

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

North Bridge House Senior School – Hampstead

January 2023

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School's Details

School	North Bridge House Senior School – Hampstead
DfE number	202/6269
Address	North Bridge House Senior School – Hampstead 65 Rosslyn Hill Hampstead London NW3 5UD
Telephone number	020 726 76266
Email address	seniorschool@northbridgehouse.com
Executive Head	Mr Brendan Pavey
Head of School	Mr Christopher Jones
Chair of Proprietors	Mr Michael Drake
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Ltd
Age range	11 to 16
Number of pupils on roll	465
	Seniors 465
Inspection dates 17 to 19 January 2023	

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1. Background Information

About the school

1.1 North Bridge House Senior School is a co-educational day school which was founded in 1987 in premises close to Regent's Park in north London. The school moved to its current location in Hampstead in 2012. It is one of a group of six schools educating pupils from two to eighteen years in the London region. The school belongs to the Cognita group of schools and is governed by an educational executive from Cognita.

1.2 Since the previous inspection the school has created additional leadership roles to oversee pastoral and academic areas.

What the school seeks to do

1.3 The school aims to celebrate each child as an individual in what it intends to be a happy school with a friendly, family atmosphere where children learn tolerance, consideration and respect for others. It seeks to recognise and nurture the individual personality and talent of each pupil and so enable them to attain their personal and academic potential.

About the pupils

1.4 Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds in the Hampstead area. Nationally standardised test data indicate the ability of pupils is above average compared to those taking similar tests nationally. The school has identified 147 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), mostly with cognition, communication, emotional or physical and sensory difficulties, 46 of whom receive additional specialist help. Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for 70 pupils with three pupil requiring additional support in the classroom.

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. 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 <u>met</u> or as <u>not met</u>. 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. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

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: <u>The Education (Independent School Standards)</u> Regulations 2014.

Key findings

2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 At GCSE in the years 2019 to 2022, performance has confirmed 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 and sex education, 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 well-being 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 of all ages develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to their ability.
 - All groups of pupils, including those with SEND or EAL, make rapid progress and achieve extremely well in their GCSE examinations across all subject areas.
 - Pupils' communication skills are excellent.
 - Pupils' attitudes to all aspects of their learning are excellent.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
 - Pupils develop notably strong levels of self-confidence, resilience and self-understanding so they are well-prepared for the next stage of their lives.
 - Pupils show an excellent understanding that the decisions they make can impact upon their futures.
 - Pupils show an excellent sensitivity and understanding towards those from diverse cultural backgrounds and for each other's individual characteristics and needs.
 - Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy in their daily lives both within and beyond school.

Recommendations

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
 - Strengthen further pupils' achievements beyond the academic curriculum.
 - Strengthen the quality of pupils' study skills, especially those of the most able.

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 of all ages develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding and across all areas of learning. They articulate ideas and employ skills well beyond age-related expectations. In geography, pupils used advanced subject terminology with much accuracy when describing pyroclastic flows or explaining processes at plate margins. In the vast majority of lessons observed the pupils' thirst for knowledge was stimulated by passionate subject specialists. For example, pupils confidently identified the dramatic devices employed in *Dr Faustus* and linked them to the requirements of a GCSE devised

task. In a lesson on odes, younger pupils were able to fully appreciate the connotations of language when describing a pomegranate. The high rates of progress evident for pupils of all abilities are facilitated by the high expectations of staff who have an excellent knowledge of each pupil's needs. In Spanish, pupils demonstrated excellent linguistic knowledge when using their target language to extrapolate the meaning of words. Year 7 mathematicians showed excellent core skills when working with negative terms and were able to apply these skills to multi-step problems. Many pupils display high levels of skill in the visual arts as well as physical education resulting in a number of excellent individual and group achievements. A large majority of pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their skills and knowledge improves in most lessons. Pupils' excellent knowledge and understanding underpins their high level of success in external examinations.

