



Norfolk House School



THE
GOOD
SCHOOLS
GUIDE

The Good Schools
Guide Review

Why we think Norfolk House School, Birmingham is a good school

Norfolk House School is a small, traditional urban prep that stands out for its academic focus and family feel. Providing excellent preparation for the local grammars and independent schools, it also offers a home-from-home environment where they don't forget to have fun. 'We couldn't wish for anything better,' said a parent.



“

We couldn't wish
for anything better

Parent

What The Good Schools Guide says

Headmistress Mrs Susannah Palmer

Since 2018, Susannah Palmer, BMus (Goldsmiths) PGCE (Birmingham). West Midlands born and bred, she attended KEHS Birmingham and taught in West House School, Edgbaston (director of music) and Mayfield Prep School, Walsall (director of studies and deputy head) before coming here.

A head with presence and good humour, we joined her in her functional upstairs office for her daily morning catchup with the SLT – an informal gathering that revealed just how well they know every child, as well as highlighting Mrs Palmer's baking skills (the magnificent birthday cake she'd made for a staff member is a common occurrence, apparently). Later we saw her teaching year 4 maths – like everyone here, she wears many hats.

Parents say she's 'fantastic'. 'She welcomes parent feedback', 'doesn't beat about the bush if she has something to say' and 'knows exactly how to support every child'. They told us she's 'regularly at the gate' and 'is not above getting stuck into clubs and hanging up the Christmas decorations'.

She has introduced STEM to the curriculum, upped the sporting fixtures and developed extracurricular opportunities in Early Years. She has extended the school day and has plans for more specialist and spare teaching rooms, as well as to increase pupil numbers after a recent dip. 'It's already picking up and we have actually grown staff numbers,' she told us. The school is financially 'very solid', she assured us, adding that the school owns three (soon to be four) local nurseries.

Lives locally with husband, Simon (retired head of music at Camp Hill Boys who now helps out with music here). They have two sons, both educated at West House Prep and KECHB before attending Durham and Leeds universities.

“

The daily morning catchup with the SLT revealed just how well they know every child, as well as highlighting Mrs Palmer's baking skills.







Entrance & Admissions

Into transition (pre-prep) from age 3 on first come, first served basis. Around 90 per cent move up to reception. No other main entry points – ‘Children join whenever,’ says head, ‘and we seem to gain a lot from overseas, so they do not fit into British term times.’ Initial parent tour with head is followed by two consecutive taster days for the child. From year 3, this includes tests in maths, English and possibly VR and NVR. ‘We also look for social interaction – important as we are a small school.’

Exit

At 11+, about 60 per cent to the excellent local state grammars, notably in the King Edward VI foundation – Aston, Camp Hill and Handsworth for boys; Camp Hill and Handsworth for girls; Five Ways for co-ed. Queen Mary’s Grammar School for Boys sometimes features, and Old Swinford Hospital. Remaining 40 per cent to local independents including Edgbaston High and King Edward VI High (both girls only), King Edward’s School (boys only) and St George’s School and Solihull School (co-ed). Four scholarships in 2025.



Latest results

This is an independent school and therefore does not have Key Stage 2 SATs results. While some independent schools choose to sit SATs, they are not required to do so and the UK government does not collect or publish their results. Find out more.

Learning support & SEN

0% Students with a SEN EHCP

11.02% Students with SEN support

Pupils

120 Number of pupils





Our view

The school is handily located off the arterial Hagley Road, but slow down when you turn the corner – if you blink, there’s a chance you’ll miss the smart Italianate villa altogether, and your next challenge will be finding a parking spot. But parents are not fazed – far from it, they value the ‘small size’, ‘home-from-home ethos’ and say the school stood head and shoulders above other local preps they looked at due to ‘the family feel’ and ‘happy children’ who get ‘excellent results’.

