



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

DEVONSHIRE HOUSE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Devonshire House Preparatory School

Full Name of School	Devonshire House Preparatory School
DfE Number	202/6380
EYFS Number	EY397203
Address	Devonshire House Preparatory School 2 Arkwright Road Hampstead London NW3 6AE
Telephone Number	020 7435 1916
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Email Address	head@devonshirehouseprepschool.co.uk
Headmistress	Mrs Serena Alexander
Proprietors	Mr Michael Loveridge; Lady Loveridge
Age Range	2½ to 13
Total Number of Pupils	581
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (319 boys; 262 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 65 5-11: 336 3-5 (EYFS): 153 11-13: 27
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	08 Mar 2011 to 09 Mar 2011

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in March 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Devonshire House Preparatory School is a day school catering for boys aged two and a half to thirteen and girls aged two and a half to eleven. There is a large Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) department with two Nurseries, one full-time and the other half-day, and nine classes of three to five year olds. The school is proprietarily owned and was founded in 1989 in Hampstead, London. It is housed on two neighbouring sites, in large Victorian houses adapted for educational use. Both sites have landscaped courtyard gardens and large playgrounds. Since the previous inspection, a deputy head academic has been appointed. Investment in communication has been made in the installation of cabling, allowing electronic links between the buildings. In addition, computers have been upgraded and the original school assessment database has been embedded in a new information system.
- 1.2 At the time of inspection there were 581 pupils on roll, of whom 319 were boys and 262 were girls. In total, 218 children were in the EYFS. Pupils come largely from the surrounding area. Pupils transfer to independent day schools or to boarding schools.
- 1.3 Pupils are admitted to the school at all stages. For the Nursery, children have an interview and undertake practical activities to check readiness for the first stage of learning, and further up the school, more formalised tests are administered. Standardised data indicates that the ability profile of the school is at least above the national average, with around a quarter of pupils having an ability that is far above the national average. Few pupils are below average ability. At the time of inspection, there were no pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and no pupil had a statement of special educational needs. There were thirteen pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) and seven receive support for this. The pupils come from a variety of cultural backgrounds.
- 1.4 The school aims to provide: a caring, happy and safe environment which is conducive to learning and personal development; the highest standards of teaching, learning and achievement for all pupils; the highest standards in personal care and support; and the encouragement of initiative.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The pupils' overall achievement is excellent and fulfils the aims of the school in providing an academic education that allows each pupil to achieve his or her full potential. Pupils achieve high academic standards within a wide and creative curriculum, and a happy and stimulating environment in which they have opportunities to develop their ideas and initiative. Pupils make rapid progress and achieve high standards at each stage. They have positive attitudes and apply themselves conscientiously to their work. Most pupils are highly literate; they write well for a wide range of purposes and their extended writing is particularly good across many subject areas. Spelling, grammar and structure are usually accurate, and teachers encourage their pupils to check work carefully. Pupils are highly articulate and confident speakers who also listen attentively. They read well and make extensive use of the library for research and to read for pleasure. Pupils use their well-developed skills with number confidently and outstandingly well. They demonstrate high levels of general knowledge and express their opinions cogently. The presentation of work is good and displays around the school are of high quality. Pupils also do well in art, music and sport. The school is aware that opportunities for using information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum are currently limited. Pupils are successful in passing entrance examinations for selective senior schools, with many being awarded scholarships, and most gain places at their first choice school.
- 2.2 Levels of participation in both team and individual sports are encouraged, whilst systems are in place to identify and nurture those with particular talent. Music is strong, with many pupils actively taking part in school choirs, orchestras, string, recorder, brass and woodwind ensembles, and individual music lessons. Pupils also enjoy regular participation in debating activity and dramatic productions. Considerable success has been enjoyed at national level in the under-9 and under-11 chess teams. Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make exceptional progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Inspection evidence, in the form of lesson observations, pupils' written work and curriculum interviews with them, confirms this judgement. The pupils' achievement is supported by their exemplary behaviour and attitudes to learning. They work very well collaboratively and show great enjoyment, energetic application and perseverance.
- 2.3 The curriculum offers a balanced range of subjects that meets all pupils' needs. Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) gives pupils insight into moral and ethical matters. The school has identified several pupils as being gifted or talented and promotes additional challenges for them. Pupils with EAL are well supported. The programme of extra-curricular activities available is vast and extends the range of experiences available to pupils. It includes judo, debating, design and technology, music, sport, drama, Mandarin and manga millinery; these activities are well attended. Regular form time gives pupils the opportunity to speak with confidence on a wide range of topical issues. Educational visits from the earliest age take place twice a term and visiting speakers are invited into school to enhance learning. This was seen in a younger class where pupils were able to