- 3.6 Pupils, including those with SEND, EAL and the more able, make rapid progress from their starting points. Academic attainment has improved since the previous inspection and is now consistently above or well-above national norms at GCSE. In the years 2019 and 2022, results in external examinations were excellent in relation to ability across the full range of subjects. In these years, over half of all GCSE entries were awarded grades 7-9 with well over 90% at grade 5 and above. The centreassessed grades for 2020 and teacher-assessed grades for 2021 show that attainment was enhanced by the highly effective support given during periods of remote learning. Pupils are highly successful in accessing a wide range of sixth form courses in their chosen destination schools, including a number with highly competitive entry requirements. Pupils' attainment has improved as a result of the focus of proprietors and leaders on the promotion of consistency in the quality of teaching through regular professional development. Many pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaire commented positively on the broad curriculum that allows option choices to be matched to each individual's strengths. Parents appreciate the high quality and regularity of feedback about their child's progress. Pupils who are encountering difficulties benefit from booster lessons, subject clinics and one-to-one support from staff. Rapid rates of progress are assisted by assessment, monitoring and reporting procedures which enable swift intervention when required. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve well in relation to whole school performance and benefit from the oversight of the learning support department to ensure that teachers meet their needs effectively.
- 3.7 Pupils' excellent oral communication is supported by the constant opportunities to make presentations, enter into discussions or perform. Pupils, including those with SEND, develop their speaking skills through class discussion where they learn to listen and respect others' contributions, before freely offering opinions. Pupils are willing to venture ideas supported by the positive encouragement of teachers and their peers. For example, all members of a Year 8 class were confident to present humorous sketches and factual information on the rule of law to the rest of their year group. Pupils of all ages write fluently and make excellent use of descriptive or technical language. In an English lesson on Gothic genre writing techniques, pupils read out their work with complete confidence and listened with much interest to the articulate feedback given by others. Scrutiny of pupils' work showed that most pupils construct complex paragraphs in order to argue persuasively. Pupils writing shows an excellent ability to express thoughts using sophisticated language in many areas of the curriculum.
- 3.8 Pupils have very highly developed mathematical and numerical skills that are employed effectively in many areas of the curriculum. Younger pupils develop numerical skills well beyond age-related expectations and around two thirds of GCSE candidates achieve the highest grades 7–9 in mathematics. Pupils' work showed a heightened ability to assess their own strengths and weaknesses in relation to numeracy. Many pupils apply their strong mathematical skills with confidence, for example, in the sciences, technology, computing and geography. During the inspection, pupils were able to derive an equation to describe the change of state of substances in physics. In computer science, excellent numerical skills were observed in programming work on indexing.
- 3.9 Pupils apply their outstanding core information and communication technology (ICT) skills purposefully in a range of subjects. In Year 7, pupils learn successfully how to use a variety of software

applications in their timetabled digital skills lessons. In computing lessons, many pupils act as highly competent programmers and abstract information to design a solution for a task as well as algorithms to implement the solutions. For example, in a computer science lesson, pupils used programming software to filter and rank data on the highest grossing films at cinemas before analysing their work for accuracy and validity. Appropriate use is made of the ICT to support learning in the majority of subject areas and to facilitate independent research. In a history lesson, pupils collated digital information from a variety of internet sites on Victorian mines and were able to accurately assess the validity of the sources used. Pupils with SEND make good use of ICT to enhance their access to the curriculum through the use of bespoke programmes and support materials, and to word-process in lessons and examinations.

