



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

North Bridge House Prep School

June 2023

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School's Details

School	North Bridge House Prep School			
DfE number	202/6400			
Address	North Bridge House Prep School Gloucester Avenue London NW1 7AB			
Telephone number	02072 676266			
Email address	prep.reception@northbridgehouse.com			
Head of School	Mr Tom Le Tissier			
Chair of Governors	Mr Michael Drake			
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd.			
Age range	4 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	408			
	EYFS	10	Juniors	352
	Seniors	46		
Inspection dates	27 to 29 June 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 North Bridge House Prep School is an independent co-educational day school. It is one of five schools in the North Bridge House School group that is owned and administered by Cognita Ltd. Founded in 1939, it moved to its current location near Regents Park, London, in 1987. The school has recently completed a building project to provide accommodation for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and pupils in Years 1 and 2.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school aims to provide a secure and nurturing environment where each child is celebrated as an individual and learns tolerance, consideration and respect for others. The school seeks to help every child fulfil their potential within a friendly, family atmosphere. Their objective is to educate the whole child by offering a variety of academic, sporting and extra-curricular activities.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Pupils come from families with professional and business backgrounds living relatively close in north London, whose cultural backgrounds reflect the diversity of the locality. Standardised assessment data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is above average for those taking similar tests nationally. The school has identified 110 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia and speech and language difficulties, 83 of whom receive additional specialist help. There are five pupils in the school who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language for 123 pupils, 21 of whom receive additional support.

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 FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection 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 in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management.

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 meets the 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 no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

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 in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. 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 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; 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, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

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

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.12 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.

2.13 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.14 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.

2.15 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.16 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.

2.17 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.18 The proprietor ensures 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.

2.19 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils' knowledge and skills are excellent across all subjects.
- Pupils are serious about wanting to learn and eager to engage. They have excellent attitudes to learning.
- Pupils are articulate communicators with strong reading, writing and speaking skills.
- Pupils are highly creative.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils have a strong personal moral code.
- Pupils are highly resilient and prepared to persist to enable success when encountering challenge.
- Pupils have excellent self-knowledge and understanding which underpins their strong self-confidence and belief that they can achieve.
- Pupils have well-developed social skills and work effectively with others to achieve common tasks.
- Pupils are highly respectful of the diversity in their own and local community.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Ensure that all pupils further develop their abilities to take leadership and initiative in their responses to everyday learning.
- Ensure pupils' ability to develop strong healthy relationships is further supported.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Pupils have excellent knowledge and high levels of skill across all areas of learning. The majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire felt that their skills and knowledge improved in most lessons. This is because of the access to specialist facilities and teaching and lesson aims that are often ambitious. Year 1 pupils successfully reviewed their knowledge of names for fruits in French, and then applied this when talking about the fruits they liked or didn't like. Year 6 Mandarin pupils showed excellent enthusiasm and skill in developing their writing of Chinese characters. Breadth and depth of

linguistic achievement reflect the school's commitment to exposing pupils to a range of languages. As part of a science investigation Year 2 pupils competently described several properties for different materials. They used specific scientific vocabulary, such as 'translucent' and 'opaque', at a level higher than expected for their age. Year 6 geographers correctly analysed information to reflect on the pull factors for migration. In Year 8, pupils accurately detailed reasons for the formation of conurbations and for different types of settlement. Year 4 pupils produced excellent water colour paintings, mixing colours effectively to create dappled patterns inspired by the sea. Year 3 pupils successfully read sheet music in 4/4 time to work out notes and rhythms. They then competently played bars of previously unseen music on the glockenspiel. The level of musicality of both singers and instrumentalists heard during the inspection in practices for a whole school performance was excellent for their age.

