

The Children's House Upper School

King Henry's Walk, Islington, London N1 4PB (Upper school)
77 Elmore Street, Islington, London N1 3AQ (Nursery)

Inspection dates

15–17 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leadership and management are effective. The headteacher and other leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness.
- Leaders and governors have been successful in maintaining good teaching and pupils' outcomes since the time of the previous inspection. The school is improving.
- Parents and carers are pleased with all aspects of the school's work.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers and teaching assistants are knowledgeable and make sure that tasks match the pupils' differing needs.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils enjoy school, work together sensibly and help each other.
- Pupils are looked after well, enabling them to feel safe and to stay safe.
- Pupils' outcomes are good. Overall, they make good or better progress across the school.
- The early years provision is good. Teachers provide children with a wide range of engaging activities.
- Leaders ensure that the independent school standards are met. However, they are not currently complying with the school's registration.
- Pupils across the school do slightly better in reading and mathematics than in writing. In their writing, pupils do not consistently demonstrate good handwriting and effective use of punctuation.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the school's registration accurately reflects the age range and number of pupils at the school.
- Develop pupils' handwriting and the consistent use of punctuation across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and proprietors have a clear vision for the future of the school, and their enthusiasm and dedication motivate the other members of staff. Leaders are having a positive impact on teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders monitor the performance of teachers and other members of staff thoroughly. They identify clear improvement points and relevant training is provided.
- The new subject leaders are developing their roles well. They have started to monitor teaching and learning, with the aim of extending their involvement in whole-school development. They feel well supported by senior leaders and take the lead on providing training in the subjects they manage.
- The curriculum is well organised. Across subjects, teachers provide a wide range of activities that support learning effectively. Leaders have improved computing since the previous inspection. Pupils have good opportunities to make use of these skills in various subjects. Good use is made of visits and visitors to enhance pupils' learning. For example, during the inspection, children in the Reception class greatly enjoyed a visit from local puppeteers.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. For example, pupils develop good knowledge of art and music from various cultures. British values are taught effectively at an age-appropriate level. Equality and acceptance of diversity are fostered well. For example, children are made aware that families are not all the same and parents of the same sex are equally valued by the school.
- There are strong links with parents. They are pleased with all aspects of the school's work. Parents typically make comments such as 'My daughter is engaged in a wide range of activities' and 'Everyone is really friendly and the children are happy.'
- Leaders – including the proprietors – ensure that the independent school standards are being met. However, due to their misunderstanding of the legal requirements, they have not ensured that the school's registration has been kept up to date. It does not reflect the current age range and number of pupils attending the school. During the inspection, leaders provided evidence to show that they have now applied to the Department for Education (DfE) to request these material changes in registration. If the material changes are implemented, the school is likely to continue to meet the independent school standards.

Governance

- Governance is carried out effectively by the council management team, the members of which are also the proprietors.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the school and have increased the challenge for school leaders since the previous inspection. They monitor the progress of groups of pupils carefully and ensure that spending is effective.

- Governors are aware that they have a less secure understanding of the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning than other areas of the school's work. They are actively recruiting a governor with educational experience to help fulfil this aspect of their role.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a suitable safeguarding policy on the school's website. Members of staff and visitors to the school are carefully selected and checked for suitability for working with pupils. Training is frequent and effective in ensuring that all staff know what to do if there are any safeguarding concerns for a pupil. Leaders are swift to ensure that external support is provided for any pupil, as necessary.
- The school provides a safe and welcoming atmosphere for pupils on both school sites. Supervision is thorough and staff take care to follow safeguarding procedures and policy. There is a successful 'If you are not sure, raise it' policy. Leaders work closely with parents and external providers to protect the pupils and to support them appropriately. One parent spoke for many by saying, 'I'm 100% content that the children are safe and secure.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they deploy successfully in their teaching. For example, a breadth of vocabulary is shared when teaching new topics. Teachers explain clearly what pupils are to learn and tasks are adjusted to meet the pupils' differing needs, including those of the most able. For example, in mathematics, the most able pupils work on word problems or two-step problems, while the less able pupils are reinforcing their understanding of simpler counting activities.
- Teachers and teaching assistants form good relationships with the pupils. Pupils benefit from the high number of adults who support them well in their learning and behaviour. Pupils learn well because members of staff step in when needed, providing the right level of guidance.
- The teaching of phonics is thorough and pupils are enabled to apply their phonics knowledge when reading and writing in various subjects. As a result, pupils read fluently, and their spelling is mostly accurate.
- Teachers assess the pupils' learning frequently and use the information they collect to help plan the pupils' next steps. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to move learning on once pupils are ready for more challenging work.
- Teachers' expectations for pupils' handwriting and punctuation are not consistently high. Pupils sometimes make avoidable errors or are not adventurous enough with their use of punctuation.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils know what to do if they have any worries and that adults at the school will support them and keep them safe. For example, one pupil said that 'teachers help you'.
- Members of staff ensure that pupils' emotional and physical well-being is supported effectively. Circle time is used well to share any concerns over unkind behaviour. Pupils are provided with the means to share their concerns in a non-threatening way. Any incidents are handled firmly but with kindness, helping to build trust between children and their families and the school.
- Parents and pupils are confident that the school is a safe place to be. Pupils are confident and self-assured because they know that they are looked after well.
- Pupils demonstrate strong knowledge of physical dangers, such as fire and the impact of computer screens on eye health. Those interviewed were less confident in discussing the dangers of using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are keen to come to school and most attend regularly. They work well with each other in class and play harmoniously at playtimes. They appreciate the wide range of activities available to stimulate their interest.
- Parents are right to be pleased with the behaviour of pupils at the school. Members of staff are quick to help pupils resolve any disagreements and to challenge stereotypical behaviour such as sexism. Pupils are happy that bullying is rare and unkind behaviour is dealt with immediately.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility as class monitors and are keen to help others.
- Pupils concentrate well most of the time and, as a result, they remember what they have learned in previous lessons. Occasionally, some pupils become quietly inattentive when they are ready and waiting to move on to a new task. They sometimes make avoidable errors in their letter formation and punctuation.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Lessons observed, work in the pupils' books and school assessment information all indicate that pupils make good or better progress from their starting points. They make good progress across subjects and in developing skills of literacy and numeracy. Almost all pupils are working at – and often beyond – age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of education.
- The most able pupils make the same good progress as other pupils. The challenge provided for these pupils has improved since the previous inspection but there are occasions when they could achieve even more.