- 3.10 Pupils throughout the school exhibit secure study skills at all levels. Some areas of the curriculum allow the development of higher-order study skills, such as the ability to synthesise information from a wide range of sources and test hypotheses. However, most opportunities are in relation to the coursework requirements of GCSE, with the result that the most able pupils do not always demonstrate such study skills as strongly as possible. Pupils of all abilities respond enthusiastically when encouraged to take a lead in their own learning and make rapid progress as a result. For example, pupils exhibited much independence when planning and realising their practical project to create dry felt hats in textiles. A large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school equips their child with the team-working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.
- 3.11 A large number of pupils of all ages participate and achieve well in external academic competitions and in sport, art, music drama and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE). There are some excellent achievements in the visual arts including outstanding grades in drama and frequent plays and music concerts that provide many opportunities to perform or undertake roles behind the scenes. During the inspection, the mixed-age cast of the forthcoming production of Beauty and the Beast collaborated to rehearse the scene Kill the beast with much enthusiasm and skill. Pupils are able to develop their musical talents in both classical and popular areas that include rock groups competing in the 'Battle of the Bands', playing in the London Cognita Orchestra or reaching finals in the Independent Schools Association (ISA) piano or acapella choir competitions. Pupils enjoy growing success in a good range of team and individual sports including recent victories in ISA golf, tennis and badminton competitions. Pupils achieve beyond age-related expectations in mathematical challenges, art, textiles and computation thinking competitions though opportunities for wider achievements are more limited in some other extra-curricular areas. As a result, pupils' extra-curricular achievements are not always as strong as possible in these areas.
- 3.12 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They engage with enthusiasm in lessons and work well together collaboratively within and beyond the classroom, responding positively to the consistent expectations of teachers. Pupils respond to the encouragement of staff and are prepared to take risks and to persevere in the pursuit of success. They are prepared to take responsibility for their work which is well organised and presented. Pupils spoke very highly of the individual support and encouragement that teachers and pastoral staff give them as they develop the confidence to overcome any personal difficulties. They are fully supported in this by helpful oral and written feedback, including clear information on how to improve.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils develop high levels of self-knowledge, confidence, self-discipline and resilience. By the time they leave, pupils understand how to improve their own learning and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives. In the questionnaires, parents commented on how happy and confident their children had become and how they had been encouraged to be their own person. Pupils build their social and inter-personal skills in Year 7 through team building activities such as the Condover

- residential camp. Pupils reflect purposefully on their work and improve accordingly assisted by staff who know each individual well. This was seen in English where pupils reflected on their written work and set goals for improvement. In a physical education (PE) lesson, pupils showed much resilience and perseverance when learning to strike a low pass with their non-dominant hand in spike ball.
- 3.15 Pupils exhibit a heightened capacity to make informed decisions in a wide range of situations that impact upon their own success and well-being as well as that of others. Pupils say that they appreciate the flexible choice of GCSE options and advice given by staff and see these as a means to focus on their strengths and interests. Careers events, include presentations from a wide range of professions, enable pupils to make secure choices about their sixth-form programmes. During the inspection, pupils in mathematics and science chose tasks in class that provided the appropriate level of challenge. Similarly, in booster lessons, they identified the topics that they wished to review and consolidate. Pupils choose freely from the range of extra-curricular activities offered and this enables them to commit to activities with enthusiasm. Highly developed collective decision-making is evident throughout the school, as seen by the work that Year 9 pupils did during the inspection to support the running of the library.
- 3.16 Pupils have a well-developed sense of the school's newly established values which encourage them to explore the concepts of generosity, integrity and respect. Pupils' heightened respect of other faiths, beliefs and cultures is embedded throughout the school. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors expressed their gratitude to the school for the freedom to develop their own beliefs. They have a clear understanding of other religions and cultures and appreciate the opportunities for discussion that are presented in PSHE and the popular philosophy unit in enrichment. In a history lesson, pupils were confident to explain maturely how Nazi Germany had manipulated and used religion for their own ends and the role religion played in the rise and fall of the Third Reich. Pupils' strong appreciation of the non-material aspects of life is evident through the high-quality art, photography and textiles work exhibited around the school as well as in the frequent informal guitar and piano recitals. Textiles work highlights the issue of plastic in the oceans and in the 'Bee Well Garden' pupils plant carpet phlox to attract insects and add colour to the front of the school. Pupils have a keen awareness of environmental issues, whether by producing organic vegetables on the school's allotment or by working towards a national sustainability award.
- 3.17 Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong and, for the most part, their behaviour is excellent. When they make mistakes, pupils are encouraged effectively to reflect on their actions and learn to accept full responsibility for their behaviour. They respect their teachers and each other as equals without the need for overly hierarchical structures with the result that most issues are dealt with before they can escalate. Pupils show compassion and feel that they can have their own opinions about moral issues, and that their views are listened to. For example, pupils showed great sensitivity and empathy in a discussion about the forthcoming events to remember the holocaust. Pupils' capacity to self-regulate behaviour builds steadily from Year 7 so that by the time they reach Year 11, they are excellent role-models. The occasional instances of thoughtless or boisterous behaviour witnessed in public areas during the inspection did not manifest themselves in the classroom. The school's excellent pastoral care system and the detailed knowledge of pupils' needs and vulnerabilities is a strength of the school.
- 3.18 Pupils' collaboration with each other, and their teachers, is excellent. Pupils exhibit outstanding teamworking skills when working in mixed-age groups in class activities, residential visits, fieldtrips, team sports, drama and music productions, house events, DofE or charitable initiatives. In lessons, pupils work effectively in groups to achieve common goals. In mathematics, pupils worked together to assess gradients on a line when finding values for y = mx + c. In drama, the class collaborated well to create concepts for costumes for different characters. Pupils exhibited much social awareness when providing support and positive feedback to their peers in an improvised game of volleyball. In their questionnaire responses, most parents agreed that the school encourages the development of teamwork and social skills.

