



## **SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE**

### **INSPECTION REPORT FOR HYDESVILLE TOWER SCHOOL AND NURSERY SCHOOL**

**DfE No: 335/6007**

#### **The key inspection judgements for this school are:**

<b>The quality of education</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' personal development</b>	<b>outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety</b>	<b>outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership, management and governance</b>	<b>outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Effectiveness of the Early Years' provision</b>	<b>good</b>	<b>2</b>

#### **Compliance with the Independent School Standards:**

The school meets the regulatory requirements of schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

#### **Compliance with the Equality Act 2010:**

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.

#### **Compliance with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage:**

The school meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

**Date of inspection: 10-12 May 2016**

## **SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS**

Hydesville Tower School provides a good education for its pupils. The quality of education is good overall with most pupils achieving well above national expectations in most subjects. Teaching and assessment are good. There is a focus on high academic expectations with consistently good quality teaching. The curriculum is excellent and offers innovative enrichment and extra-curricular activities that support the education of the whole child. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Behaviour is exemplary and pupils show kindness and consideration towards each other. The school promotes welfare, health and safety well and has excellent procedures for safeguarding. Leadership, management and governance are outstanding and highly effective in promoting the school's progress and achievement. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good with children acquiring firm foundations for their future education.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should seek to raise pupils' attainment and progress further by:

- taking every opportunity to challenge the pupils' understanding through creative and investigative learning;
- ensuring that changes in staffing are well managed so that progress and attainment are maintained; and
- improving the criteria for identifying the most able and talented pupils and planning for them more effectively.

## SECTION B: INFORMATION

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in accordance with Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. It follows the inspection framework agreed by SIS and the Department for Education (DfE).

In reaching their judgements, the inspectors observed lessons across a range of subjects and areas of learning. Examples of pupils' work were examined and data regarding pupil achievement were analysed. Discussions were held with members of staff and trustees and inspectors spoke with groups of pupils. Inspectors observed the life of the school, including break and lunch times. They scrutinised the school website and other documentation and records. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires and the secondary pupil questionnaires were taken into account.

The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Mr Andrew Rickett
Team inspectors:	Mrs Jane Cooper Mrs Christine Graham

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL:

Hydesville Tower and Nursery is a non-selective independent day school for boys and girls aged between three and sixteen years. The school opened in 1952 and was acquired by the Cognita Schools Group in 2007. It is located in Walsall in the West Midlands. There are 294 pupils on roll of whom 37 are in the Nursery. No pupils had a statement of educational needs at the time of the inspection and 61 were identified as more able or talented. The school aims to '*strive to develop students who are well-rounded individuals through a nurturing environment that promotes the values of self-esteem, self-confidence and happiness*'. Significant improvements to the fabric of the building were undertaken in 2015 and the Nursery was refurbished in the same year. The hall has recently been upgraded.

## **SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS**

### **1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

#### **Pupils' learning and achievement**

Pupils' learning and achievement are good. Pupils enter the school with a range of abilities and make at least good, and often excellent, progress from their starting points. By the end of Year 2 pupils have built on the solid foundation gained from the early years and attain standards that are above those expected nationally. This progress continues into Key Stage 2 where achievement by Year 6 is well above national averages with a substantial number of pupils achieving at higher levels. Pupils who remain to continue their studies in the senior school mostly do well in their GCSEs again with results that compare favourably with national averages particularly with regard to the value that the school has added to the pupils' education. Learning and achievement are not yet outstanding because there are some variations in standards between subjects and for some groups of pupils. In particular, results in science, music and physical education (PE) at GCSE are not as high when compared with other subjects. The school has responded to unavoidable changes to staffing for science and tried hard to recruit teachers to maintain the pupils' progress. Past results and current predictions indicate that, although most pupils continue to make progress in science, it is not as high as it could be. New staff are in place to lead music and PE and some excellent planning and teaching were seen in these areas leading to higher attainment. The recent identification of pupils who are more able and talented is placing an emphasis on how the school can challenge the more able to a greater extent.