- In mathematics, pupils make good progress in developing a range of skills, including the handling of numbers.
- Pupils make good use of their knowledge of phonics to help them to read and spell unfamiliar words. They enjoy reading and most have developed specific tastes such as favourite authors. The most able readers draw conclusions from what they have read.
- In writing, pupils include interesting vocabulary and their spelling and grammar are mostly accurate. There is a whole-school focus on handwriting this year. Currently, not all pupils form letters correctly or have sufficient skill to write quickly and accurately. In addition, they often forget to use their punctuation to best effect.

Early years provision

Good

- Children – including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) – make good or better progress across the early years provision and are prepared well for joining Year 1. Most children have reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year.
- Teaching has a positive impact on children’s learning and outcomes. Members of staff work effectively alongside children, asking questions that strengthen their learning.
- Children’s personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. The children’s health and safety are a high priority. Children are kept safe, including on visits to the park and the upper school. There are good relationships between members of staff and the children. As a result, children behave well, are happy and feel safe.
- In the Nursery Year, children benefit from a wide range of engaging activities and there is clear progression from the provision for two-year-olds to the tasks provided for older children. Two-year-olds settle quickly into the clear routines and are soon making choices for themselves in their learning.
- Older Nursery children cooperate well with each other. For example, they share resources sensibly and take turns to weigh out ingredients for biscuits. In the Reception Year, children demonstrate good listening, and read and write simple words independently. Greater opportunities for early writing are making children more aware of letters. Teachers miss some opportunities to check that children are writing letters correctly.
- Leaders and managers across the early years are effective. They ensure that resources are relevant and plentiful. Children have good access to activities – including in computing – and clearly enjoy their learning. The school meets the independent school standards in providing for children in the early years provision but has not ensured that the registration is accurate.
- Leaders bring in external specialists to enhance the professional development of the staff and to support individual children’s specific needs.
- There are strong links between the school and parents. Parents are delighted with the school and have good opportunities to share in the responsibility of assessing their children’s learning. Assessment records are thorough and detailed, although some of the targets set for the children’s next steps lack the precision needed to make them easily measurable.

- There is no outdoor area attached to the nursery building. Members of staff provide outdoor learning by visiting local parks and the upper school playground. Leaders are aware that this is not ideal. They are actively seeking ways of extending outdoor provision.

School details

Unique reference number	130243
DfE registration number	206/6383
Inspection number	10067131

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Number of part-time pupils	37
Proprietor	The Children's House School Limited
Chair	Dawn Brindle
Headteacher	Kate Orange
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,795–£13,545
Telephone number	020 7249 6273
Website	www.childrenshouseschool.co.uk
Email address	kateorange@childrenshouseschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–17 March 2016

Information about this school

- The Children's House is a small independent infant school with nursery. There are three classes in the early years provision. The school is located in two buildings which are situated less than a mile apart: one at King Henry's Walk and the other in Elmore Street. The school is managed by a charitable trust. There have been several changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection.
- Pupils come to the school from a range of heritages but few are at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.

- There are no disadvantaged pupils at the school. There are currently no pupils with SEND in key stage 1, and very few in the early years.
- At the time of the previous inspection in March 2016, leaders were advised to contact the DfE to explain any changes to the age range and number of pupils registered. Leaders were successful in arranging for the registration of the nursery to be cancelled but the school does not comply with its registration in respect of the age range and number of pupils on roll.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in 10 lessons, all with the headteacher or an assistant headteacher.
- Discussions were held with leaders, governors (the council management team and the proprietors) and other members of staff.
- Informal discussions were held with several parents and pupils, and 24 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire were scrutinised.
- Pupils in Year 2 were heard reading and samples of pupils' work were scrutinised.
- A range of information supplied by the school was checked, including the school's own assessment information, planning documents and checks on the quality of teaching. The inspector also looked at the school development plan and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector checked that the school complies with the independent school standards and its DfE registration by holding discussions with staff, checking the premises and scrutinising relevant policies and documents held by the school.

Inspection team

Alison Cartlidge, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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