



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Regulatory Compliance Inspection Report

Highclare School

October 2018



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School's Details

School	Highclare School			
DfE number	330/6060			
Registered charity number	528940			
EY number	EY287857			
Address	Highclare School 10 Sutton Road Erdington Birmingham B23 6QL			
Telephone number	0121 373 7400			
Email address	headsecretary@highclareschool.co.uk			
Headmaster	Dr Richard Luker			
Chair of governors	Mrs Louise Flowith			
Age range	15 months to 18 years			
Number of pupils on roll	553			
	Boys	288	Girls	265
	EYFS	113	Juniors	227
	Seniors	196	Sixth Form	17
Inspection dates	3 to 4 October 2018			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Highclare is an independent non-denominational co-educational day school for pupils aged between one and eighteen years. The school was founded in 1932 and now operates on three sites in Birmingham: Erdington, for the senior school and sixth form; St Paul's, for pupils from ages two to eleven; and Woodfield, for pupils from one to eleven.
- 1.2 The school is a registered charity overseen by a board of governors. Since the previous inspection in November 2014, the senior school has become fully co-educational throughout and has reorganised its senior leadership.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to promote excellence for each pupil through the encouragement of academic achievement and sporting prowess, and musical, dramatic and artistic talents. It seeks to be a school where pupils can be happy, thrive and develop their self-confidence and self-esteem.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils are predominantly drawn from business and professional families in the north Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield area, and are broadly representative of the cultural diversity in the locality. Nationally standardised test data indicate that the ability of pupils in the junior and senior parts of the school is above average, and that the ability of pupils in the sixth form is below average. The school has identified 64 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, of whom 51 receive specialist support for dyslexia, dyscalculia, and a range of other learning difficulties. There are 4 pupils with education, health and care plans. The school has identified 6 pupils for whom English is an additional language, all of whom receive support for their English. The school makes special arrangements for pupils with special talents in art, music, and sport.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

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. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

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 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 un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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 a COMPLIANCE ONLY inspection and as such reports only on the school's compliance with the standards. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified.

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.

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 published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school does not meet all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and should take immediate action to remedy deficiencies as detailed below.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2015 to 2017, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools. Results in IGCSE first language English have been similar to worldwide norms.
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2015 to 2017 have been in line with the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.
- 2.5 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, except for those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 The arrangements made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils do not pay due regard to current statutory guidance. Not all members of staff have a sufficiently clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities with regard to reporting any allegations against staff, although there have been none. Neither do all staff recognise their safeguarding responsibility to report disclosures, including those for alleged peer-on-peer abuse. As a result, a few parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire did not feel that the school safeguards their child effectively.
- 2.11 Health and safety requirements relating to fire safety are not met. The school has not carried out a fire risk assessment for the building on the site used for sporting activities by pupils. This did not have a potential impact on children in the registered setting.
- 2.12 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 and 16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met but those in paragraphs 7 [safeguarding] and 12 [fire safety] are not met.**

Action point 1

- The school must ensure that staff both understand and undertake their safeguarding responsibilities effectively, particularly those relating to reporting allegations and disclosures [paragraph 7(a) and (b)].

Action point 2

- The school must ensure that fire risk assessments are carried out for all parts of the premises and accommodation and that any recommendations arising from these assessments are implemented effectively [paragraph 12].

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.13 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required.
- 2.14 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.15 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for their medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.
- 2.16 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.17 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.
- 2.18 **The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled.

- 2.19 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.
- 2.20 **The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.21 The proprietor does not ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.
- 2.22 The leadership and management have failed to ensure that members of staff have a sufficiently clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities with regard to reporting allegations and disclosures. Prior to the inspection, the leadership and management have not commissioned, as required, a fire risk assessment for the all buildings on the school.
- 2.23 The standards relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34 [knowledge and skills, fulfilment of responsibilities, and promotion of pupil well-being] are not met.**

Action point 3

- **The proprietor must ensure that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the other standards are consistently met, thereby actively promoting the well-being of the pupils [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].**

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS: THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE EARLY YEARS PROVISION

- 2.24 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is inadequate.
- 2.25 A team of enthusiastic staff and committed managers place a high priority upon the children's well-being. Consequently, the children forge excellent relationships with staff and feel happy and secure in their environment. Almost all children under the age of two meet or exceed the level of development that is typical for their age and are ready for the next stage of their education.
- 2.26 Carefully planned activities reflect the needs and interests of the children and staff make very good use of the resources. The outside area is not fully utilised to provide learning activities for the youngest children. As a result, children have limited opportunities to develop and apply their exploratory and investigative skills in an outdoor environment.
- 2.27 Experienced and well-qualified staff provide education and care that generally meet the needs of all groups of children. The systems in place to identify children with additional needs are appropriate and ensure that such children thrive.
- 2.28 Children separate quickly from their parents and settle easily with their key person. Each child benefits from high-quality individual time with adults who ensure that they are safe, happy and secure. Required pre-employment checks on staff have been undertaken to ensure that all children receive the best possible support. Safeguarding and welfare requirements are not fully met. Shortcomings in understanding and following the statutory guidance for children's safeguarding and welfare mean that safeguarding arrangements across the school are not wholly effective.
- 2.29 Self-evaluation is effective, and the development plan for the setting identifies realistic targets for future improvement.

