



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

North Bridge House Senior Canonbury

May 2023

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School's Details

School	North Bridge House Senior Canonbury			
DfE number	206/6001			
Address	North Bridge House Senior Canonbury 6–9 Canonbury Place Islington London WS1 2NQ			
Telephone number	0207 267 6266			
Email address	canonbury@northbridgehouse.com			
Executive Headteacher	Mr Brendan Pavey			
Head of School	Mrs Charlotte Tassell-Dent			
Chair of governors	Michael Drake			
Proprietor	Cognita Schools			
Age range	11 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	244			
	Seniors	197	Sixth Form	47
Inspection dates	10 to 12 May 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 North Bridge House Senior Canonbury is an independent day school, one of the North Bridge House group of schools. It is governed and administered by Cognita Schools. The current executive head and head of school took up their posts in September 2019.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 2014 and is located in Islington. It comprises two sections: seniors for pupils aged 11 to 16 years, and sixth form for pupils aged 16 to 18 years.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to celebrate each pupil as an individual in a secure and nurturing environment. It seeks to help every child fulfil their potential through a wide variety of activities and dedicated, inspirational teaching. It endeavours to provide a happy school with a friendly family atmosphere.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Most of the pupils come from the local community. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils in the senior school is above average, and that of pupils in the sixth form is broadly average. The school has identified 83 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) which includes dyslexia, dyspraxia, processing difficulties and autistic spectrum needs, most of whom receive additional specialist help. Two pupils have an education, health and care plan (EHCP). English is an additional language for 34 pupils of whom 3 receive additional support for their English. The curriculum is modified for the most able pupils in the school's population and remote schooling arrangements are made for those whose particular talents mean that they need to be away from the school site.

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 **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. 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: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) 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 The school's GCSE and A-level results in the years 2019 to 2022 confirm 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 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'.

Key findings

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

- Pupils apply their excellent communication skills effectively to all areas of learning.
- Pupils display high levels of skills, knowledge and understanding in many aspects of their learning.
- Pupils demonstrate a confident ability to analyse and hypothesise utilising a wide range of resources to do so. They apply their skills and understanding to unfamiliar situations.
- Most pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, but some lack consistent engagement in their work in class.

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

- Pupils' self-understanding is excellent. They are confident, resilient and most are strongly engaged with their own learning.
- Pupils are highly inclusive. They value diversity and show sensitivity and tolerance to difference in all its forms.
- Pupils clearly understand how to stay physically and mentally healthy and are adept at making appropriate judgements about how to achieve a balanced lifestyle.
- Pupils have an excellent awareness of community and collaborate productively in groups and teams.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Ensure that all pupils approach their learning with consistent engagement through the sharing of excellent teaching practice throughout the school.

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 make excellent progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school. On entry, most pupils have an ability level above those taking similar tests nationally. Analysis of school data, lesson observations and work scrutiny show that at both GCSE and A level, most pupils attain grades higher than expected for those of their ability, in line with the school's aim to enable their pupils to achieve their potential academically. Pupils' attainment at A level in 2022 was good, with three-fifths of results at the top three grades. This level of attainment is lower than the centre- and teacher-assessed results in 2020 and 2021 when the same proportion of results were at the top

two grades. Results in GCSE are equally indicative of the high quality of teaching and learning. In 2022, just under three-fifths of results were at the top three grades, again lower than the centre- and teacher-assessed grades in 2020 and 2021, but higher than in 2019. Results show improvement beyond predictions for pupils in most cases, and substantial improvement in some.

