headteacher works relentlessly to pursue a vision for excellence and identify new ways to improve and strengthen the curriculum and extend the learning opportunities for all pupils. Parents and carers commend this approach and praise the way in which the school continually engages them in their children's learning. Information provided for parents and carers is extensive and readily accessible. The school's website is very informative and includes all written school policies, including the complaints procedure. All independent school regulations for this standard are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	202/6360
Inspection number	420168
DfE registration number	202/6360

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Preparatory
School status	Independent
Age range of pupils	Rising 3–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	249
Number of part time pupils	34
Proprietors	Melissa Remus Elliot
Headteachers	Melissa Remus Elliot
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,250-£11,400
Telephone number	020 7794 5857
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