EFFECTIVENESS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

- 2.30 The effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate.
- 2.31 Leaders and managers demonstrate a strong desire to provide high-quality provision and care for children. Sensible areas for future development have been identified in the whole-school development plan. Through effective self-evaluation, which takes account of parental views, leaders and managers strive to improve the provision for care and learning to ensure that children receive an excellent start to their education. Leaders and managers are effective in overseeing the educational plans, staff practice and children's records. They ensure that the curriculum is suitably covered and offers a suitable breadth of experiences, thereby meeting the needs of and reflecting the interests of the children.
- 2.32 A cycle of meetings between leaders and individual staff ensure that practitioners are well supported in their roles as key people for the children. Training opportunities enable staff to enhance their practice by ensuring that they are aware of the latest initiatives and have the skills to provide the children with a stimulating and effective educational experience.
- 2.33 Leaders monitor planning and assessment data to ensure that learning experiences are matched to the individual needs of the children. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Almost all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire or were interviewed indicated that they are extremely happy with the provision of care their children receive.

- 2.34 Leaders actively promote British values, including those relating to equality and diversity. They appreciate that children come from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds and celebrate events such as Chinese New Year, Diwali, Easter and Christmas. They instil respect for others and celebrate children's differences through their daily routines and procedures by the provision of appropriate resources to stimulate the children's awareness of other cultures.
- 2.35 Practitioners manage any poor behaviour effectively and act as role models of the high standard of behaviour expected. As a result, the youngest children respect each other. The values of tolerance and kindness are embedded in daily practice. From a young age, children take turns and share well.
- 2.36 Safeguarding arrangements are not effective. While staff undertake regular safeguarding training, including training to prevent radicalisation and extremism, this has not been sufficiently effective across the school as a whole. Shortcomings in following the statutory guidance for children's safeguarding and welfare mean that the staff understanding of safeguarding responsibilities across the school is inadequate. Procedures and checks of the setting at the start and at the end of the day ensure a safe environment for all children.

QUALITY OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- 2.37 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.
- 2.38 Staff have consistently high expectations for the children in their care. They have an excellent awareness of the range of children's needs, which they support very well. This means that all children including those with additional needs as well as the more able, make good and often better progress in relation to their ability.
- 2.39 The staff generally devise enjoyable, interesting and age-appropriate activities that enthuse and challenge all children and meet their individual needs and interests. The provision of a range of resources in the outdoor area strengthens children's physical development. Children demonstrate skills in manoeuvring wheeled vehicles, and great competence when negotiating steps in order to descend the slide. However, the youngest children have limited opportunities to develop and apply their exploratory and investigative skills in an outdoor environment.
- 2.40 Staff throughout the setting are very knowledgeable and aware of the needs of the age group. They apply their secure understanding of age-appropriate goals for individual children very well. Practitioners continually gather assessment information through photographs and written observations of the children and carefully document these in children's records of learning. Key people make excellent use of this assessment information to determine what children know, understand and can do. Staff track individual children's progress against age-related expectations. This alerts staff to any emerging needs or gaps in learning, which practitioners address effectively. This ensures children's very strong readiness for their next stage in learning.
- 2.41 Interactions between staff and children are timely and purposeful, and strongly extend children's understanding and development. For example, during a painting activity, children were able to name the wide range of different colours that they were using. Practitioners use praise and encouragement effectively to help children understand when they are doing well and how to develop. Key workers model good behaviour, kindness and good manners.
- 2.42 Members of staff engage entirely positively and articulately with children during routine daily activities, such as at meal times and when attending to personal needs. As a result, children's social and language abilities develop strongly, thus maximising opportunities for children's social and language development.