- 3.19 Pupils are extremely positive in their commitment to improving the lives of others, both within and beyond school. They volunteer as part of their DofE Award, assist in charity shops, cook in soup kitchens, read to younger children and help with cubs and beavers. Charitable work is extremely well supported by activities such as a non-uniform day for Save the Children and Cancer Research or a bake sale for Water Aid. The highly-motivated prefect team takes effective responsibility for year groups, houses, community projects, mentoring and diversity issues. They take their duties very seriously and make an excellent contribution to the school community. Year 11, as the senior year, are role-models and show leadership in the school through activities such as the 'older, wiser learners' (OWLS), homework club or by planning and running a silent disco. Pupils serving on the school's sustainability council work with much enthusiasm on a variety of energy saving projects and now collect compostable waste from the dining room to use on the allotment.
- 3.20 Pupils display outstanding natural tolerance, understanding and sensitivity towards those from diverse cultural backgrounds, and for the individual needs or characteristics of other pupils. Their attitudes towards inclusion and diversity are a strength of the school and a testament to the rapid personal development that takes place in relation to their starting points. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promotes the values of respect and tolerance for other people. Pupils are highly respectful of their peers who are working to overcome specific educational needs, and pupils with a range of abilities and backgrounds support each other extremely well. In a science lesson, pupils showed much respect for those with different abilities and those with SEND or EAL. This created an environment in which no pupil was afraid to admit a lack of understanding or ask for help when analysing how internal energy relates to temperature and state. Pupils reflect with strong sensitivity on the diversity within the community and show how much they value difference by speaking out when they hear things that are not respectful towards others. Pupils are happy to be identified when rejecting all forms of discrimination through the challenge posters displayed around the school. The 'pride and diversity' council has created a safe environment in which pupils are confident to discuss and explore their identity. The celebration of diversity and culture is reinforced across the curriculum through mechanisms such as Black Lives Matter booklists in English, pen pal exchanges in languages or themed activities in the visual arts.
- 3.21 Pupils understand how to stay safe, including online, and know how to balance their lives to stay physically and mentally healthy. Pupils value the opportunities to develop their fitness through participation in a growing range of sporting opportunities and an emphasis in PE lessons on physical fitness. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to stay safe online that is reinforced through PSHE and digital skills lessons. Pupils understand the essentials of a healthy diet that is promoted in their science, food and nutrition lessons. Pupils have a clear awareness of mental and emotional well-being and are comfortable to openly discuss issues. During the inspection, pupils showed a clear understanding of the way that a balanced lifestyle can reduce anxiety prior to exams. Pupils are supported by very well-structured personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and well-being programmes that include a focus on healthy relationships and lifestyle choices, including, at the time of the inspection, sleep patterns. The proprietors have fully recognised the need to enhance support in these areas including the provision of a well-being lead and activities relating to their annual global well-being day. Pupils have access to skilled counselling and well-trained tutorial support. A highly developed safeguarding network alongside a close knowledge of each pupil ensures that issues are addressed promptly and sensitively.

Inspection Evidence 13

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 representative of the proprietary body, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Mr Roger Tapping Reporting inspector

Mr Marcus Evan Cook Compliance team inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Mrs Angela Clancy Team inspector (Former head of department, HMC school)

Mrs Clare Macro Team inspector (Head, GSA school)