

# North Bridge House Senior School

Independent school light-touch inspection report

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## **PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION**

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

This was a light touch educational inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils; and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

North Bridge House Senior School, which opened in 1987, is now part of the Cognita group of schools. It provides an education for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16 years and is situated in north-west London. The school has 54 girls and 146 boys on roll, a total of 200 students. Of these, 39 speak languages other than English as their principal language, though none is at an early stage of English language acquisition. Thirty-six students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, of whom one has a statement of special educational needs. The school was last inspected in 2007.

North Bridge House School 'believes strongly in the importance of nurturing the child and developing their strengths. The school's continuing objective is to instil the belief that education is a preparation for the future.' The majority of students enter the school after completing their primary education in local authority schools. Last year, all students went on to schools in the public or private sectors to complete A-level studies.

## **EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL**

North Bridge House Senior School provides a good quality of education which enables students to make good and often outstanding progress in their learning. The provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. Thorough and comprehensive arrangements for safeguarding students ensure that they are safe and valued, as reflected in their responses to the student questionnaires. Highly effective leadership underpins the good quality of teaching and assessment, together with continuous monitoring of students' progress, to ensure that the school's aims are met in practice. The outstanding curriculum has been extended since the last inspection, to include appropriate opportunities for careers education, including work experience for students in Year 10. Recent improvements to the accommodation enhance the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in science, music and

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

information and communication technology (ICT). Student's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their behaviour are outstanding. The school meets all the regulatory requirements for independent schools.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The school provides an outstanding curriculum which makes a strong contribution to students' academic and personal development. Students are well served by an effective and broad curriculum which embraces all the subjects of the National Curriculum in Key Stage 3, and which ensures that all have opportunities for success in GCSE examinations in Key Stage 4. In addition, students in Key Stage 3 have the opportunity to study both French and Spanish, to develop their reading skills and to participate in imaginative lessons in drama. The European Computer Driving Licence is to be introduced into the curriculum for students in Years 8 and 9 this year, providing an opportunity for accreditation in this core subject. Recognising that girls are in a minority in the school, additional provision is appropriately made to address their needs and interests, for example through girls' science and dance clubs and the creation of a girls' committee.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides a strong core of subjects to GCSE level, extended by opportunities to study three science subjects, two modern foreign languages and a range of humanities, creative and expressive subjects. The relatively small size of the school has not inhibited the range of opportunities available. Some students are able to take GCSE examination in mathematics or modern foreign languages at the end of Year 10 and then extend their experiences through courses in AS mathematics, or extra GCSE courses in photography, and art and design. ICT is studied to GCSE level by a small number of students. All students have opportunities to use ICT in their work across a range of subjects but there is no system in place to record students' progress in their developing ICT skills.

All students in Key Stage 3 study personal, social, and health education (PSHE) and citizenship and students interviewed commented positively about themes related to healthy lifestyles and staying safe. In response to a requirement at the last inspection, opportunities for careers education have been introduced in Key Stage 4, including writing curriculum vitae (CVs), meeting experts from industry, one-to-one guidance, interview techniques and work experience. These experiences are valued by students. The school's curriculum is further enriched by links with a local special school, a primary school which serves an ethnically diverse community, and by a number of themed weeks and days. Successful experiences from a recent poetry week are evident in the displays in common areas of the school. Drama productions and large-scale musicals, together with a range of clubs and activities, draw upon contributions from more than three quarters of the students in the school.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall, and this contributes effectively to the good progress made by students. Students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities are well provided for with additional support in identified areas of learning. As a result, their progress over their five years

