



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report

Hollygirt School

April 2022

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School's Details

School	Hollygirt School			
DfE number	892/6001			
Registered charity number	1174296			
Address	Hollygirt School Elm Avenue Nottingham Nottinghamshire NG3 4GF			
Telephone number	0115 958 0596			
Email address	info@hollygirt.co.uk			
Headteacher	Dr Helen Barsham			
Chair of trustees	Dr Debra Costley			
Age range	3 to 16			
Number of pupils on roll	187			
	EYFS	10	Juniors	57
	Seniors	120		
Inspection dates	26 to 29 April 2022			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Hollygirt School is an independent co-educational day school which was set up in 1877 as a school for girls, becoming fully co-educational in 2014. It occupies four adjacent buildings in a pedestrianised area close to the centre of Nottingham. These include the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting. The school is owned by the Rhoda Jessup Educational Charitable Trust and the trustees provide the governance of the school. A new head joined the school in 2021.
- 1.2 The inspection took into account the circumstances faced by schools during the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed by government guidance at various points of the pandemic.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school sets out to offer a nurturing education in a warm family-orientated community. It aims to enable pupils to thrive, fulfil their academic potential and develop as socially responsible individuals, ready for life. The school's ethos of kindness, honesty, resilience and hard work is intended to encourage pupils to develop respect for themselves, the school and the wider community by promoting fundamental British values.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from many different backgrounds, including professional and academic families, generally living within 20 miles of the school. The ability of pupils as assessed by nationally standardised tests is broadly average for those taking the tests. Fifty-one pupils have been assessed as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, (SEND) including dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit disorder/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and social and emotional needs. Of these, 27 pupils receive additional support for their needs. Nine pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Two pupils have been identified as having English as an additional language (EAL) and receive additional support. Thirty-one pupils have been assessed as more able and they are offered challenge through differentiated work and additional activities.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection 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. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

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 standards 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 meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2019 to 2021, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 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 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; 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.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], 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.**

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

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 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

2.13 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' 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.

2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.

PART 6 – Provision of information

2.15 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes 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. It also includes 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.

2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

2.17 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.

2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

2.19 The proprietor ensures 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.

2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils make strong progress from diverse starting points and achieve well in GCSE examinations.
- Pupils develop excellent attitudes to learning.
- Pupils develop good communication skills.
- Pupils acquire secure learning skills across all areas.
- More able pupils do not always achieve at the levels of which they are capable because lack of sufficient challenge limits their progress.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils show notable kindness, respect and understanding for each other.
- Pupils develop strong self-confidence and sociability.
- Pupils show true respect for other cultures and are very open to engage with the diversity of the school.
- Pupils engage with a healthy way of life physically and mentally.

Recommendations

3.3 The school should make the following improvements.

- In the junior school, to ensure that pupils develop their numeracy skills fully by making provision for greater application of mathematics across the curriculum.
- In the senior school, to ensure that pupils identified as the more able make progress in line with that of other pupils by offering consistent levels of challenge in the work they are set.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

3.5 Across the school pupils achieve well from a wide range of starting points. In the EYFS, children make good progress and across the school, attainment is good for all pupils. Results at GCSE over the last three years are good and show strong progress from the predictions made in standardised tests. The centre- and teacher-assessed grades in the years 2020 and 2021 show that pupils maintained the standards achieved in 2019. Those pupils who have SEND and EAL achieve at similar levels to their peers. These levels of achievement show that pupils make good progress, enabled by the support of dedicated teachers who use a detailed, regular monitoring system. This meets the recommendation

of the previous inspection and culminates in planning to meet the needs of each individual pupil. Those pupils with particular talents are identified and supported, and pupils with SEND receive targeted support which includes one-to-one tuition. The work of the leadership team in developing and implementing this system of assessment and interaction strongly supports the progress of pupils of all ages. In discussions, pupils said that they know how they are progressing and how to improve. Pupils who have joined the school recently said that they can see a rapid development in their grades. Pupils with SEND achieved at levels above those predicted for them in standardised tests, in line with their peers. The small number of pupils identified as more able achieved in line with levels predicted for them.