- 3.6 Pupils of all ages are highly confident communicators. Pupils speak with clarity and enthusiasm in class discussions, whilst also listening respectfully to the views of others. This is enabled through the strong and supportive relationships pupils have with each other and their teachers. Reception children used their excellent phonic understanding of initial sounds and diagraphs to guess the spelling of unfamiliar words such as 'favourite' with a good degree of success for their age. They write in sentences and understand some of the conventions of letter writing. Year 2 pupils made progress through the year from writing at length in sentences to a clear understanding of the construction of paragraphs. They retold the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* using commas in sentences accurately. In English, Year 3 pupils read out the stories they had written, enthusiastically accentuating onomatopoeic and alliterative vocabulary. Pupils of all ages successfully apply their communication skills across subjects, with older pupils writing extremely competent essays for their age. Year 4 pupils wrote well-structured analytical essays on 'Were the Vikings bloodthirsty people?' Year 8 pupils wrote a coherent explanation about Charles I's belief in the divine right of kings being a key cause of the English civil war. Year 7 pupils understand the importance of using body language and facial expression to support communication, as seen in drama work exploring the impact of comedy on communication. High levels of achievement are a result of the focus upon developing effective communication skills as a tool for learning.
- 3.7 Pupils have strong numerical skills and knowledge. There is a focus on enabling pupils to acquire mathematical skills and then an expectation that they will be applied to many subjects. Reception children have a thorough grasp of numbers to ten and a strong understanding of formal mathematical conventions to enable adding numbers to twenty. Year 2 pupils showed how shapes can be halved or quartered and apply this to their understanding of number. Year 3 pupils demonstrated excellent understanding of the properties of polygons, using appropriate terminology, when solving increasingly challenging problems. Older pupils successfully used factorisation to manipulate algebraic equations, with the most able working with high degrees of accuracy and independence. Pupils competently apply their mathematical knowledge across many areas of learning, using data to support points made in essay writing, applying formulae to aid analysis of results in scientific investigations or when calculating river discharge in geography work. Imaginative and effective use of mathematics was seen in a 'maths meets art' project.
- 3.8 Pupils are competent users of technology both to support their learning across the curriculum and in acquiring computer-specific skills. Year 1 and 2 pupils excitedly and accurately used the camera facilities in handheld computers to take pictures in their classroom in order to make a collage. Older pupils used different programs effectively to present data collected on field trips in graphical form. They responded imaginatively to tasks using many of the features in presentation programs to make their work as interesting as possible. From Year 3, pupils make regular use of personal devices for research and to complete assignments. Pupils used speciality software effectively to give presentations on Greek mythology. In Year 6 English pupils used software effectively to film book reviews. Older pupils spoke confidently about using spreadsheets to support work in humanities and science studies and using a variety of coding programs. They enjoyed using a 3D printing program competently to design a chess piece and a puzzle cube game. These high-level skills are enabled through the specialist teaching and knowledge of staff and the readily available resources. In this they

benefit from the commitment of the proprietors to ensure that every child from Year 3 upwards has access to their own laptop.

- 3.9 Pupils move to the next stage of their education with highly developed study skills. This is due to a whole school approach of regularly reviewing understanding before moving forward in a topic and a focus on the particular skills required to acquire knowledge. In writing a Year 6 history essay on 'Could World War 2 have been avoided?', pupils consulted a variety of sources of information and selected key features through careful analysis of each to reach their own hypotheses in answer to the question. In science older pupils competently made predictions, effectively supported by prior knowledge of forces. Year 8 pupils hypothesised about the width of riverbanks and subsequently justified their conclusions successfully, using collected data. Excellent thinking skills are a result of a focus on enabling pupils to apply their knowledge, encouraged by the school leadership.
- 3.10 By the time pupils leave the school, all have made at least good and some rapid progress relative to their starting points. This was confirmed by observations of pupils' work in books and in lessons, and by analysis of the school's own assessment data. Pupils with SEND make rapid progress from their starting points. This is because of the effective individual support that they receive. Pupils are academically well prepared for entry to their future schools, with half of pupils entering the North Bridge House group senior schools and half gaining places at independent schools with competitive entry criteria. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that teaching enabled their child to make progress.
- 3.11 Pupils achieve success beyond the school curriculum as individuals and in groups. A number of pupils achieve scholarship awards in recognition of their academic ability or skills in performing arts, sports and drama. The school has been finalists and semi-finalists in local football competitions. Individuals have represented the school at regional competitions in golf, tennis, cricket, gymnastics, athletics, swimming, and football. Pupils with a talent for tennis and chess have had their skills recognised nationally, and the school choir were finalists in a national singing competition. Able mathematicians achieved considerable success in the UKMT Global Challenge. In 2022 63% of entrants from the school achieved bronze certificates or higher, with 12 pupils achieving gold certificates. Many pupils take part in LAMDA exams. In 2022 86% of these received the highest grade of distinction. Pupils have art exhibited in nationally renowned art galleries and a group has recently reached the second round of the Townsend-Warner History Prize. At the time of the inspection, geography pupils representing the school were lying fourth in the WWF and ITZA international One Planet Challenge.
- 3.12 Pupils of all ages and abilities have excellent attitudes to learning. They are quick to settle to tasks and are eager to participate in learning with others. For example, Year 4 pupils successfully punctuated four increasingly complex sentences through peer discussion. Most pupils work independently to respond to set tasks. However, pupils have relatively limited everyday opportunities to use their creativity and take leadership in their learning. Pupils relish opportunities, when given, to employ their imagination, as was evident in self-generated video presentations where Year 6 pupils enthusiastically spoke about their favourite books. High levels of enjoyment were shown by all Year 3 and Year 4 pupils whilst working together to create their designs in an after-school drawing club. Reception children worked collaboratively to rid their water play ocean of plastic and so save their plastic animals from pollution. Pupils' independence and eagerness to take initiative are enhanced by their experiences on residential trips and the breadth of curricular and extra-curricular experiences with the result that the school enables all to find their 'True North.'