in school is good. Individual education plans are prepared to alert teachers to their individual support needs but the targets identified in these are not always specific enough to guide teachers in planning precise and appropriate activities. There are a number of outstanding features in the teaching and learning experienced in a range of subjects and a significant number of students make outstanding progress. In the best teaching, lessons are characterised by thoughtfully prepared activities, which are well structured and sequenced to ensure that all students develop their knowledge and understanding effectively. Teachers, in these lessons, exude enthusiasm and involve all students through a range of oral questioning techniques which challenge students to make intellectual effort. Staff and students have excellent relationships and classrooms provide a safe environment in which students are confident to take risks with ideas and expressions of personal views. In the best practice, provision for the needs of the highest attaining and those requiring individual support are evident in the planning and practice of teachers. Occasionally, teachers are inclined to 'answer their own questions' and do not provide sufficient opportunity for students to express and develop their ideas. The individual strengths and needs of students are well understood by staff whose knowledge is enhanced by four-weekly staff meetings to review the progress of all students. The marking of students' work generally provides helpful comments with a focus on how the current piece of work may be improved. Students appreciate the regular feedback received through attainment and effort grades. They are provided with sufficient information to know the extent of the progress they are making in each subject. However, the grading system for attainment is not based on commonly-agreed subject descriptors which enable students to recognise the next steps required to improve their grade.

Students mostly enter the school with attainment above the national average. By the end of Year 11, students have made good progress. There are some inconsistencies between attainment in different subjects but the number of students achieving five or more A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, at GCSE is well above the national average with 94% in 2010, continuing a similar trend in recent years. In addition, many students make outstanding progress with, for example, more than half achieving five or more grades A\* or A at GCSE in 2010. These levels of progress are largely attributable to the quality of the curriculum on offer and the extent of the good and outstanding teaching in the school.

## **SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUPILS**

Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. As a result, students make excellent progress in their personal development. The school community is based on mutual respect and relationships throughout are exemplary. Students state that they enjoy coming to school and many participate with enthusiasm in the variety of opportunities provided. The behaviour of students in lessons and around the school is outstanding; they respect and support each other, evidenced, for example, by their willingness to listen to and take account of the views of others. These standards of behaviour, together with high levels of attendance and positive attitudes to their learning, contribute to

students' ability to make the most of the opportunities available. A few students, in their response to the questionnaire, believe that the school does not take sufficient account of their views. However, the school has a range of opportunities for students' voices to be heard through committees and form representatives.

The excellent range of enrichment activities available within and beyond the curriculum contribute effectively to students' social and cultural development. The school is rich in creative and imaginative activities; students' value opportunities to take part in a range of team sports; links with other local schools enable students to take responsibility and to contribute to the wider community. Trips and visits, both at home and abroad, enhance the strength of the school community and broaden horizons. Students demonstrate respect for the diversity of cultures encountered within the local and national communities, and for young people facing different challenges to themselves. A particularly noteworthy feature is the number of students who train to become volunteers at Activenture outdoor activity weeks for disabled pupils. Students are, in all respects, well prepared for their future lives.

## **SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The school makes good provision for safeguarding students and ensuring their welfare, health and safety. Good policies are in place for child protection and for the safe recruitment of staff. All staff have received up-to-date training in child protection, including enhanced training for those with designated responsibilities. Staff recruitment procedures are thorough and all required checks on staff are made before their appointment, to ensure their suitability to work with children and are recorded, as required, on a single central register. Students state that they are safe in school and express confidence in the willingness and ability of staff to resolve any concerns they may have. A few students, in their questionnaire responses, do not agree that the school helps them to be healthy. A small group of senior students interviewed identified themes in the school's curriculum dealing with healthy lifestyles, endorsed the healthy options available for school meals and were very complimentary about the range of sports activities provided by the school. Inspectors agree with these positive views.

Fire safety procedures are maintained to a high standard and no health and safety risks were identified during the inspection. The school has in place a three-year plan to improve accessibility which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

## **WHAT THE SCHOOL COULD DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER**

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- implement assessment procedures to provide evidence of students' progress in ICT at the end of Key Stage 4
- introduce more specific descriptors to enable staff to enhance students' understanding of how they may improve their work and to set them challenging personal targets.

## INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	✓			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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## SCHOOL DETAILS

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1987		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 146	Girls: 54	Total: 200
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£ 12,390		
<b>Address of school</b>	1 Gloucester Avenue London NW1 7AB		
<b>Telephone number</b>	0207 267 6266		
<b>Email address</b>	seniorschool@northbridgehouse.com		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alexandra Ayre		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Cognita Ltd		