Pupils at all levels acquire skills in literacy and numeracy that allows them to access all areas of the curriculum. In the main, they have a very good grasp of grammar, punctuation and spelling and write with accuracy. They read well and with expression. Pupils are confident to share their ideas and do so very articulately using descriptive language to enhance the impact of what they are saying. They acquire an excellent subject vocabulary that allows them to engage in discussion at a high level and enjoy speaking to each other. There is a very good level of numeracy with pupils able to apply their knowledge and understanding of number to practical problem solving.

Pupils have excellent attitudes towards their learning. They engage well in lessons and are eager to respond. This was particularly evident when teachers provided stimulating experiences to which pupils responded with enthusiasm and a heightened engagement. This was seen, for example, in an outstanding music lesson where all pupils made rapid progress irrespective of ability. On some occasions opportunities for these experiences were missed. Pupils are well organised and use their learning skills to approach their work with determination and a desire to do well.

#### **The quality of teaching and assessment**

The quality of teaching and assessment are good. Teaching in the prep and senior school is consistently good with some of exceptional quality. Staff have high expectations of pupils with regard to their engagement in learning and the quality of their work. Staff have secure subject knowledge and expertise which they use effectively to challenge pupils through learning activities that are well matched to different abilities. This is an improvement from the position at the previous inspection and indicates the impact of strong performance management and professional development. Lessons are carefully planned with a focus on lesson objectives that are often supported by success criteria helping pupils assess their own understanding. Teachers challenge pupils through effective questioning but at times opportunities are missed where pupils themselves could contribute ideas so that they might learn from each other.

Outstanding lessons enable pupils to make exceptional progress because they build on pupils' skills and challenge them with ever more demanding tasks. A major strength of these lessons is the deepening of the pupils' understanding through creative and imaginative learning that put greater onus on the pupils to think for themselves. In the best lessons, excellent use is made of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning.

Lessons are delivered at a good pace and are clearly structured so that pupils make at least good progress. Pupils are given opportunities to share their ideas with others but these are not always then disseminated, and developed, as a whole class. Teachers use plenaries effectively to reflect on the lesson and assess what pupils have learnt and the progress they have made.

Marking of pupils work has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers regularly mark pupils' books and frequently write useful comments that identify how they can further improve. The very best marking provides opportunities for pupils to respond to the teachers' comments, thus taking their learning forward. Similarly, some teachers are skilful in differentiating their comments to the ability of the pupil. The school has a very effective system to assess pupils' capabilities using a variety of tests. Results are used to track pupil progress and identify those who may need support.

### **The quality of the curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum is excellent because a combination of a traditional curriculum delivered with an innovative enrichment programme and extensive extra-curricular provision gives outstanding opportunities to develop the whole child. The curriculum is very well suited to the needs of pupils and meets the aims of the school. This is apparent in the strong planning of the curriculum. It is sequential and supports the good progress that pupils make. Long and medium plans, and supporting resources, are very well used by teachers.

The formal curriculum is broadly traditional with a breadth and balance in all areas of learning. An emphasis on literacy and numeracy means that pupils have excellent opportunities to develop skills in these subjects across the whole curriculum. A flexible approach allows for good choice at Key Stage 4 with opportunities to expand provision to meet the range of pupils' interests. For example, the school has introduced courses in child development and psychology. Other features of the curriculum include drama and the introduction

of modern foreign languages from an early age. French and German are taught from Year 5 with Spanish offered to able linguists. Specialist teaching is deployed from Year 5 onwards and setting in English and maths helps to ensure that pupils of all abilities learn at the right pace and receive good challenge and support. This also prepares them well for the secondary phase. Since September the number of pupils learning a musical instrument has increased significantly.

The wider curriculum includes extensive and innovative enrichment opportunities that are timetabled each week for all pupils. They say that they 'really love' these activities which contribute to their enjoyment of school and attitudes towards learning. The wide range of activities allows pupils to acquire new skills in artistic, creative, musical and sporting fields. These include glass painting, batik, cookery and Bollywood dancing. The rich variety of extra-curricular activities includes those that provide access to useful life skills such as debating, touch typing and young enterprise. The curriculum is further enriched through educational trips that bring learning to life.