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of rules and laws because of the school's clear system of behaviour management which they all understand, and feel is appropriately applied. All pupils demonstrated a strong grasp of right and wrong. Although they may sometimes make

mistakes, they reflect honestly and acknowledge where they went wrong, thinking about how they could improve their responses in the future. This is because of the emphasis on kindness promoted through nomination of others for awards. Pupils across the school make positive choices to behave well because of the schools' strong reward culture.

- 3.15 Pupils exhibit high levels of self-confidence. They explained that this is developed over their time in the school, starting at a very early age, because of the very many opportunities to perform, first in front of the school in assemblies and then to larger audiences in both drama and music productions. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents felt the school helps their children to be confident and independent. Pupils exhibit strong leadership qualities, developed through the many opportunities to take on roles of responsibilities. Pupil subject ambassadors demonstrate their love of the subject and high-level skills in their areas of strength. Sport ambassadors prepared warm-up activities for younger pupils. Pupils gain great self-belief and pride from the celebration of their work by peers and teachers. Pupils have an excellent understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement because of the expectation that they will self-evaluate their work and test results, having been given clear guidance on how to do so. Where necessary, focused one-to-one support enables them to identify areas for improvement next time. They show high levels of resilience in learning from mistakes and having another go at questions initially found difficult, built through a culture of praise. Year 4 pupils are keen to gain their pen licences and so persevere to improve their handwriting. Pupils felt that their high levels of confidence grew from the warm, friendly and supportive culture of the school, saying 'when we are supported by our friends, we can do anything'. Older pupils explained that they are very pleased that the school encourages resilience as they are now reaping the reward in obtaining places in schools of their choice.
- 3.16 Pupils have highly developed social skills; they work effectively in groups and pairs to achieve common goals. Almost all parents, responding to the questionnaire, felt the school helps their children develop strong teamwork and social skills. Reception children successfully worked in teams in a woodland environment to find out who could build the strongest shelter. Year 4 pupils worked together as a class to identify different literary techniques used in the poem *Clockwork* by Philip Pulman. They then worked effectively in pairs to find interesting verbs, nouns and adjectives to add to their word banks, knowing that this co-operation would help their independent writing. Strong social skills are a result of a unified approach to modelling and developing knowledge of a skill or concept in class or in small groups before initiating independent responses to tasks, which is a common approach to learning encouraged by the school leadership and supported by governance. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop their social skills when working or playing in house groups or in pairs and teamwork in gymnastics and team sports.
- 3.17 Pupils show a high level of respect for the diversity within their own community and beyond because of the emphasis on this as one of the three school values. Year 7 pupils study and reflect effectively on the impact of the life and beliefs of Rosa Parks and her effect on the issue of segregation in the USA. Pupils' understanding of the impact of different cultural influences is seen in their art and music work. When Year 8 pupils studied the book *The Bone Sparrow* by Zana Fraillon, set in context of Rohingya people fleeing from Myanmar, they reflected sensitively on what they themselves might take if they had to flee from home and why, and how it might make them feel. They then sensitively compared evidence from the story against the articles in the United Nations convention for the rights of a child. Pupils explained that their strong respect for all is supported through the opportunities to read widely from different cultures, because of the school resources which reflect British culture, and because of their exposure to associated topics in the carefully considered PSHE curriculum and linked assembly themes.
- 3.18 Pupils have a strong philosophical approach to life. Younger pupils show interest in comparing different faiths, looking at creation stories in world religions and learning about major faith celebrations. Pupils of all ages enjoy contributing to teacher-led assemblies, especially when they can contribute experiences about their own faiths. Pupils demonstrated deep philosophical reflection