- 3.6 Pupils of all ages develop good knowledge, skills and understanding across the areas of learning. Pupils develop a wide range of skills in a well-structured curriculum. In the EYFS and the junior school, pupils' reading ability and the development of language skills are supported well by the skilful teaching of phonics and many opportunities to speak, discuss and write. Pupils' learning develops successfully through themed topics such as a topic on Maya civilisation. An exhibition of pupils' work on this topic showed strong development and use of their skills in use of information and communications technology (ICT), art, writing, and communication and knowledge in history. In the senior school, pupils develop good knowledge, skills and understanding because a well-designed curriculum offers a wide range of diverse subjects including textiles, food technology, and travel and tourism. Pupils make good progress because lessons are mostly planned to enable pupils to engage in the work with a wide range of tasks which provide varied levels of challenge to suit pupils' needs. Pupils say that staff know them very well, that they can always ask for help and that there are a number of clubs and activities which enable them to succeed. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were highly supportive of the way the school equips pupils with the team working, collaborative and research skills needed later in life, and that pupils' individual needs are fully met. Inspection evidence confirms that this is so although occasionally provision for the most able does not always challenge them sufficiently. The recommendation from the previous inspection to ensure consistency in teaching plans is not yet fully met.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages develop effective communication skills. In an EYFS phonics lesson, children progressed well from holding a sentence in their heads to speaking it aloud with different intonation and accent, then writing it out in full. They accomplished this using excellent collaborative skills. More able children progressed to using capital letters and full stops. Pupils chatted confidently in a Year 1 lesson about mini-beasts, discussing possible habitats to search for these and explaining confidently the difference between invertebrates and animals with skeletons. After the mini-beast hunt, pupils completed full, descriptive sentences in writing describing their finds, lower ability pupils achieving success through support in their use of simple punctuation.
- 3.8 Year 6 pupils used excellent speaking and listening skills to explain to pupils and parents how they had researched the Maya civilisation, using ICT, design and technology (DT) and art well to create their presentation. They communicated a very clear knowledge of the civilization they had researched, such as when explaining how knowledge of computer gaming software enabled the creation of a model Maya pyramid and community. Senior school pupils communicate confidently and support each other in lessons where they collaborate and discuss ideas well. Pupils use their skills successfully across a wide range of opportunities, including assemblies, school council and debating.
- 3.9 In the junior school, pupils develop a good grasp of basic number skills and work well both individually and in collaboration with their peers. Provision of tasks is appropriately differentiated to challenge more able pupils and support those with lower levels of ability. This ensures that all pupils make good progress in numeracy. However, the progress of all pupils is restricted because they are given limited opportunities to use their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum. Senior school pupils develop a strong core of mathematical ability which they apply with confidence across the curriculum, for example in science and technology. They are supported and encouraged by well-structured teaching and the additional support which is available through clubs.

