



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Regulatory Compliance Inspection Report**

**The Children's House School**

**January 2023**

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### School's Details

<b>School</b>	The Children's House School			
<b>DfE number</b>	206/6383			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	1113285			
<b>Address</b>	The Children's House Upper School King Henry's Walk Islington London N1 4PB			
<b>Telephone number</b>	02072 496273			
<b>Email address</b>	administrator@childrenshouseschool.co.uk			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Ellie Grunewald			
<b>Chair of Governors</b>	Mrs Dawn Brindle			
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Children's House School			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 7			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	109			
	<b>EYFS</b>	71	<b>Upper school</b>	38
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18 to 19 January 2023			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 The Children's House school is an independent, co-educational day school based in Islington, north London. The school is a registered charity, overseen by a board of governors. The school was set up in 1973 by a group of parents. It now occupies two sites near to each other; a nursery in Elmore Street educating for children from the age of two and a half to four, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); and an upper school in King Henry's Walk, educating pupils from Reception to Year 3.
- 1.2 The school was previously inspected by Ofsted in 2019. Since the previous inspection, a new head was appointed in September 2022.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to place importance on pastoral care with the community, with families and children at its core. It seeks to provide individualised learning within a broad, creative curriculum and small class sizes. It endeavours to build pupils' self-confidence and self-awareness and to encourage their development of a passion for lifelong learning. It aspires to instil in pupils a respect for others and for the environment, and an appreciation of the wider world.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come mostly from professional families living within a relatively small geographical area around the school. There are 8 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Five pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), some of whom are given support within class for their English. There are no pupils with an education, health and care plan. The school identifies a small number of pupils considered as more able within the school's population and provides additional activities in lessons.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated and the school is required to take the actions specified.

Additionally, this visit serves as a material change visit to assess the school's proposal to increase its provision on a phased basis for pupils aged up to 11 years by 2025. The school currently caters for pupils aged 2 to 7 years (KS1). This material change inspection is considering the first phase of the school's planned changes to cater for pupils aged up to 9 years.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school does not meet all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and associated requirements, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.**

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.7 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.8 Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 In meeting the needs of children in need or at risk, the school's arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils operate effectively in line with statutory guidance.
- 2.10 However, recruitment checks on new staff are not always carried out before staff commence employment at the school and not all required checks of governors have been completed. In particular, the school has not completed all necessary barred list checks or checks against the list of those prohibited from management before appointment, where relevant. The school has not ensured that any adults involved with children under the age of eight are aware of the need to identify any disqualification from childcare. In addition, the school has not checked all staff for any gaps in employment history or ensured receipt of suitable references for all staff.
- 2.11 Senior leaders employ a strategic approach to risk assessment in many areas of its operations, including in the EYFS. However, when Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks have been delayed, the school has not always ensured that a suitable assessment of risk has been made and documented, including written consideration of any need to arrange supervision until the DBS check is seen.
- 2.12 Oversight of safeguarding by governors, in particular of recruitment checks, has not been sufficiently robust to ensure all requirements are met.
- 2.13 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9–15, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 (accessibility plan), and the ban on corporal punishment under**

section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met, but those in paragraphs 7 [safeguarding] and 16 [risk assessment] are not met.

### Action point 1

The school must ensure that all required recruitment checks are carried out before a person commences work at the school; in particular, barred list checks; obtaining suitable references and verifying them; checking for any gaps in employment history; and requiring staff to declare whether there is any reason they are disqualified from childcare where relevant [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.7, 3.9 and 3.14].

### Action point 2

The school must ensure that when a person is allowed to start work in regulatory activity before a DBS certificate has been seen, it makes an adequate assessment of risk which is suitably documented, including a written rationale for any supervision arrangements [paragraph 7(a) and (b) and, for the same reason, paragraph 16(a) and (b); EYFS 3.9 and 3.65].

### Action point 3

The school must ensure that all governors are checked against the list of those prohibited from management before appointment [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.7 and 3.9].

### Action point 4

The school must ensure that governors maintain sufficiently effective and informed oversight of safeguarding to ensure that all statutory requirements are met, with particular regard to recruitment processes [paragraph 7(a) and (b); EYFS 3.4 and 3.7].

## PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.14 The school maintains an appropriate register of recruitment checks undertaken. It does not use supply staff.
- 2.15 The school has not completed all required checks for staff or proprietors in a timely fashion. Recruitment checks on staff are not always carried out before they commence employment at the school. In particular, a declaration of medical fitness and confirmation of the right to work in the United Kingdom.
- 2.16 At the time of the inspection the school could not provide sufficiently clear evidence of recruitment checks on governors. In particular, evidence that checks on the right to work in the United Kingdom and evidence that a satisfactory DBS check had been obtained.
- 2.17 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school in paragraphs 19 and 21 are met, but those in paragraphs 18 and 20 [suitability of staff and proprietors] are not met.**

### Action point 5

The school must ensure that all required recruitment checks are carried out before a person commences work at the school, in particular, checks of medical fitness and checks of the right to work in the United Kingdom [paragraph 18(3); EYFS 3.9]

## Action point 6

The school must ensure that all required recruitment checks are carried out before a proprietor commences duties at the school, in particular: a check of the right to work in the United Kingdom and evidence that a satisfactory DBS check has been made [paragraphs 20(6)(b)(i and ii); EYFS 3.7, 3.9 and 3.11].

### PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.18 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.19 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

### PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.20 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.
- 2.21 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

### PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.22 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.
- 2.23 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

### PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.24 The proprietor does not ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils. In particular, with regard to safeguarding and recruitment processes.
- 2.25 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 is not met.

### **Action point 7**

**The proprietor must ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].**

### **3. Recommendation with regard to material change request**

#### **Summary of findings**

- 3.1 Curriculum, teaching, assessment; spiritual, moral and social development of pupils.**
- 3.2 The school ensures a level of commonality and continuity across the EYFS and upper sections of the school in terms of timetabling and curriculum. It has prepared suitable curriculum plans for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) are currently provided effectively and the programme will be extended for older pupils. Recent staff recruitment has ensured that new staff have the necessary skills and experience to educate pupils up to the end of the primary phase. Pupils are regularly assessed through suitable means. These include use of external benchmarks which it is planned will be extended as appropriate for older pupils. The school has a well-established culture of developing pupils spiritually, morally and socially. Pupils learn to distinguish right from wrong in a supportive environment and often self-police each other's behaviour. They are growing appropriately in self-esteem and self-confidence. The pupil body is diverse and pupils are developing an appropriate understanding of other faiths, cultures and traditions.
- 3.3 Due to the lack of evidence in some staff files to support compliance with recruitment checks, the standards relating to leadership and management are not met. Planning for the proposed increase in the age range of pupils is suitable and methodical. Once the school has completed the actions required following this inspection it is likely that other regulations will continue to be met with the proposed increase in pupil age range.

#### **Recommendation**

- 3.4 It is not possible to recommend that approval be granted for the proposed increase in the age range of pupils up to the age of 9 years due to current failings in the school's recruitment procedures.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Wendy Martin Reporting inspector

Mr Philip Gibson Compliance team inspector (Assistant head, IAPS school)

Ms Mary Sansom Compliance Team inspector (Compliance and pastoral manager, GDST school)