



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION REPORT
FOR SCHOOLS WITH RESIDENTIAL PROVISION**

HOLMWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL

JANUARY 2018



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	Holmwood House School			
DfE number	881/6016			
Address	Holmwood House School Chitts Hill Lexden Colchester Essex CO3 9ST			
Telephone number	01206 574305			
Email address	office@holmwood.house			
Head	Mr Alexander Mitchell			
Proprietor	Holmwood House School Ltd			
Chair of directors	Mrs Wendy Trott			
Age range	6 months to 13 years			
Number of pupils on roll	401			
	Boys	244	Girls	157
	Day pupils	335	Boarders	66
	Nursery	108	Preparatory	293
Inspection dates	30 to 31 January 2018			

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 Holmwood House School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between six months and thirteen years. Founded in 1922 to educate boys, it became co-educational in 1985. When established, the school was privately owned and in 2007 became a private limited company. A single director, supported by a board of advisors, provides governance oversight.
- 1.2 The school is accommodated on a split site. Children aged six months to four years attend the nursery, situated approximately three miles away from the main school, which incorporates the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Pupils aged four years to thirteen years attend the prep school. Pupils in Years 4 to 8 can board on a flexible basis during the week. Since the previous inspection, the prep school has embedded its specific learning philosophy, developed the information technology infrastructure and reviewed reporting to parents.
- 1.3 This inspection was carried out simultaneously with an inspection of the registered EYFS setting by Ofsted for which a separate report was published.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school aims to develop the individuality and ability of each child, to make them self-reliant and adaptable and to help them face reality. It believes that happiness is the key to progress. It seeks to nurture a lifelong love of learning by encouraging pupils to become resilient, resourceful, responsible respectful and develop reasoned thought.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Pupils come from a range of professional and business backgrounds, mostly from white British families. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 38 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyspraxia, 27 of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for four pupils, whose needs are supported by their classroom teachers. Data used by the school has identified 20 pupils as being the more able in the school's population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 32 other pupils because of their special talents in music, sport and creative arts.

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.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools ('boarding NMS'). It also comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding NMS. It identifies any standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the standards.

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, including the boarding NMS, 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, including the boarding NMS. 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](#), National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, 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 National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, and relevant 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 The school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 **The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

- 2.5 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.6 **The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.7 Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including 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.
- 2.8 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.9 Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, including for children in the EYFS, are inadequate. The content of the safeguarding policy does not have sufficient regard to current statutory guidance, in particular in relation to requirements for staff training, procedures for making referrals and seeking advice from external agencies. It is not correctly implemented. Safeguarding leadership is not defined with sufficient clarity and the allocation of responsibility does not ensure consistency of practice across the school. Communication is insufficiently effective. Staff, including those with safeguarding responsibility, are unclear about the procedures to follow regarding reporting concerns about a child and allegations against staff. Staff do not have a clear understanding about recognising signs of abuse as defined in statutory guidance. Those with designated safeguarding responsibility do not have a secure understanding of their roles or provide effective advice and guidance to other staff. External agencies are not informed sufficiently promptly, and before internal investigation, about safeguarding concerns and advice is not followed promptly.
- 2.10 The standard on child protection [NMS 11] is not met and represents a failure to safeguard boarders.

2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 9 to 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 and NMS 2 to 10 and 12 to 16 are met but those in paragraphs 7 and 8, [safeguarding] and in NMS 11 [child protection] are not met.

Action point 1

- the school must ensure that the published safeguarding policy reflects statutory guidance, in particular with regard to arrangements for making referrals, seeking advice from external agencies and staff training, and that it is implemented effectively [paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 11]

Action point 2

- the school must ensure that safeguarding leadership is clearly and appropriately defined and that staff with designated safeguarding responsibility work in partnership, with effective communication, to ensure consistency of implementation [paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 11]

Action point 3

- the school must ensure that designated safeguarding leaders have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities [paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 11]

Action point 4

- the school must ensure that all staff have a clear understanding about reporting procedures for pupil concerns and allegations against staff [paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 11]

Action point 5

- the school must ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of recognising signs of abuse [paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 11]

Action point 6

- the school must ensure that external agencies are notified of safeguarding concerns without delay, and before internal investigation, and that the advice given is promptly followed [paragraphs 7 and 8; NMS 11]

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

2.12 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.

2.13 The school does not keep a single central register (SCR) of staff appointments as required because it operates two central registers across its two sites, one of which, for the nursery, is not suitably maintained.

2.14 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school in paragraphs 18 to 20 and NMS 14.2 to 14.6 are met but those in paragraph 21 [The single central register of appointments] and NMS 14.1 [safer recruitment] are not met.

Action point 7

- **the school must keep a single central register of staff appointments, incorporating staff in the nursery, and ensure that this is appropriately maintained [paragraph 21; NMS 14.1]**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.15 Suitable toilet, changing and showering facilities for pupils 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. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.16 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 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 those 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, and its results in public examinations, 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. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.18 **The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and statement of boarding principles [NMS 1] are 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, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.20 **The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are 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 to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and actively promote the welfare and well-being of the pupils. The oversight and monitoring of safeguarding arrangements are inadequate. Safeguarding procedures are not correctly implemented and leadership and management have failed to ensure that staff with designated safeguarding responsibilities have adequate support, knowledge and skills to fulfil their role. The school does not keep a suitably maintained single central register of staff appointments. The leadership and management of boarding does not ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.

2.22 The standards relating to leadership and management of the school in paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c) [knowledge and skills; the fulfilment of responsibilities; promoting the well-being of pupils] and NMS 13.1; 13.4; 13.5; 13.7 and 13.8 [management and development of boarding] are not met.

Action point 8

- the proprietor must ensure that leadership and management acquire the good skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are met consistently, and pupils' well-being is actively promoted [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); NMS 13.1; 13.4; 13.5; 13.7 and 13.8]

Action point 9

- the proprietor must ensure suitable oversight of safeguarding arrangements, including through effective review, to actively promote the welfare and well-being of pupils [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c); NMS 13.1; 13.4; 13.5; 13.7 and 13.8]

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 directors and a representative from the advisory board, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. 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

Mrs Sue Bennett	Reporting inspector
Mrs Maureen Bradley	Accompanying Inspector
Ms Lisa Maynard	Compliance team inspector (Group business manager, ISA schools)
Mr Timothy Cannell	Team inspector for boarding (Headmaster, ISA school)