Founded in 1934 as Garry House School by Cecil D’Arcy Roshier (who remained headmistress for 30 years), the school has always been a proprietorial prep. Originally based in nearby Fountain Road, it moved to Norfolk Road in 1965, where the house has been beautifully maintained and adapted with well-appointed, pristine classrooms, a charming library and a soft-surface outside play area, where neat wooden buildings house transition and reception classes. A wooden gate leads to a surprisingly large and magical garden used for forest school.

The hall (just about) fits the whole school – we joined them on long benches for morning assembly where we sang happy birthday to a pupil (the head played piano) and saw others receive certificates and medals. Nice to see children’s achievements outside school celebrated too, including one girl’s trophy for her ski jump prowess.

‘It is known as one of the more academic local private schools,’ parents told us. ‘But it’s not done through pressure – it’s about personalised learning, a laser focus and getting the best out of the child.’ Parents say it helps that ‘everyone knows everyone as it means the children feel valued and can talk to anyone.’ Small class sizes are also credited – 21 max though all between 11 and 20 when we visited. Homework levels ‘reasonably high’, of which they approve.

“

It’s about personalised learning, a laser focus and getting the best out of the child.





Each class teacher has a specialism that's shared across the school. Means pupils get specialist teaching in PE, music, art and outdoor learning from the off.

In Early Years, we watched nurturing young teachers divide the two classes into six teaching groups for maths, phonics and literacy. 'Groups are deliberately kept small and they're very fluid,' one explained – and parents said they are kept informed of progress and 'how we can help with learning at home'.

Year 1's were also divided up – one half showed good emotional literacy as part of their comprehension project on The Very Sad Penguin, the other half made posters about a missing toy in the ICT suite. 'A useful way to learn Word,' explained the teacher. Over in year 2, children discussed things that are good (physical exercise) and bad (smoking, fast food and always taking the lift) for our bodies. 'My dad always takes the elevator,' one young lad let on.

In older years, we saw one class watching videos and hanging onto the teacher's every word about fossils, several putting their hands up to ask questions – while another fact-filled lesson focused on the Tudors. 'Yes!' exclaimed one lad, punching the air when the teacher said 'boys were seen as better than girls in those times'.