The special educational needs coordinator is well qualified and experienced. The management of special needs is well organised. Referrals made by staff are quickly dealt with. Pupils are thoroughly assessed and a detailed individual education plan produced. These plans are well used by the coordinator and staff with regular reviews that ensure pupils receive well targeted support and make good progress.

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

The quality of pupils' personal development is outstanding. The school makes every effort to ensure that its core values are shared by adults and pupils and fully embedded in its ethos and daily life. Pupils develop a strong personal moral code, knowing right from wrong that helps them to challenge prejudice and unfairness. They stand up for what is right and develop into respectful, caring individuals who take their responsibilities seriously. They make an excellent contribution to the school and wider communities particularly through enthusiastic fund-raising and generous contributions to those who are less fortunate than themselves.

Behaviour is exemplary and relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils form strong friendships and show kindness and compassion towards each other. The vertical tutor grouping has a positive impact in drawing pupils together across the age range and helps to eliminate bullying. There is a strong learning culture in the school. Pupils are attentive in lessons and show a determination to succeed. They remain fully engaged in tasks and contribute willingly and with confidence to discussion. Their excellent attitudes towards learning and a desire to improve make a significant contribution to the pupils' success in their learning which is reflected in the very good progress they make.

Social development is exceptional. A strong personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme covers important moral and ethical themes and develops life skills in an age-appropriate way. This includes awareness of bullying and staying safe when using electronic and social media. Pupils are helped to build resilience through PSHEE. Economic education is

covered well in both prep and senior school culminating in the challenge for Year 11 pupils to run a small enterprise that teaches them the practice of business and the value of careful economy. In recent projects, pupils have shown great initiative and clear enjoyment in work that has contributed to their financial awareness.

There are excellent opportunities for cultural development. Pupils learn about British institutions through a wide variety of visits and visiting speakers. Fundamental British values are interwoven into the curriculum and pupils show a high regard and respect for the cultures and beliefs of others. They have engaged in debate about the European Union referendum, held mock elections and have visited the Houses of Parliament and a range of religious buildings.

The school provides high quality careers advice which helps pupils explore their interests and strengths to make informed choices about further study. Links with the local college provide a wide spectrum of advice so that pupils are well-informed about a variety of options open to them.

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

Provision for the safeguarding of pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. Excellent procedures are firmly in place that ensure appropriate checks are made to protect pupils' safety. The designated safeguarding lead has a very detailed grasp of her responsibilities and is well supported by her deputy and other key staff who together ensure that all policies and processes are up to date and comply with latest requirements. Safeguarding procedures are meticulously carried out and there are excellent links with the local safeguarding board. All staff have received up to date training and have a good understanding of their responsibilities regarding child protection. Through PSHEE and assembly the school helps pupils to understand what bullying is and what to do should this happen to them.

The school has clear and rigorous policies for staff recruitment and key staff have been appropriately trained. There has been a high turnover of staff in recent years and procedures for appointing and vetting staff have been followed carefully.

Procedures are in place to ensure that pupils are safe when using electronic media. PSHEE and assembly make an important contribution to the pupils' awareness of staying safe online. The school has strong filters that ensure there is limited access to websites used on the school premises. Pupils report that they can discuss anything with their teachers and, as part of their e-safety course, they have talked about why some people are attracted to extremism.

There is stringent supervision of pupils during the school day and at the beginning and end of school. Risk assessments are very thorough. The school has an appropriate first aid policy and sufficient staff have been trained in first aid including those in the early years. Medical and fire arrangements meet requirements. Admission and attendance registers are maintained correctly in accordance with regulations. Leaders and managers have targeted and improved

the attendance of pupils taking holidays in term time. Attendance is now above the national average.