about questions posed in general studies, encouraging them to consider life's big questions such as 'Why do people suffer?' or 'Can there be happiness without sadness?' From a young age, children are encouraged to think and wonder. Year 2 pupils responded to the Christian Easter story with a powerful reflection and drawings on the meaning behind the symbolism of the cross. Year 7 pupils showed deep appreciation of the beauty of creation when reflecting on their recent residential trip to Snowdonia.

- 3.19 Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of health and wellbeing through the focus of the 'Global be well' initiative by Cognita. Year 4 pupils said they had been taught about healthy food choices in their lessons and that it helps them consider what is good for them to eat. All schools in the group are encouraged, in a joint off-timetable day, to focus on an area of health and wellbeing, the focus in 2023 being the importance of nutrition. Pupils have a strong understanding of the importance of road safety when on regular trips for exercise at Regents Park. Pupils confidently reflected in discussion that they understand about healthy and safe relationships through work in PSHE and 'Wellbeing Wednesday' assemblies, though they felt that more time to explore topics would support them even more to face challenges in modern society. Pupils demonstrate a well-developed awareness of how to stay safe both physically and online. For example, Year 3 and 7 pupils were observed playing a variety of physical games safely in a small space.
- 3.20 Pupils contribute enthusiastically to their own school and wider community. The school eco councils, with representatives from classes across the school, lead successful initiatives on recycling and reducing the school use of single-use plastic. The school council chose activities for playground games and sent suggestions for the design of the early years outdoor garden to the company responsible for the building project. Anti-bullying ambassadors support younger pupils who may need guidance on friendships, and many of the older pupils have demonstrated an excellent sense of service towards their peers when fulfilling a wide range of roles of responsibility, for example as school prefects or subject ambassadors. Pupils' artwork has been used to enhance the billboards around the local HS2 development or as posters used to exemplify the importance of work done with endangered animals at London Zoo. Some of the school's charity collections are initiated by individual children.
- 3.21 Pupils have a strong understanding that the decisions they make to study effectively will affect potential outcomes and academic success. During breaktimes, play together cooperatively, making the right choices in how to behave appropriately in group activities, they are given lots of opportunities to select a range of different games. From an early age pupils know that it is right for them to make their own decisions. Reception children struggling to complete an addition question will choose to retrieve concrete materials from the maths cupboard to help them. When they disagreed with the teacher's choice of story, they suggested voting, to enable democratic choice. Year 6 pupils, working collaboratively to learn from mistakes made in their end of year assessment, showed good understanding of how to read questions more carefully and how this might help them achieve better results. Older pupils are willing to give up spare time to practise pieces on their musical instruments so that all achieve excellent levels of performance in year group orchestras. Year 7 pupils' understanding of consequences and choice is supported in philosophy lessons where they reflected thoughtfully on utilitarianism and deontology. Pupils enjoy making informed choices when they are given the opportunity to respond to tasks and present work in their own way.

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 governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assembly. 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 Vivien Sergeant	Reporting inspector
Mr David Williams	Compliance team inspector and team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)
Mr Michael Clennett	Team inspector (Former acting head, GSA school)
Mr Patrick Wenham	Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)