place correctly map symbols on a blank island outline during a presentation from a visiting expert.

- 2.4 The quality of teaching is excellent and makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' achievement. Lessons are thoroughly planned with clear objectives and a sequence of activities, which secure and maintain the pupils' interest. Lessons proceed at a lively pace, with pupils taking an active part in practical work and concentrating well. This was particularly evident in a science lesson where pupils were studying nutrition and digestion; they were carrying out experiments to measure mass, temperature and volume when investigating the energy content of food. Teachers are supportive and encouraging, and use praise well. Marking is helpful, supportive and informative. The pupils' academic performance is closely monitored, and additional support and challenge provided where necessary. Pupils make excellent progress as they advance through the school because of the well-planned, well-paced lessons, which encourage them to evaluate their own progress. Skilful questioning by the teachers enables the pupils to achieve thorough understanding.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.5 The pupils' personal development is excellent and a strength of the school. A strong spiritual understanding is fostered in assemblies, religious studies and PSHCE. The ethos of the school enables self-confidence to flourish. A common thread through interviews with the pupils, and in responses to the pupils' and parental pre-inspection questionnaires, is that the school is friendly and has a family feel. Moral development is excellent; throughout the school, pupils understand what constitutes acceptable behaviour and they respect the school rules, as reflected in their exemplary behaviour both in and out of the classroom. They demonstrate courtesy to each other and to the staff. Rewards such as house points and commendations for good behaviour are given to pupils who have shown qualities of kindness and care towards others.
- 2.6 The pupils' social development is excellent. The school succeeds in providing an environment in which pupils feel valued, appreciate the talents of others and learn to work constructively within a community. Pupils are friendly and confident. The high profile attributed to charitable work gives pupils an excellent understanding of those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils gain a thorough knowledge of their own and other cultures through the strong involvement in art, music, PSHCE and the school's extensive programme of day and extended educational visits.
- 2.7 The attention given to health and safety measures is excellent, makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development, and ensures that staff and pupils benefit from a safe and positive school environment. Clear systems, training and policies, including those for safeguarding and the prevention of bullying, support the excellent pastoral care provided by all staff, and are well managed and monitored by those with clearly defined responsibilities. Pupils are confident that they have someone to whom they can turn, and feel well supported. Healthy living is effectively encouraged through PSHCE and science, school meals are nutritious and popular, and catering is of a very high quality. Appropriate medical arrangements are in place for those who are unwell, and medicines are stored and administered suitably.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.8 Governance is excellent overall and is provided by the proprietors. It is very effective in setting and securing appropriate aims and values for the school and leads to excellent oversight of the school's work. Since the previous inspection, a clear vision for the school's medium-term strategic development has been recorded in a formal plan and linked to short-term priorities. Governance is rigorous in its monitoring of policies and procedures; for example, the central register of appointments is carefully maintained. The proprietors are fully trained in child protection and safeguarding matters. They recognise their responsibility for providing a safe and healthy school for all pupils, employees, parents and visitors. The highest priority is attached to ensuring that all the operations within the school environment, both educational and supportive, are delivered in a manner that is safe and healthy for all.
- 2.9 Leadership and management are excellent. The school, including the EYFS, is strongly led, and those in senior positions are approachable and efficient. Their understanding of what is required in terms of monitoring, assessment, planning, peer mentoring and appraisal is excellent. They work extremely well together and involve all staff in discussions that lead to overall ownership of decisions and policies set. They have an excellent vision for the future of the school and are working to ensure the best possible provision for its pupils. The quality of the premises and accommodation is excellent. Buildings are maintained to the highest standard. The specialist rooms in each are used well for the benefit of all pupils.