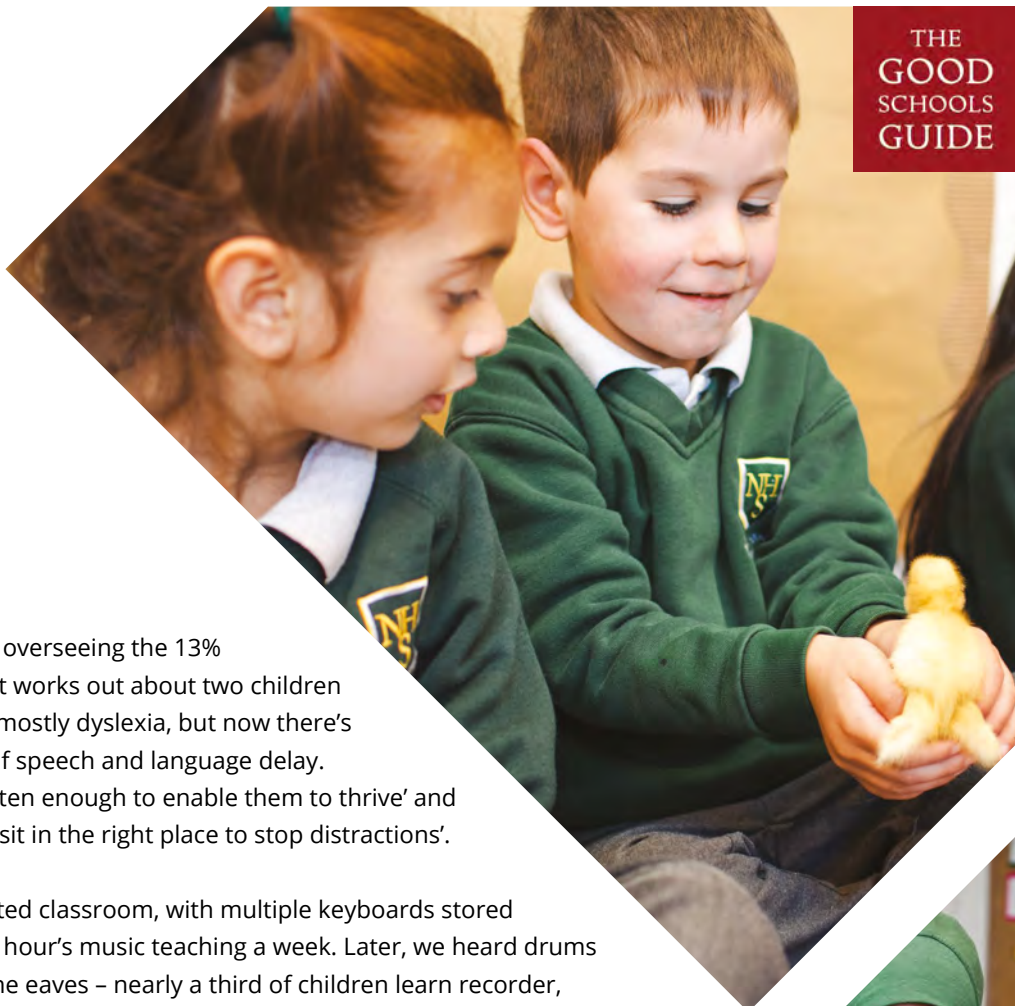
There are daily reading sessions, plus storytelling over a snack. 'Proper books, Swallows and Amazons and Treasure Island, not David Walliams,' says head.

Each class teacher has a specialism that's shared across the school. Means pupils get specialist teaching in PE, music, art and outdoor learning from the off, with science and ICT added from year 1 and maths and English from year 3. Mandarin is taught from year 1 and there is a club for French. Maths is taught across three groups in years 1 and 2, after which there's 'a bit of setting if needed'. STEM from year 1 – pupils told us of science experiments and making catapults. Enrichment for year 6's – our tour guides had written a book for younger pupils. Some parents bemoaned 'some ups and downs in staff turnover', but say things have 'now settled down' and all speak very highly of the newer, mainly younger teachers which complement the longer-standing ones.

From year 2, 11-plus teaching is timetabled. 'They get used to assessments and mocks,' said a parent. For the hardcore, there are Saturday morning and holiday classes too – free from year 5 and open to other schoolchildren. 'I write the materials and employ specialist staff,' the head told us. 'I'll be honest, I didn't enjoy it,' admitted a year 6 but not all feel that way. 'I actually quite liked it.'

A love for literacy is reflected by the children's excitement about World Book Day. There are daily reading sessions, plus storytelling over a snack. 'Proper books – Swallows and Amazons and Treasure Island, not David Walliams,' says head.





The head doubles up as the SENCo, overseeing the 13% (and growing) on the SEN register. 'It works out about two children per class,' she told us. It used to be mostly dyslexia, but now there's more ADHD and autism, plus a bit of speech and language delay. Parents say the small classes are 'often enough to enable them to thrive' and praise teachers for 'getting them to sit in the right place to stop distractions'.

Music and art have a shared dedicated classroom, with multiple keyboards stored against the wall – all children get an hour's music teaching a week. Later, we heard drums coming from the practice room in the eaves – nearly a third of children learn recorder, piano, violin, drums or singing. Several told us choir is 'my favourite club' (there's a junior and senior one) and there's an orchestra. Years 5 and 6 recently performed with two local schools and the children often sing and perform at a local retirement village, as well in assemblies. 'We visited the Symphony Hall to do a Queen medley,' one told us.