- 3.6 All leavers in 2022 gained a place at their first-choice institution, many with high entry requirements or in specific fields, or took a gap year. Academic outcomes are excellent for all pupils whatever their challenges and starting points. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make strong progress, in line with their peers. This is enabled by teaching which demonstrates detailed knowledge of individual pupils and mutually respectful relationships between staff and pupils. In the response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very large majority of parents agreed that their child's individual educational needs are met effectively. Several commented on the excellent support provided to meet their child's needs. This confirms the school's efficacy in achieving its aim to meet pupils' pastoral and educational needs and enable enhanced progress so that all pupils reach their potential. Pupils' strong academic outcomes benefit from the oversight of the governance team, which reviews results and set targets for the school based on pupil performance.
- 3.7 Pupils' level of skills, knowledge and understanding are excellent in most areas of learning, and they apply these effectively to new situations. Year 7 pupils demonstrated their scientific knowledge and adept social and speaking skills when delivering presentations on ecosystems. In a Year 10 English lesson, pupils made excellent links between words and phrases, and their effect on the reader when comparing the Caribbean and London in the poem *Island Man*. In a sixth form devised drama piece, pupils used effective techniques, including vocal tone and non-vocal expressions and gesture to evoke character. Artwork on display includes paintings, drawing and sculpture, and indicates the high level of skill of many pupils across the school. Several pupils showed strong composition and musicianship skills in classroom, rehearsal and performance. In a Year 9 chemistry lesson, pupils drew on previous knowledge and skills to successfully attempt more challenging balancing of chemical equations.
- 3.8 Pupils are excellent communicators; they speak with confidence and express their ideas articulately and precisely. Pupils in a Year 7 English lesson used sophisticated language to describe the requirements for an army recruiter. Those in a Year 11 computer studies lesson used technical vocabulary accurately in explanations including the answer to a coding problem. Many pupils are avid readers and show high levels of understanding and extensive vocabulary. They analyse effectively and express opinions about what they have read. They listen attentively to instructions and to one another and develop good presentation skills in classes and assemblies. Pupils contribute well to discussions, and some are enthusiastically learning to debate. Pupils develop excellent descriptive, analytical and creative writing skills as seen in explanations of longshore drift in Year 10 geography and discussion of characterisation in the gothic genre in sixth form English literature.
- 3.9 Pupils use their strong numeracy skills effectively in many areas of the curriculum, including science, geography and computer studies. In a Year 10 physics lesson, pupils defined radioactive half-life and explained clearly how they had calculated this for an isotope from a graph. Pupils in year 9 adeptly analysed statistics on the birth rate, fertility rate and death rate in the Gambia to better understand the effect of population growth on resources. In a Year 8 geography lesson, pupils persevered to find an appropriate scale to plot data to consider the change in the thickness of icesheets over time. Sixth form pupils demonstrate their prowess in more advanced scientific calculations in physics and chemistry.
- 3.10 Pupils have excellent information and communication technology (ICT) skills, using digital devices and software effortlessly as a tool to support and enhance learning. Older pupils showed facility with advanced composition software and solving coding problems. Younger pupils used devices with ease to access and navigate the package of resources provided by their teacher to support the lesson. Pupils make effective use of the school's online learning platform to complete homework and assignments. They are adept at using software for writing documents and spreadsheets when writing notes or

reports. They are confident in researching online and preparing presentations such as that for an assembly on Florence Nightingale.