- 3.10 In the junior school, ICT, including computing and coding is taught as a discrete subject from the EYFS onwards and all pupils use ICT effectively across the curriculum. In a computing lesson, Year 6 pupils with SEND explained confidently how the school would create a new record in its database, using the example of a new pupil in school. Senior school pupils use ICT confidently to extend their work and to undertake independent research across many aspects of the curriculum. Pupils benefit in their development of ICT skills from online platforms used by the school to communicate with them as well as multi-media curriculum material developed by staff. Pupils appreciate the ease of communication this allows them with their teachers and the level of information they have about their work.
- 3.11 Junior school pupils develop good study skills across the topic-based curriculum. They undertake successfully individual and collaborative extended pieces of work involving discussion, research and various writing and speaking skills. Senior pupils apply their skills confidently across the curriculum. They make good progress in their learning because their time is guided well by staff. Older pupils have a clear understanding of the need to extend their learning beyond what they have been taught in lessons. Pupils use their research skills in some subjects including history, religious studies (RS) and biology. Here, research topics are set with pupils returning some weeks later with successful reports and presentations. Pupils from across the senior school demonstrate good analytical skills. Pupils in GCSE English analysed the use of imagery successfully to show their understanding of the feelings of a poet who was writing in her second language. Pupils make good use of the wide range of opportunities to use higher-order thinking skills presented by the scientific curriculum.
- 3.12 Pupils succeed in a wide range of academic and other achievements. Junior pupils regularly gain entry to academically selective independent senior schools, often with scholarships. Some senior pupils progress to other schools and colleges with high entry requirements after GCSE examinations while others move on to sixth-form colleges for vocational courses. Across the school, pupils gain successes in art and writing competitions and take part successfully in a very wide range of activities run by the school. Some represent the school in debating competitions. Pupils engage with external associations in order to further their individual talents and the school supports and enables pupils who are training at academies for football, tennis and ice-hockey. A large number of pupils perform at high levels in martial arts. Currently individual pupils are members of national show jumping and swimming squads, and a competitive ice hockey club. One is an ambassador for a national climate change organisation. These pupils benefit from the school's support in developing bespoke timetables to allow them to take part and keep up with their work. The school successfully achieves its aims to enable pupils to thrive and fulfil their academic potential.
- 3.13 The attitudes of the pupils to their work are excellent. Pupils in the junior school happily work independently and have strong relationships with their peers and teachers. Senior school pupils demonstrate a strong desire to learn, they are happy, confident and enjoy their learning. Older pupils work independently with the supportive direction of staff and demonstrate a passion for collaborative learning. All pupils support each other in their work. The peer-mentoring system that exists within houses nurtures independence across the senior school.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.14 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.15 Pupils of all ages are extremely confident and sociable. They have good communication skills and these attributes result from the extremely good support they receive from staff. Pupils speak highly of their excellent relationships with staff and senior leaders and benefit from the guidance they receive in developing their skills across the curriculum. Year 6 pupils spoke about how they had confidence to redraft their poems successfully after collaborating with their peers and teachers to enhance their vocabulary and structure. Pupils take responsibility for meeting the high standards for work set by the school and confidently work independently or in groups to improve their work. In the senior school, pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and divergent starting points 'find a home' in the school in

the words of Year 10 pupils. Some have had difficult experiences in previous, usually much larger schools but said that they now feel safe and are able to be themselves with no fear of ridicule. Year 8 pupils talked about the confidence and independence they have learned through taking part in activities such as musical theatre. Pupils develop high levels of self-knowledge and self-confidence which are evident in their enjoyment of lessons and free time, in their ability to persevere and the way they take responsibility for their learning and work. The individual learning pathway prepared for each pupil ensures that they have a clear understanding of how to improve their learning.

- 3.16 Pupils have strong decision-making skills, making choices which result in excellent behaviour throughout the junior school. Lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) enable pupils to make strong personal decisions about their lifestyles. Year 6 pupils talked about the value of the programme which raised awareness of drug and alcohol abuse and gave them strategies to enable them to be resilient in the face of peer pressure. Senior pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of the consequences of their own actions. The pupils value the timetabled 'issues' subject, the senior school's PSHE programme, which very successfully provides them with wide understanding of issues both locally and further afield. The pupils spoke with confidence when explaining how they understand and plan the next steps in their lives. They described how school has helped them to understand their own journey so far and to make decisions for the future. In this way the school fulfils its aims to prepare pupils for life.
- 3.17 Pupils develop profound spiritual awareness. They demonstrate a considerable knowledge of world faiths and confidently reflect upon the traditions and ceremonies with maturity and respect. This results in part from the involvement of parents, who represent many faiths and support the pupils' learning by giving talks, leading discussions and running related activities such as cooking. In discussion, junior pupils listed their personal priorities as family and friends and then being healthy. Pupils relate to certain places such as gardens at home as being 'happy places' where they can relax. The children in EYFS stopped to appreciate the spring blossom on their way to visiting the Year 6 exhibition whilst also looking at mini-beasts. They reflected thoughtfully on how we must all care for the creatures in our world. Older pupils understand that their actions in aspects of everyday life can affect others. The school's assembly programme is broad and pupils lead assemblies on topics including religion, climate issues, political and abstract ideas. Pupils' work in geography and religious studies on migration pressures and political bias shows depth of understanding and personal responses.
- 3.18 Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They consistently make good moral choices about how to co-operate and interact with others. They show a great respect for staff and there is a strong understanding that members of the school community have a responsibility to look after each other. Relationships are a genuine strength of the school. The junior pupils demonstrate independent and responsible behaviour in lunchtime routines when collecting their lunch from the kitchen on trays and then returning to their classroom to eat with their teachers. Here they engage in friendly and interesting conversation, both with their peers and their teacher. Senior pupils have a well-defined understanding of respect. There is a deep understanding of fairness by pupils that underpins their approach to learning and to relationships. This is enabled by the school's effective behaviour management system which is supported by pupils. In the pupil questionnaire responses, whilst almost all pupils thought that the school expects pupils to behave well, a small minority did not agree that pupils are kind and respect each other or that the school treats pupils fairly. All pupils spoken to expressed the view that pupils are very respectful towards each other and that the whole community of the school is kind. This was commented on as a highlight of joining the school by a number of new pupils. All behaviour records show that the school has clear disciplinary procedures which are used appropriately and fairly although some recent changes to the procedures were evidently not clearly understood by pupils when discussing sanctions with inspectors.
- 3.19 Pupils speak of a strong family feel to the school because of its small size. They work closely together to achieve common goals, for example pupils instigated a 'dress up in Ukraine colours day' to raise

