



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION**

**THE MULBERRY HOUSE SCHOOL**

**MARCH 2017**



## SCHOOL'S DETAILS

<b>School</b>	The Mulberry House School			
<b>DfE number</b>	202/6392			
<b>Address</b>	7 Minster Road West Hampstead London NW2 3SD			
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 4527340			
<b>Email address</b>	info@mulberryhouseschool.com			
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Victoria Playford			
<b>Proprietor</b>	Mrs Bethan Lewis-Powell			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 7			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	221			
	<b>Boys</b>	116	<b>Girls</b>	105
	<b>Day pupils</b>	221	<b>Boarders</b>	0
	<b>EYFS</b>	138	<b>Prep</b>	83
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29 to 30 March 2017			

## PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any unmet standards identified at their previous inspection.

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.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting 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.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

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 the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

**The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. Inspectors visited both school sites and the facilities for the youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mr Steven Popper

Reporting inspector

Mrs Jacqueline Shackel

Team inspector (Head, HMC school)

Mr Nathan Close

Team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)

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## 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### About the school

- 1.1 The Mulberry House School is an independent day school for boys and girls aged between 2 and 7 years. The school was founded in 1989 by the proprietor, who owns the school and was its first headteacher. The current headteacher took up her post in January 2017.
- 1.2 The school is based in two properties situated approximately 100 metres apart. It consists of two departments: Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for children aged between 2 and 5 years, and Prep, for pupils aged between 5 and 7 years. Since the previous inspection, an additional level with four more classrooms and a roof playground has been added to the main building.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to develop each pupil's love of learning. It seeks to provide pupils with a challenging education to enhance their emotional, intellectual and physical development and prepare them for the next stages of education. The school seeks to nurture pupils' individual talents and ensure that they reach their academic potential.

### About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from a range of professional backgrounds and represent a diverse range of cultures. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is above average. The school has identified five pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), none of whom receives extra support for a range of conditions including dyslexia. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 29 pupils, none of whom requires additional support for English. Data used by the school have identified six pupils as being the most able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for six other pupils because of their special talents in music and art.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Squirrels (for children aged 2 to 2½ years)	Nursery
Otters (for children aged 2½ to 3 years)	Nursery
Badgers (for children aged 3 to 3½ years)	Nursery
Transition (for children aged 3½ to 4 years)	Nursery
Prep I	Reception
Prep II	Year 1
Prep III	Year 2

### **Recommendations from previous inspections**

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in September and October 2010. The recommendations from that inspection were:
- Establish formal procedures to ensure full oversight by the proprietor of those areas where there is a statutory duty.
  - Extend the opportunities provided for EYFS children to initiate their own learning during inside activities.
  - Establish and embed formal procedures to recognise gifted and talented pupils and to ensure they are strongly challenged in all areas.
  - Extend the high teaching standards demonstrated in many lessons to ensure such quality is consistently reflected across the school.
- 1.7 The school has successfully met all the recommendations of the previous inspection. Further detail is given in the main text of the report.

## **2. KEY FINDINGS**

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

- The attainment and progress of all groups of children and pupils is outstanding. Their achievements in mathematics are exceptional.
- Pupils demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding across the curriculum.
- Pupils' communication skills are outstanding.
- Pupils consistently demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and study skills of very high quality.
- While some pupils achieve very highly in information and communication technology (ICT), pupils do not always apply or develop their ICT skills as strongly as possible in their work across the curriculum.