- 3.11 Pupils display effective study skills, drawing on a wide range of resources including websites, the school virtual learning platform, books and media. They think for themselves and confidently offer hypotheses, such as when Year 8 pupils described the losses of habitat related to glacial melting. Pupils analyse text and data accurately and apply their knowledge to new situations. In a Year 7 history lesson, pupils used different sources, including images and text to choose three-word phrases to create a narrative explaining Charles II's accession to the throne. Older pupils showed excellent higher-order thinking skills in interpretation and comparison of sources when explaining that Mary Tudor had learnt to be wary of men because of the behaviour of Thomas Seymour. Most develop strong organisational skills, reading critically and reflecting on their own work.
- 3.12 Pupils have a good measure of success in extra-curricular activities, with some pupils' achievements being considerable for their ages, particularly in art and drama. A high proportion of the pupils entering LAMDA examinations each year do so with great success. This year almost all of the 28 entrants were awarded distinctions. Pupils participate in national science Olympiads, gaining commendations for biology and a silver award for physics over recent years. In last year's UK mathematics challenge, five middle school pupils attained bronze, and three gained silver awards. Many pupils experience considerable success in completing The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, where some pupils overcome significant personal challenges in completing volunteering and the expedition activities. Pupils have achieved highly in other fields, including sports' leader qualifications, learning British Sign Language, the national chess league, national short story writing competitions and art exhibitions such as those organised by the Royal Academy. Many pupils participate in school teams in a variety of sports with good levels of success, some having been chosen to represent their boroughs and to participate in the London Youth Games and national competitions for sports such as netball and table tennis.
- 3.13 Pupils exhibit positive, and often excellent, attitudes to learning, whether working on tasks as individuals or in groups. In a Year 10 French lesson, pupils concentrated well on converting sentences from present to imperfect tense and then translating to English despite noise from younger pupils outside, maintaining a friendly and relaxed classroom atmosphere. More able pupils have extremely good concentration and ask higher order questions, tackle more challenging tasks and generously help their classmates. For example, in a Year 9 Mandarin lesson, pupils were very focused on perfecting their expressions for taste and flavours. Pupils enjoy each other's contributions and demonstrate good initiative and independence. In sixth form English essays, pupils showed ample evidence of wider reading which ensured that their exploration of Gothic literature was articulate and effective. In most lessons, pupils benefit from their teachers' effective behaviour management, which contributes to a productive working environment. However, in some of the lessons observed, younger pupils were distracted or engaged in behaviour which prevented others from focusing on their work.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.15 Pupils are self-confident and resilient and feel well prepared for the next stage. They show high levels of self-understanding. Most are reflective and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They are confident and adapt well to new situations. In the face of difficulties pupils show perseverance and resilience. They exhibit high levels of self-esteem, because they are comfortable in their own skins and get on well with other pupils. They enjoy the support of their teachers and are tolerant of each other. Pupils with SEND report being very well supported and clearly articulate how the school has helped them to manage anxiety and stress so enabling them to be more confident and develop excellent learning and life skills for their future. Older pupils are particularly eloquent about the effect that the school, and especially the senior staff, has had on their development and achievement, citing the

support of the teachers. Sixth form pupils told inspectors that they feel confident about themselves and their futures. This is largely due to the excellent pastoral care in fulfilment of the school's aim to celebrate each pupil as an individual in a secure and nurturing environment. Pupils showed excellent awareness of visitors and were genuine in their courtesy but confident in getting on with their learning despite being observed.

