

Independent Schools Council

Inspection of Norfolk House School by the Independent Schools Inspectorate on 21st- 24th May 2007

Edited Highlights

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The educational experience provided

Norfolk House School provides a good, broad and balanced educational experience, meeting its aim that pupils should be well prepared for later life as well as acquiring the key skills they need for study in school... The curriculum is both flexible and imaginative... The experience pupils receive is now considerably enhanced beyond the formal curriculum; pupils speak enthusiastically of their experiences, both in and out of school... Excellent subject-focused days, such as the recent history day, are especially popular and effective... The expanded range of extra-curricular experiences is well-attended and imaginative for a small school.

Transitions between stages are exceptionally well planned. A class swap day in the summer carefully bridges the gap between years... Preparation for senior school is equally effective. The school encourages discussion of how parents can support their child through this process and the head meets all parents to offer advice.

Curricular planning ... is well thought through, thorough and detailed.

The school now has appropriate arrangements to meet the needs of pupils requiring special provision. They are well supported and withdrawn from lessons, where necessary, in a way that is not disruptive to their other learning.

Pupils' learning and achievements

Pupils are outstanding learners... they achieve high quality results, both in national tests and in entrance examinations to senior schools. From the outset in Reception, pupils show well-developed literacy and numeracy skills, a thorough grasp of personal relationships and the ability to apply their knowledge to everyday situations... They show exceptional ability to make inferences.

Pupils in the middle years write well, producing some exceptional creative writing. They have a sharp appreciation of concepts, which enables them, for example, to explain why the position of the sun appears to change during the day and why Victorian Methodists and Anglicans were drawn from different social classes... Boys and girls progress equally well, as do pupils from different ethnic and other groups.

Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at age 11 are high for their abilities... pupils are successful in entrance examinations to north London senior schools and a number each year win scholarships. Despite its small

size, the school fields teams in football, cricket, netball and rounders. Chess is a particular strength.

Almost all pupils are highly articulate... they speak with confidence, talking about feelings in circle time, for example, reading in assembly, contributing well to class discussion and explaining complex ideas clearly. They write fluently in a wide range of genres.

From an early age, pupils apply their understanding to new situations, are encouraged to have ideas of their own and to challenge the teacher, and work independently at difficult problems... Pupils enjoy their work and persevere at it. They take pride in their written work, which is well presented. They are courteous and positive, both in discussion and around the school, and are fully engaged in all they do.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

Pupils demonstrate outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in all areas of school life. In every way they show the compassion, tolerance, empathy and co-operation which the school aims to develop... Pupils' spiritual development is demonstrated by their considerable self confidence . . . Pupils' positive self-esteem was apparent in discussions with inspectors about the school... In circle time, Year 1 pupils said they felt 'wonderful', 'great', 'relaxed' and 'fantastic' as they passed a smile and a squeeze of kindness around the group... Pupils' spirituality is also demonstrated in their response to the excellent opportunities afforded by the link with a local school for autistic pupils. Their participation in joint events, such as a mini-Olympics, had led Year 6 pupils to reflect on how privileged they were and how mutual respect should be shared with others.

Pupils' moral development is outstanding. Pupils are courteous in and around the school, opening doors and letting others speak in discussions without interruption... Pupils also understand their responsibility to help others.

The development of pupils' cultural awareness is exceptional... Year 6 understood the different cultural styles by participating in a Gamelan orchestral workshop on Balinese instruments. Year 2 experienced Chinese opera. Year 4 performed an informative assembly on India... A parent has spoken in assembly about Muslim family life in Britain today... Other assemblies by visitors, including the Rabbi and local Priest, have enriched pupils' cultural experience. Pupils know it is wrong to judge people by their background.

The quality of teaching (including assessment)

Teaching is good, reflecting the school's aims that pupils' progress should be underpinned by teaching which encourages independent learning... Teaching is supported by secure subject knowledge, enabling teachers to give clear explanations of ideas and to make work relevant both to current issues and to pupils' interests... Teachers make frequent use of praise and use resources with ingenuity.