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

- Pupils' self-confidence and self-awareness are outstanding. They demonstrate excellent independence and decision-making skills.
- Pupils display an excellent sense of right and wrong and treat others extremely well.
- Pupils' social development and collaborative skills are excellent. They demonstrate strong commitment towards acting on behalf of others.
- Pupils are extremely accepting of and respectful towards others from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

### **Recommendations**

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider:

- Enable pupils to apply and develop their ICT skills even more strongly in their work across other subjects.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The proprietor and school leaders are entirely successful in their aim to nurture pupils' individual talents and ensure that they reach their academic potential and are well-prepared for the next stages of education. The school does not use attainment as a criterion for entry to the EYFS, but outcomes at the end of the EYFS in 2016 were well above national age-related expectations across all areas of learning. In addition, results in national tests at the age of 7 have been well above the national average for maintained primary schools. This excellent attainment is because leaders track pupils' learning and progress extremely carefully to identify any gaps that individual pupils have in their learning and which pupils need to receive extra challenge or support. This detailed and precisely-analysed information enables teachers to plan well-pitched teaching that meets the individual needs of pupils, including the most able and those with SEND. The school has fully met the recommendation from the previous standard inspection to embed formal procedures to recognise gifted and talented pupils and ensure they are strongly challenged in all areas. Pupils' outstanding attainment enables them to be highly successful in achieving places at the destination schools of their choice.
- 3.3 Pupils make outstanding progress. All groups of pupils, including the most able and those with SEND, make rapid progress from the time they join the school at the age of two. This is confirmed by lesson observations and the school's own internal assessment data. In addition, scrutiny of pupils' books revealed that considerable academic improvement had been made over the course of the school year. Pupils progress swiftly as a result of teachers' consistently high expectations and extremely effective communication that promotes thought and cements understanding. For example, pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that the teachers helped them to progress by giving good explanations at the beginning of their lessons. Similarly, detailed and informative oral feedback and marking enables pupils to understand what they need to do to further improve their work and helps pupils set their own targets for development. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that teaching enabled their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future.
- 3.4 Pupils demonstrate excellent knowledge and understanding across the curriculum. Their books contain work of a standard well beyond what would normally be expected of pupils of a similar age. Pupils consistently demonstrated their strong skills and understanding during lesson observations. For example, young children in the EYFS confidently and accurately explained what conditions enabled potatoes to grow well, whilst older pupils were able to speak and understand words and phrases in Mandarin and Spanish. This is because the proprietor and school leaders have made certain that staff use questioning extremely effectively to extend pupils' understanding, and because teachers link curriculum subjects together successfully so that pupils can apply their knowledge from one subject to another. The proprietor and leaders have made certain that the school has fully met the recommendation of the previous standard inspection to ensure that the high teaching standards demonstrated in many lessons are reflected consistently across the school.
- 3.5 Pupils' mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding are particularly outstanding. School assessment data show that the proportion of pupils exceeding national expectations for their year group rises rapidly as they move through the school. Pupils are able to articulate their advanced mathematical knowledge very precisely. For example, children in the EYFS spontaneously explained how they had ordered various objects 'from heavy to light' and could indicate whether particular shapes were two-dimensional or three-dimensional. Similarly,

other children demonstrated excellent understanding for their age of area and size while carefully observing the scales of a fish, whilst older pupils used terms such as 'numerator' and 'denominator' with accuracy. Pupils' exceptional achievements in mathematics are the result of the proprietor's and leaders' sustained focus on developing numeracy throughout the school, the notably high levels of challenge that teachers provide and the pupils' excellent use of mathematical vocabulary in and out of lessons. Pupils' mathematical skills and understanding also develop strongly through the highly effective use of physical and visual learning resources that enable them to discover and check mathematical relationships for themselves. For example, some of the younger children were able to spot and name particular numerals missing from a 'mathematics mat' and show the inspectors where these numbers were displayed elsewhere in the environment.