- 2.43 Excellent relationships with parents enable information about the children to be exchanged seamlessly at handover times. Daily communication books provide parents with food and sleep information. A comprehensive information pack provides clear information about the setting. Information evenings and workshops help parents to understand and engage with their child's learning. Parents contribute to their child's learning journal with observations and information from home. Staff share summaries of their own child's development, next steps and targets with parents. Practitioners give parents informative termly reports about their children.
- 2.44 Staff recognise and embrace diversity. The children use the resources in play activities most effectively to enhance their understanding of the world.
- 2.45 High-quality teaching and support ensure that all children from the earliest age are equipped with excellent learning skills. For example, during an adult-led activity, children demonstrated high levels of motivation as they successfully completed a complex task which required them to spread glue effectively using a glue spreader.
- 2.46 The curriculum is structured to provide all children with equal opportunities to develop into enthusiastic and independent learners. Checks at age two highlight any potential concerns, and well-established links with local agencies ensure that advice can be swiftly obtained.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, BEHAVIOUR AND WELFARE

- 2.47 The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children are inadequate.
- 2.48 Managers and staff support and encourage children to develop their independence and their sense of curiosity. By focusing upon the individual needs of the children, a secure and happy environment has been developed which enables children to be highly successful learners. Children have the confidence to take risks as they develop new skills, observed, for example, when a child persevered to make a ride-in car move using her feet.
- 2.49 Children demonstrate great self-confidence in their surroundings as they move around the setting, such as when a child used a watering can to water flowers. Children happily say their goodbyes to parents and quickly settle into an activity with their key person, demonstrating emotional security.
- 2.50 The linked rooms allow the youngest children to become familiar with the staff prior to transitioning to the next stage of the setting. Detailed handovers between staff ensure that essential information about each child is passed on, enabling children to transition smoothly to the next room.
- 2.51 Children have extremely well-developed personal and social skills for their age. Their relaxed behaviour demonstrates that they feel emotionally secure within the setting. Children play co-operatively and happily alongside each other and they are beginning to engage in activities together. They respect each other and are beginning to develop an understanding of how they can contribute to wider society and life in Britain, for example, through helping to make cards for charity fundraising events.
- 2.52 Flexible introductory 'taster days' help new children settle smoothly into the setting's routines. The strong key-person system ensures nurturing relationships and close bonds with children and their families. Well-established routines enable children to feel safe and secure, emotionally and physically.
- 2.53 Staff effectively promote prompt and regular attendance, and absences are followed up.

- 2.54 Important skills for life, such as learning about safety and healthy lifestyles, are introduced to the children effectively. A healthy lifestyle learning initiative has been introduced to develop children's awareness of healthy eating and exercise. Nutritious meals and snacks ensure that children have a balanced and healthy diet, and very high standards of care and hygiene support their personal needs. Children are taught how to use cutlery safely and how to move around their environment with care. Meals and snacks are nutritious and well balanced, helping children to develop a good understanding of healthy food. Time spent outdoors enables the children to develop an understanding of the importance of fresh air and exercise.
- 2.55 Safeguarding and welfare requirements are not fully met. Shortcomings in following the statutory guidance for children's safeguarding and welfare across the school mean that the staff do not have an adequate understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities.

OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

- 2.56 Outcomes for children are outstanding.
- 2.57 All children progress extremely well from their individual starting points. Almost all children meet or exceed the level of development that is typical for their age. They are positively encouraged to make the next steps in their learning, and are supported by regular meetings with parents and focused observations by key people.
- 2.58 The children explore their classroom environment with determination and excitement in response to the personal encouragement and individual care given to each child. They enjoy choosing books and sharing them with adults. This promotes their emotional security and ability to develop skills for the future. They are curious and happy as they self-select their activities. Children enjoy listening to music and join in enthusiastically by moving spontaneously, and show delight by clapping. They listen attentively to stories and sing along with familiar songs. Children begin to count as part of their everyday activities, counting to five and beyond with the help of adults. The children explore mark making using crayons and coloured pens. They confidently recognise and name basic colours.
- 2.59 The development of children's communication and language skills is highly effective, helped by staff interacting with the children using effective questioning techniques, repeating phrases and modelling language for them. They are beginning to link words together to make simple sentences and fully understand and respond to instructions.
- 2.60 All children develop the key skills needed for their next stage of learning extremely well.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

- 2.61 In order to meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 fully, those responsible for the registered provision must take the following action.**

ACTION POINT FOR EYFS

- **The school must ensure that staff understand and implement their safeguarding responsibilities effectively, particularly those relating to reporting allegations and disclosures [EYFS 3.6].**

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT

The school is advised to make the following improvement to its provision for children in the early years.

- Enable the youngest children to strengthen their exploration and investigation skills through activities in the outdoor area.

3. INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 3.1 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 chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and an assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Dr Christopher Ray	Reporting inspector
Miss Jacqueline Scotney	Accompanying reporting inspector
Mrs Adele Wright	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Valerie Holloway	Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Former head of Nursery, IAPS school)