

Connaught House School

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch 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

Connaught House School was established in 1953 and the school has been on its present site on the corner of Connaught Square near Hyde Park in London since 1956. It is based in a Grade II Georgian town house with classrooms on five storeys. The school admits children between the ages of four and eleven, with 67 pupils on roll at present. There are 11 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Reception class (Junior 1). Around a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language and a wide diversity of ethnic backgrounds are represented at the school. Pupils are prepared for a range of entrance examinations, including Common Entrance and the Eleven Plus. Boys go on to other preparatory schools at the age of eight and girls mainly go to independent schools at the age of eleven. The school was last inspected in January 2007.

The school aims to *'create a happy environment which fosters cheerful, motivated and interested children who have not only confidence in their own abilities, but also a considerate awareness of their peers'*.

Evaluation of the school

The quality of education provided by Connaught House School is outstanding. The curriculum and the variety of learning experiences offered are exceptional. The quality of teaching is outstanding overall and never less than good, resulting in outstanding progress by pupils. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are outstanding and all of the requirements are met. All of the regulations that were not met at the time of the last inspection have now been addressed and the school is now fully compliant. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is good and it enables children to make a good start to their education.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum offered to pupils is outstanding and has been improved from the good provision seen during the last inspection. The activities provided are directly related to pupils' needs and enable pupils to make exceptionally good progress in their basic skills by the end of Year 6. Schemes of work are thorough and are largely based on the National Curriculum programmes of study and the demands of the Eleven Plus examinations taken by girls in Year 6. The level of expectation is appropriate to the needs of pupils and provides challenge for the most able and particularly good support for those who have learning difficulties or speak English as an additional language. The range of extra-curricular activities and clubs is exceptional. Pupils clearly enjoy these immensely and say so in pupil questionnaires and conversations with inspectors. One important fixture in the school is the 'science week', which enables pupils to demonstrate their perceptive investigative skills to parents and visitors. Pupils in Year 6 also greatly enjoy the annual school 'mystery journey', which the headteacher arranges without letting pupils know where they are going. The curriculum enables pupils to become responsible and well-rounded individuals. In the Early Years Foundation Stage class (Junior 1), the curriculum meets the needs of the children effectively and allows them to achieve well and enjoy their learning.

The quality of teaching is outstanding overall; it is at least good in Key Stage 1 and outstanding in Key Stage 2. This is an improvement on the already good teaching seen during the last inspection. In Junior 1, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan a range of interesting activities which challenge the children and make learning fun. Pupils of all ages are really enthusiastic about learning and clearly have very good relationships with teachers. Teachers are enthusiastic about teaching, which in turn engages pupils in learning. In nearly all lessons, good use is made of a wide range of teaching methods to engage pupils. However, there are insufficient planned opportunities in some classes for pupils to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills consistently to support learning in all subjects of the curriculum. In other respects, planning is very effective and clearly identifies what pupils will learn and how their learning will be assessed. Work is very closely matched to pupils' needs. Teachers evaluate their planning weekly to ensure that subsequent lessons build on pupils' prior learning. In Year 6, pupils are very carefully prepared for entrance examinations by being given homework and extra tuition as necessary. They say that they feel well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Assessment systems are sharply focused and provide teachers with good information to ensure that pupils are working at a level suitable to their needs and abilities. A wide range of assessment tools are used, including diagnostic tests to identify pupils with possible learning difficulties. Marking is effective and provides pupils with clear targets for improvement as well as encouraging comments and praise where warranted. The school measures its performance against Common Entrance and

Eleven Plus examination results. Some limited use is also made of Standard Attainment Tests in Year 2 and Year 6.