- 3.6 Pupils' communication skills are excellent. School assessment data show that a very large majority of Year 2 pupils are meeting or exceeding national expectations for those a year older in reading, and a very large majority are meeting or exceeding national expectations for Year 3 pupils in writing. Examples of pupils' writing that were seen during the inspection were of an exceptionally high standard, both in terms of use of language, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and imaginative and coherent content. Younger children in the EYFS demonstrated a very well developed vocabulary for their age and, during a drama lesson, were able to vocalise complex ideas. Older pupils expressed strong, thoughtful, mature responses and opinions during lessons. Pupils' communication skills develop as a result of the proprietor's and leaders' focus on developing these skills from the children's earliest days in the school. Pupils' communicative abilities also advance because teachers demonstrate the use of appropriate and precise vocabulary and accurate pronunciation, and make very successful use of clear explanations, questions, and resources to promote learning. For example, English lessons that were observed during the inspection included the effective use of lists of adjectives and challenging texts that were very well matched to pupils' needs.
- 3.7 Pupils consistently demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. Children and pupils displayed a deep engagement with learning and the tasks at hand during all lessons observed. Pupils' study skills are also of a very high standard. Young children were able to make up their own game about creating and flipping pancakes to each other, while older children enjoyed teaching each other about dinosaurs while pretending to be teachers. Examples of older pupils' work show that they have carried out high-quality market research and been able to hypothesise extremely well about which types of shops or supermarkets would sell different foods at which type of price. Records of some debates conducted by pupils show that they can develop and critique arguments extremely well, and are able to identify key information that influences the veracity of the arguments put forward. In one philosophy lesson observed, children demonstrated a very strong and confident understanding of what 'reasoning' was. These achievements come about because pupils are very highly motivated through leaders' and teachers' high expectations and warm and encouraging manner with them, and through the challenges and opportunities for independent research and self-chosen projects that they receive, as well as other provision such as debating sessions and philosophy lessons from an early age. The school has successfully met the recommendation from the previous inspection to the extend the opportunities provided for EYFS children to initiate their own learning during inside activities.
- 3.8 Pupils' academic and other successes are outstanding. Pupils' achievements in music, drama and the arts are high for their age, and they have a history of success in national art and local music competitions and other events. In a drama lesson, all groups of younger children, including those who required more support, were able to vocalise and express complex ideas. Other lesson observations showed that pupils' creative artwork is excellent, and that they have

highly-developed artistic skills for pupils of their age. This is because of the creative opportunities and specialist teaching that pupils receive.

- 3.9 Some pupils achieve very well in ICT. For example, individual pupils have achieved very highly in national computer animation competitions open to much older children. During ICT lessons observed, some pupils understood complex language such as 'algorithm' and other terms associated with coding, and were able to code with confidence. However, lesson observations showed that pupils do not always apply or develop their ICT skills as strongly as possible in their work across other subjects.

#### **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils exhibit substantial self-confidence and self-awareness as a result of the school's very high quality of pastoral care. Young children are extremely confident when leaving their parents and joining the group, reflecting their very strong attachments with caring staff, who treat them with affection and tenderness, as well as the warm and respectful relationships between parents and staff that exist across the school. Older children and pupils are very confident when expressing their views. For example, during a philosophy lesson, children were happy to voice opinions that they knew were not shared by the majority of other children in the class because of the teacher's warm and explicit encouraging and welcoming of contrary opinions. Pupils become confident in expressing their feelings and ideas because staff provide them with many opportunities for discussion, such as in circle times, philosophy lessons and debating sessions, which enable them to feel very welcome and secure, enabling them to offer their own ideas. Staff create an atmosphere of acceptance and mutual respect and continually show that they value pupils' views. A very large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school promoted an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development.
- 4.3 Pupils demonstrate outstanding independence, resilience, and decision-making skills. They are able to make decisions about actions that they need to take in order to achieve their desired goals. The youngest children made very thoughtful and considered decisions, in relation to their age, when determining how large their fruit slices should be when decorating their rice cakes. Older children exploring a story were able to identify and articulate important and key decisions that the story characters needed to make to enable the narrative to end happily for all. During a mathematics lesson, older pupils were able to articulate very thoughtful ideas when contemplating whether to spend money on certain items or experiences rather than others. They displayed a very good understanding of ideas about saving money and whether this is important. Examples of pupils' work show that pupils are able to vocalise clear ideas about what they might take into account in future choices of career. Teachers nourish pupils' decision-making abilities through continually giving them choices and using very clear and effective questioning to encourage pupils to voice their views. For example, during one drama lesson, the teacher had prepared two different puppet shows and gave the children time to observe the various attractively presented resources laid out before inviting them to choose which show they would like to experience.
- 4.4 Pupils display an excellent sense of right and wrong and treat others extremely well. They value caring behaviour and fairness and are able to express very thoughtful ideas about these. For example, during one philosophy lesson, children were able to suggest considered examples of what was fair behaviour and what was not. This is because of the school's high expectations of behaviour and the proprietor's and leaders' successful embedding of the 'Mulberry House Way', the school's ethical code that emphasises the importance of being kind, helpful, and caring towards others and respecting them. Children show consideration and empathy towards each other as well as determination to always do the right thing and support each other to follow the rules. They are highly responsive to the school's use of 'carpet stars' and a 'traffic light' system to signify the types of behaviour that are valued. Pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that the school helped them to understand what is morally right and wrong, and an overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school actively promoted good behaviour.