#### **4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE**

The quality and effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, is outstanding. The school's ethos is fully understood and shared by the school's leaders who encourage all pupils to '*strive to develop as well-rounded individuals*'. The headteacher has worked tirelessly to build a strong leadership team in the school by developing the management skills of key staff and delegating responsibilities to them. He has judiciously placed leaders with specific responsibilities in key areas of school life which has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The refinement of the leadership structure has given clarity to their roles and greater accountability. The two deputy headteachers are very effective in leading management teams in the prep and senior schools thereby bringing a more cohesive approach to school self-evaluation. Their work is making a strong impact on raising the quality of teaching and moulding staff into a cohesive team. It is too early to see the impact of some of the initiatives led by the more recently appointed members of the leadership team. The school improvement plan has identified areas for development that are directly related to pupil performance. Although the priorities identified in the plan derive from accurate self-evaluation, some of the actions to implement them lack clarity. For example, there is some ambiguity about how to measure the success of the support being given to pupils identified as more able and talented. The impact of performance management has improved as it is more closely linked to school development priorities. Staff are supported by good quality professional development that leads to enhanced classroom practice. The overwhelming response from parents who returned the inspection questionnaire was positive. The school meets the independent school standards for premises and accommodation, information to parents and handling complaints.

##### **Governance**

The quality and effectiveness of governance is outstanding. Governance is managed through a comprehensive range of support from the Cognita Group. The recent appointment of an Assistant Director of Education (ADE), who chairs the governance committee, is already making an effective contribution to the quality of leadership and management through his support and advice to the headteacher and leadership teams. The further support of an Independent Chair (IC) ensures that there is a focus on safeguarding and compliance.

#### **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS' PROVISION**

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is good. Leaders and managers have appropriately high expectations for children's development and offer good provision and care. Effective systems are in place for supervision. Arrangements to safeguard and protect children and to meet government requirements are excellent. There is a clear focus on staff development through robust performance management and regular observations of staff. Leaders and managers have ensured that the EYFS meets all requirements although there are some variations in teaching which need to be improved.

All staff have a secure understanding of the EYFS curriculum. It is wide ranging, well planned and relevant to the needs of children at their different stages of development. All areas of learning are covered but in a few lessons, opportunities are missed to promote children's creativity.

Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall. Most teaching is good but in some lessons there is too much teacher direction and too few opportunities for children to investigate for themselves or make independent decisions. Evidence from 'My Learning Journey' and literacy and numeracy books show that children make at least good progress from their starting points as they move through early years. By the end of EYFS most children's development meets or exceeds the expectations for their age. Letter formation requires improvement throughout the EYFS and Key Stage 1. Assessment procedures are suitably maintained. Detailed notes from teachers' observations provide useful information from which to plan future learning. There are effective arrangements to ensure smooth transition as children move to the prep school.

The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children are outstanding. Children are very well cared for. Teachers know the children and excellent relationships between them enable children to thrive within a very supportive environment. Children develop confidence through the positive culture and atmosphere. They are interested and enthusiastic learners who acquire skills that will sustain them through their future learning experiences. Children have numerous opportunities to develop independence through exploration of their surroundings. Staff ensure that children have plenty of physical activity and encourage healthy eating.

Engagement with parents is a strength of EYFS. Parents receive useful information about how well their children are progressing and have opportunities to meet staff at parent evenings. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified promptly and are well supported.

## SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Hydesville Tower School			
Address of school:	Broadway North Walsall WS1 2QG			
Telephone number:	01922 624374			
Email address:	info@hydesville.com			
Web address	www.hydesville.com			
Proprietor:	Cognita Schools Group			
Person registered with DfE as proprietor under paragraph 20 of Part 4:	Mr C. Jansen			
Head Teacher:	Mr Andrew McGinnes			
Early Years Manager	Miss Hannah Bayliss			
DfE Number	335 6007			
Type of school	Independent school			
Annual fees	£8685 – £12105			
Age range of pupils	3-16			
Gender of pupils	Co-educational			
Total number on roll	full-time	280	part-time	14
Number of children in registered nursery		23		14
Number of children under-5	Boys:	21	Girls:	16
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	148	Girls:	109
Number of post-compulsory pupils	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	0	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	Boys:	0	Girls:	1
Type of inspection	Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008			

**This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, and members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship or Cognita group. The report is available from the School Inspection Service website: [www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk](http://www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk).**