- 2.10 The quality of links between the school and parents is excellent. These links are successfully promoted and assist the school to meet its aims. Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with full and relevant information. Parents are made aware of the complaints procedure and encouraged to talk to staff about any concerns. The parents' charitable fund-raising committee runs many events including winter and summer fairs, a ladies' lunch, a 'readathon' and a quiz night. There are regular consultations between parents and teachers, and informative reports are sent out frequently. The weekly newsletter is an informative document. The form assembly observed during the inspection was attended by many parents who fully appreciated the opportunity to share in their children's learning experience. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated their support for all aspects of the school, in particular the progress their children make, the pastoral care and guidance given, the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and values, and the high standards of behaviour. Inspectors agree with these positive views.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Improve the opportunities for pupils to use ICT in their learning throughout, including the EYFS.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.1 Devonshire House Preparatory School EYFS is an outstanding setting. It successfully supports and meets the needs of all its children and fulfils its aims well. High priority is given to the happiness and emotional well-being of each child. The setting's leaders are developing a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision in order to take effective steps to improve it. Since the last inspection, high standards have been maintained, significant improvements have been made to assessment procedures and ICT has become a focus in school development planning.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 Outstanding leadership and management, together with a common sense of purpose and highly effective teamwork throughout the setting, enable all children to progress very well. Robust and inclusive policies, procedures and records work well to ensure that children are safeguarded and their needs are met, giving them equal opportunity to succeed. Regular monitoring and review take into account the views of all members of the setting, and include parents. The EYFS is included in a clear whole-school development plan and also has its own detailed action plan to set further targets for improvement. Resources are deployed well. Very strong links with parents and carers encourage effective partnerships that support children's learning. Parents are increasingly well informed about their children's activities and progress. They say they have great confidence in the setting and that their children enjoy school.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding and highly effective arrangements ensure children's health and safety. Staff are well deployed and have the skills, qualifications and commitment needed to promote excellence in children's learning and welfare, including warm, supportive relationships. An interesting, well-organised environment contributes to the busy atmosphere both inside and out. The provision for ICT is an area for further development and the school has ambitious plans for improvement. Children's physical skills clearly benefit from the recently enhanced outside areas, and specialist teaching in some subjects contributes well to learning. Detailed, imaginative planning ensures that purposeful activities are provided for children of all abilities and ages, including the youngest, and that strong assessment and observation enhance individual progress. Children's behaviour is managed very well so that all can feel confident.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 4.4 The outcomes for children are outstanding. Most children make at least good progress and achieve the Early Learning Goals; some progress rapidly and work beyond them. Children enjoy learning and clearly demonstrate a developing sense of independence, together with emerging skills for the future. They are actively encouraged to become involved in their school and the wider community. Children play harmoniously and their behaviour is outstanding. They are highly motivated, actively interested and keen to make decisions. Children develop good hygiene practices and make healthy choices about food. They show they feel safe by confiding in adults and clearly demonstrate growing confidence. Children communicate well, generally listen attentively and are keen to tackle problem solving, ranging from working out how to fit everything into a box in the Nursery to subtracting numbers in Reception. As they progress through the setting, children show that they can use their emerging reading and writing skills in a variety of contexts, for example in writing simple sentences. Displays are of high quality and reflect the children's skills in creative work.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 4.5 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Complaints since the last inspection

- 4.6 Since the last inspection there have been no complaints to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Karin Kelly	Reporting Inspector
Mr Kim Parsley	Assistant Headmaster, IAPS school
Mrs Julia Jones	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Yvonne Parry	Early Years Team Inspector (Senior Manager and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, IAPS school)