- 4.5 Pupils' social development and collaborative skills are excellent. They work well together and support each other extremely well in and out of lessons. For example, the youngest children enjoy collaborative work in the sand pit, and work particularly well together for children of their age. Older pupils who spoke to the inspectors said that during break times they would go and play with someone whom they saw alone at the 'Friend Stop', and would go there themselves if they wanted someone to play with. Pupils' outstanding willingness and ability to support each other is developed through the many opportunities that teachers provide for the pupils to work collaboratively, such as the effective use of paired discussions and grouping strategies that enable pupils to help those sitting near them.
- 4.6 Pupils show strong commitment towards acting on behalf of others and understand why this is important. They are able to contribute ideas about how to improve the school for the benefit of others, as seen through the ideas they offered about the uses that the school's recent building development could be put to. In one mathematics lesson, older pupils demonstrated excellent discussion and understanding of the possible moral imperative of taxes: sharing ideas about how money raised through tax could be used to provide public services. School documentation shows that that pupils have shown great commitment to supporting a range of charities. Leaders and teachers nurture pupils' commitment to others less fortunate than themselves through initiatives such as the school's 'WE-DAY' ('Ways to make the world a better place' day) and giving pupils roles that carry responsibilities towards others, such as being book monitors and table monitors. The proprietor and leaders ensure that the school encourages responsibility from an early age, both within the school and the wider community.
- 4.7 Pupils are extremely accepting of and respectful towards others from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They are willing to share their cultural differences and identities with each other. Older pupils were very aware that there were those with different backgrounds, cultures and faiths in the school, and spoke to the inspectors with passion about how they were all equal and got along well. Children in the EYFS from a range of different geographical backgrounds demonstrated an understanding and appreciation of their different cultural heritages. This is because the school celebrates different faiths and cultures, through events such as a recent 'Indian culture' week, and emphasises respect for others in the 'Mulberry House Way'. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that school actively promoted values of democracy, respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- 4.8 Pupils' spiritual understanding is excellent. They reflect with a maturity beyond their age on the spiritual dimensions of life, and are very capable of articulating their feelings and ideas. This is because the teachers immerse pupils in philosophical and spiritual themes in a sustained manner from an early age. For example, older EYFS children exploring hot cross buns spontaneously engaged in a highly sophisticated, articulate and thoughtful discussion about the Easter story and Jesus's death and resurrection. They were able to explain why it was important that they learned about different religions.
- 4.9 Pupils develop a strong awareness of the importance of keeping healthy and staying safe from an early age. They are very aware of who they can turn to for help if they have any worries. This is because of leaders' very strong focus on teaching pupils how to grow healthily by eating sensibly and exercising, and the importance placed on promoting pupils' emotional well-being through, for example, a 'healthy body' week and the use of yoga. Leaders ensure that pupils understand how to keep safe and avoid risks, including when online. For example, school records of an e-safety assembly led by pupils show that pupils had an excellent awareness of how to keep safe online. Pupils' settled behaviour from the beginning of their school experience shows that they feel safe and secure. This is the result of the constant warmth and

affection pupils receive from key staff, and because staff are very observant of, and responsive to, individual pupils' needs.