Overall, pupils make outstanding progress during their time in the school. The majority of pupils make exceptional progress in relation to their prior attainment and underlying abilities at both key stages. In the Junior 1 class, children make outstanding progress, especially in reading and their mathematical development. Pupils' progress in mathematics is outstanding and pupils achieve very high standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils make very good progress in their key skills in Key Stage 2 and achieve very high standards in literacy and numeracy. Pupils' progress in ICT is good, but not as strong as other areas of the curriculum. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and English as an additional language make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment and underlying abilities. They are very well supported and their individual education plans have clear targets for improvement. Pupils' progress in art and music is exceptional and pupils achieve very high standards in both subjects.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. However, pupils' moral and social development is now outstanding. When children enter Junior 1 class, there is a strong focus on getting them to work together and by Year 1 they have developed a keen understanding of the need to respect others. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding at all stages, both in classes and around the school. Pupils are very well behaved and courteous towards adults and other pupils. Older pupils are mature, well balanced and friendly. They get on well together and show concern and empathy with those in difficulty. Older pupils are very conscientious in their duties as monitors, helping children in Junior 1 down to the school dining hall in the basement for example. Levels of attendance are very high. The pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. All pupils take part in school plays and concerts, which are attended by parents and friends. Pupils are given many opportunities to excel, especially in music and art. Pupils have a good general knowledge, but their understanding of the public institutions and services of England are insufficiently well developed as they move through the school. Pupils have very good social skills and are prepared very successfully for their future economic well-being.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and say that they feel very safe in school. Provision for their welfare, health and safety is outstanding. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when this aspect of the school was satisfactory. The school has an effective policy for the safe recruitment of staff and ensuring that pupils are safeguarded. The school promotes pupils' safety and well-being very successfully. Healthy eating and exercise have high profiles and staff and pupils are well aware of healthy lifestyle matters. All fire risk assessments have been

carried out and equipment is checked regularly. There are sufficient, suitably trained first aiders, including paediatric first aiders. The school has a good three-year access plan which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002. The school complies with requirements to provide a safe environment for children in Junior 1. There are rigorous procedures to ensure that children's specific health needs are met.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Because of the effective teaching, children make rapid progress in all areas of learning. At the end of the Reception year, most are working beyond the early learning goals, especially in reading and mathematical development. The teaching plans stimulating activities and establishes effective systems to assess children's progress against the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Teaching makes skilful use of questioning to establish children's understanding. Their behaviour is exemplary and children respond well to the high expectations that adults have of them. They enjoy learning and are always fully engaged in the activities. There are many opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills and they learn to read and spell through rigorous teaching of letters and sounds. Children learn to interact well with each other and the excellent relationships contribute strongly to the enjoyable and purposeful environment. Children make a good start in learning how to stay healthy and safe. The curriculum is developing well and provides a good balance between teacher-led activities and opportunities for children to develop their creativity and independence. However, as there is no outside play area, children do not have any opportunities for a free flow of indoor and outdoor activities. The setting compensates for this as much as possible by well-planned outdoor activities in nearby Hyde Park. There are robust systems in place to ensure that children are able to learn in a safe, healthy and caring setting. Staff are appropriately qualified and carefully checked, and the school meets the requirements for the number of adults needed. The outstanding leadership and management reflect a strong commitment to raising achievement and further improving provision. Classroom practice is evaluated to provide consistency and the curriculum is reviewed regularly. There are excellent relationships with parents, who praise the school highly for the good quality education provided for their children.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with one exception.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- improve the programme for pupils' personal, social and health education so that pupils' knowledge of public institutions and services are developed systematically as pupils move through the school (paragraph 2(d)).

What the school could do to improve further

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

- provide more opportunities for pupils to use their ICT to support their learning in all subjects in the curriculum.

Inspection judgement recording form

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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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?		√		
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?		√		
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?	√			
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?		√		

School details

Name of school	Connaught House School		
DCSF number	213/6129		
Unique reference number	101164		
Type of school	Boys' pre-preparatory/Girls' preparatory		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1953		
Age range of pupils	4-11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 19	Girls: 48	Total: 67
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£3,500-£4,300		
Address of school	Connaught House School 47 Connaught Square London W2 2HL		
Telephone number	020 7262 8830		
Fax number	020 7262 0781		
Email address	office@connaughthouseschool.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs J Hampton		
Proprietor	Connaught House Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Stephen Dennett		
Dates of inspection	17 November 2009		