No drama on curriculum but it weaves its way into English and assemblies, and there's a whole-school summer production led by year 6, recently Moana, with nativities for younger ones. 'As with music, the teachers bring a lot of enthusiasm and it's very inclusive,' said one parent, although others admitted they 'just don't care – it's the academics I want'. Just under a third do LAMDA.



“

We visited the
Symphony Hall to
do a Queen medley.





We found year 6's using watercolours in an art class – they told us of clay and collage work they'd also recently done, while younger pupils told us they'd studied graffiti art.

Egbaston's remaining riches from its heyday as the Beverley Hills of Birmingham are well used, including tennis club, reservoir, botanical gardens, planetarium and – for sport – Avery Fields.

'We've been offered bigger premises further out, but it would undermine our offering – we wouldn't have access to any of this,' says school. When Harborne library was threatened with closure, the pupils' contribution to the debate was widely credited for it remaining open.

'You wouldn't choose the school for the sport,' say parents. But there's plenty of it – boys play football, touch rugby and cricket and girls play hockey, netball and cricket, now including fixtures. There's also basketball, handball and badminton – with weekly swimming lessons for years 1-6 at the university's new 50m pool and tennis taught by professional coaches.

Clubs run daily after school – all pupils we met did at least one, with favourites including chess, choir, cookery and STEM. All included in fees except for the three run by external companies – football, martial arts and French. One parent felt the clubs are 'a bit blah – useful for us working parents but I'd like to see more variety'. From year 3, everyone goes to PGL – years 3 and 4 for two nights, years 5 and 6 for four nights.



“

We've been offered bigger premises further out, but it would undermine our offering – we wouldn't have access to any of this.





Plenty of leadership opportunities – year 6's run coffee mornings and assemblies. There's even an annual election for one to become prime minister for a week. The last one brought in a no-uniform day and asked for a water fight where, ironically, he was the only one to get wet.

No Black History Month. 'Our school is diverse and one month is not enough to celebrate the heritages of all our children. 'One of our tour guides said the huge diversity map in the entrance, highlighting the many countries the pupils' families come from, is his 'favourite thing about the school' and there are assemblies and events, some pupil-led, as part of the school's diversity calendar.



Easily the best
food we've tasted
in a prep.



We visited on South Africa Day. The vegetarian and lamb curries laid out in the school hall looked so good that we tried both, then went back for seconds! Easily the best food we've tasted in a prep.

'What's your name?' asked our young dining companions. 'Why are you here?' 'How old are you?' 'Aren't you having pudding?' Spirited and curious, they told us of things they love about the school ('like a family', 'so fun' and 'you learn loads') and things they didn't ('I'd like more puddings', 'maths can be hard').

Parents are mainly professionals – doctors, pharmacists, bankers aplenty. Mostly dual income, some forgoing holidays or a nice car to come here. Not the sort to dress up for the school run. All are aspirational – 'and yes, that includes some pushy parents,' said one. Many came here themselves – one dynasty has sent 15 grandchildren to the school. Most are local, some coming from Walsall, Sutton Coldfield and Northfield.





Money matters

Fees lower than some of the competition.

Norfolk House School fees

£11,436 - £16,203 pa (2025/26 academic year)

The last word

Norfolk House School is a small, traditional urban prep that stands out for its academic focus and family feel. Providing excellent preparation for the local grammars and independent schools, it also offers a home-from-home environment where they don't forget to have fun. 'We couldn't wish for anything better,' said a parent.



Norfolk House School

Visit us

Come and experience life at Norfolk House School

Register for one of our Open Events, or book a personal tour at a mutually convenient time at: nhschool.co.uk

[Book now](#)

THE
GOOD
SCHOOLS
GUIDE

For more information about joining Norfolk House School, please contact Admissions:



www.norfolkhouseschool.co.uk



0121 454 7021



info@norfolkhouseschool.co.uk

Norfolk House School Ltd. 4 Norfolk Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3PS