Teachers know their pupils well and so meet their needs effectively; pupils say they value the excellent one-to-one support which teachers provide unstintingly... Teachers have high expectations and encourage independent

work and research. They ask questions to test existing knowledge... they encourage pupils to challenge what teachers are saying, to develop their confidence in discussion... Over the longer term, the school monitors pupils' progress carefully; those who run into difficulty are identified quickly and their needs discussed fully.

THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The quality of pastoral care, and the welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of pastoral care and the arrangements for welfare, health and safety are outstanding... The school provides a happy and nurturing environment in which it values all the pupils and encourages both respect between pupils and staff and respect between pupils themselves... staff promote pupils' self confidence through support, praise and encouragement. Academic and non-academic achievements are recognised and celebrated.

Staff relate well to pupils and provide good role models. They emphasise positive behaviour and their encouragement and praise are evident in all aspects of school life... Posts of responsibility and the role played by the school council help to create tolerance between pupils.

Effective discipline and a high standard of behaviour are evident. Pupils are polite and respectful with visitors, greeting them cheerfully, opening doors and showing them the way... The school has appropriate sanctions for lack of consideration or misbehaviour. . . It does all it can to ensure that all members of the school have equal opportunities to participate fully in school life.

The quality of links with parents and the community

The school has extremely strong links with parents and the local community... Parents are pleased with the education and support the school provides, with the supportive, family atmosphere and with the dedication of the staff.

The school positively encourage parental involvement; it provides many ways for them to be involved in the work and progress of their children and the life of the school... Information for parents and opportunities for parental discussion are excellent.

Links with the community have greatly increased, so that this is now one of the school's strengths. Good relationships have been established with many of the local independent schools... Full use is made of opportunities in the surrounding area and in other parts of London to enhance pupils' education.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of governance

The school benefits from outstanding strategic leadership, setting a context in which the school has been able to leap forward and fulfil its aims... Important issues have been identified clearly and addressed decisively... Significant investment has improved both accommodation and resources considerably. Staff appreciate the combination of openness and approachability, together with the ability to take well-informed decisions and implement them swiftly.

The quality of leadership and management

Outstanding leadership and management have enabled the school to make exceptional progress since the last inspection in all aspects of school life... The school now has a clear focus and educational direction.

Pupils now benefit from an ethos of care and ambition... Staff appreciate the open and supportive leadership style and the way they are now more fully involved in strategic planning... The school has a high quality development plan, setting out clear indicators for success and a detailed action plan to achieve it in each area.

Staff are proud of their school. The school is generously staffed, enabling it to offer small classes in which pupils receive high levels of personal attention... The school makes the best possible use of a small site, and of local facilities.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Norfolk House has been transformed since its last inspection. It provides pupils with the opportunity to achieve their potential within a caring environment in which they feel secure, in accordance with its aims. Pupils are outstanding learners who achieve high quality results, both in national tests and in entrance examinations to senior schools. Despite the lack of a library and the fact that the school is still developing its use of ICT, pupils are expected to think and find out answers for themselves, and to evaluate their own work... The school is a small, caring, and supportive environment in which pupils become aware of the needs of others and learn to appreciate the diversity of cultures in which they live. Outstanding leadership has identified key issues that needed addressing, involved staff fully in their resolution and developed the roles played by staff at all levels. Both pupils and staff are proud of their school, which enjoys excellent relationships with its parents.

Next steps

The school has no significant weaknesses. In order to build further on the quality of education it already provides, it should:

1. examine ways of developing pupils' library skills further, despite the lack of a school library
2. develop further the use of ICT across the curriculum
3. continue to use the established programme of classroom monitoring to spread best practice throughout the school.

The full inspection report is available at www.isinspect.org.uk