money for the humanitarian appeal. Senior pupils speak of working for their houses, playing in teams and running events. They said that they collaborate in lessons to achieve goals and take responsibilities seriously, such as where Year 9 pupils work as mentors to those in Year 8. Older pupils act as book buddies for younger pupils. Members of the school council consult their forms effectively and put forward suggestions to the head, reporting back on successes.

- 3.20 Pupils play a central role in suggesting ideas and promoting events in an extensive programme of support for local and national charities. In the junior school the annual 'Sparkle' week results in pupils undertaking random acts of kindness to raise awareness of mental health and well-being. Pupils engage in litter picking, tidying up, writing kind messages to friends and family, and making biscuits for a local care home. Those in Years 1 and 2 made posters for vaccine centres thanking them for their hard work. Senior pupils display a well-developed degree of social awareness. The pupils work collectively in houses, smaller groups and as a whole school to support charities and outside organisations such as Macmillan, Cancer Research and Children in Need. Pupils undertook a 24-hour danceathon in aid of Sports Relief. Many undertake local commitments as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, making a valuable contribution.
- 3.21 The school celebrates other cultures. Pupils' understanding and respect for cultural difference is extended through the formal taught curriculum and assemblies, tutor time and house time. Where EYFS children arrive from overseas, the register is taken in their native language and children learn simple phrases in the language to help the newcomer settle in. Pupils show their understanding in a variety of ways, for example writing in Year 6 with great empathy about the holocaust and the struggle of Jews in Nazi Germany. In discussion pupils were adamant that there is no racism in the junior school and that everyone feels safe and respected at the school. This is confirmed by inspection evidence. Senior pupils show the highest regard for diversity. They are welcoming, accepting of all and the school embodies a culture of appreciation and empathy regardless of background. Pupils from a number of different backgrounds said how easy it had been to settle into the school. The school embodies its ethos of kindness, honesty, resilience and hard work, successfully enabling the pupils to develop respect for themselves, the school and the community.
- 3.22 Junior pupils said that they choose to stay healthy and understood the importance of healthy eating and exercise. They explained that they have learned to make good choices about physical health in their science and physical education lessons. Pupils are well aware of the importance of good mental health and talked about how to tell if someone in a class is feeling upset and needs a friend to talk to. Pupils learn about online safety from the EYFS onwards and can clearly outline the dangers of online communication and how to protect themselves. Pupils talked positively about the impact on their health of trained listeners in school and how mental health had become easier to understand during the pandemic lockdown. Older pupils have an excellent understanding of how to maintain a healthy mind and body; they appreciate the need to keep a balance in life. They enjoy and gain good development from the excellent opportunities for sporting involvement. In PSHE lessons, pupils reflect effectively on their behaviour and develop strategies for the future.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions 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 assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Gwen Caddock	Reporting inspector
Ms Rachel Pairman	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Mr Christopher Emmott	Team inspector (Former head, ISA school)
Dr Jonathan Ewington	Team inspector (Assistant head, SofH school)