- 3.16 Pupils develop excellent decision-making skills. They regularly make choices of tasks in lessons and next steps in their learning. From everyday decisions to the selection of subjects or activities, pupils understand that their choices affect their future success and wellbeing. Initially pupils are given support to make their own decisions until they feel confident on their own. In art lessons, pupils discussed and listened carefully to guidance when making their own decisions about the theme and medium for their GCSE art project work. In terms of behaviour, pupils show shared responsibility for making good choices. Pupils readily discussed their subject choices and how they relate to their interests and ambitions.
- 3.17 Pupils appreciate the non-material aspects of life and show good aesthetic and cultural awareness. Artwork around the school reflects the creativity and inspiration of the pupils. The school choir demonstrated evident enjoyment when singing in an after-school activity, and pupils cite involvement in Duke of Edinburgh Award expeditions and trips to outdoor activity centres as times when they appreciate nature, quiet and the time to relax. They care and show respect for one another. They are aware of the beauty that can be found in nature, music, art, friendships and family life.
- 3.18 Pupils understand right from wrong and have a strong sense of justice and fair play. They understand the need for rules, behave well both in the classroom and in less structured time and take responsibility for their own behaviour. They challenge unkindness when they encounter it. In a Year 7 tutor group, pupils expressed informed opinions about school rules and ideas as to how these could be modified for the benefit of all. Pupils are aware of the school's values and code of conduct and the significant support which improves their readiness to take responsibility for misdemeanours and make reparations. In the responses to questionnaires, the vast majority of parents agreed that the school treats children fairly and actively promotes the values of democracy, tolerance and respect. Although a small minority of pupils responded that the school does not treat pupils fairly, and pupils are not always kind and respectful to one another, this was not borne out in written comments, conversations with pupils or observations during the inspection.
- 3.19 Pupils build strong positive relationships, collaborate well and support each other in achieving common goals. They enjoy each other's company and are supportive in their learning. In a Year 10 biology lesson, the class worked together very effectively to create a model answer. In a Year 10 drama lesson, the pupils gave constructive criticism to others and reflected intelligently on their own performance in a scripted piece. They readily celebrate the success of others as seen in an assembly when some pupils received awards. Older pupils spoke of how rewarding they found participation in the peer mentoring scheme. They have attended a training course and are now helping to support younger pupils in various ways. They also described how easily they worked together in teams to complete the expedition section of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils in the middle years appreciate the house activities, enrichment sessions on Friday afternoons and other clubs which are open to all ages so that they can make friends across the year groups. Pupils have benefited from governors' consideration of national themes and trends and the consequent emphasis on positive relationships in the PSHE.
- 3.20 Pupils make meaningful contributions to the life of the school. They told inspectors that everyone contributes to their school and community in some way, with all being valued. They show an excellent awareness of others in the school, and older pupils are given opportunities to be role models and set good examples to younger pupils. Many pupils in middle years as well as sixth form are 'buddies' to younger pupils. Pupils express opinions and suggestions to the school council which has a role in helping to improve school life. For example, the council has recommended the introduction of a pupil-led school survey and is introducing a cultural day to celebrate the cultures of all the pupils at the

school. Some pupils lead all age clubs for their particular interest, for example chess club. Pupils in the middle years were welcoming and attentive tour guides to visitors on open morning. On occasion pupils help to host science outreach sessions for local children. In a PPP (people, places, planet) session pupils organised a litter pick in the community beyond school. Pupils also participated in a fun run to raise money for charity and took part in the Christmas shoebox appeal. Sixth form pupils visited a care home at Christmas to interact with the residents and distribute Christmas cards. Most pupils contribute to the school but would benefit from further engagement with the local and wider communities.

- 3.21 Pupils appreciate their diverse community, demonstrating consistently high levels of sensitivity and tolerance to those from different backgrounds and traditions. They respond positively to assemblies led by pupils on topics such as Ramadan and Polish family history including the holocaust. Pupils told inspectors that the school is very tolerant of diversity, and inclusion is the norm. Pupils show respect for others and value diversity within wider society. They are accepting, tolerant and supportive of difference in religion, gender, sexual orientation and neurodiversity. Several pupils attend Pride Club, which gives them the opportunity to consider and discuss sexuality and gender issues in an accepting environment. Pupils appreciate the input of staff on important topics such as mental health and LGBTQ+ matters in PSHE and assemblies, which helps them to understand the views and feelings of others.
- 3.22 Pupils know how to stay safe physically and online. They are aware of the school's filtering and monitoring systems which support them in staying safe. Pupils have excellent strategies for keeping healthy both mentally and physically. They understand the need for a balanced lifestyle encompassing exercise, diet, sleep and the management of stress. Pupils have also benefited from the school's promotion of the importance of getting enough sleep, an initiative prompted by the governors. Pupils enjoy being active during break and lunchtimes even though the outdoor space is limited. This is mitigated by frequent and varied sport sessions during the week. Although opinion is divided on the quality of the food, pupils commented that the varied menus encourage a healthy diet. They were observed to make good choices at lunchtimes. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay mentally healthy and say that they feel this is due to excellent support for good mental health from the school.

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 the member of the proprietorial body, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and assembly. 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

Mrs Linda Smallwood	Reporting inspector
Mrs Caroline Petryszak	Compliance team inspector (Former Head, GDST school)
Mr Ian Silk	Team inspector (Head of Prep School, HMC school)