



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Regulatory Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**Highgate School**

**December 2021**

## Contents

<b>School's Details</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>1. Background Information</b>		<b>4</b>
About the school		4
What the school seeks to do		4
About the pupils		4
About the inspection		4
<b>2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection</b>		<b>6</b>
Preface		6
Key findings		7
PART 1 – Quality of education provided		7
PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils		7
PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils		7
PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors		7
PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools		8
PART 6 – Provision of information		8
PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled		8
PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools		8
Additional information on particular areas of focus		8
<b>3. Educational Quality Inspection</b>		<b>11</b>
Preface		11
Key findings		11
Recommendation		11
The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements		11
The quality of the pupils' personal development		14
<b>4. Inspection Evidence</b>		<b>17</b>

## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Highgate School			
<b>DfE number</b>	309/6001			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	312765			
<b>Address</b>	Highgate School North Road London N6 4AY			
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 340 1524			
<b>Email address</b>	office@highgateschool.org.uk			
<b>Head</b>	Mr Adam Pettitt			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Bob Rothenberg			
<b>Age range</b>	3 to 18			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	1903			
	<b>EYFS</b>	60	<b>Juniors</b>	542
	<b>Seniors</b>	922	<b>Sixth Form</b>	379
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 November to 3 December 2021			

## 1. Background Information

### About the school

- 1.1 Highgate School is an independent co-educational day school situated in Highgate village, London. Its pre-prep school, which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), junior and senior schools are governed as a single foundation.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1565 by Sir Roger Cholmeley as a grammar school for boys; the junior school was opened in the nineteenth century and the pre-prep in 1993. The school began to admit girls in 2004. It is based on two sites within walking distance of each other.
- 1.3 During the period March to August 2020, the whole school remained open only for vulnerable children and children of key workers. During this period of closure the school provided remote learning materials for all pupils.
- 1.4 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.5 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.6 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children in the Nursery year and vulnerable pupils or the children of key workers received remote learning provision at home.
- 1.7 In 2020 and 2021, public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed grades and teacher-assessed grades were awarded. Since 2020, EYFS profiles have not been externally moderated.

### What the school seeks to do

- 1.8 The school seeks to provide a broad, intellectual education complemented by many opportunities to develop human qualities through service and co-curricular activities in a framework of high-quality, responsive pastoral care. It aims to ensure that pupils use their minds and voices to make a difference to the world around them.

### About the pupils

- 1.9 Pupils come from a range of professional, academic and business backgrounds, which reflects the local community. National standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils is above average for those taking the tests. The school has identified 334 pupils in the pre-prep, junior and senior schools as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), mostly mild dyslexia and dyspraxia. They receive support in the classroom or individually and in small groups. There are currently no pupils who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Of the 234 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), 15 receive classroom or individual support. The needs of the large number of pupils identified by the school as very able are met through extension tasks and wider challenges, including an invited programme for academic prize winners in the senior school.

### About the inspection

For this inspection, the DfE requested a particular focus on ISSR Part 1 (curriculum, relationships and sex education, teaching and assessment), Part 2 (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development) and Part 3

(welfare, health and safety) to ensure that pupils are safeguarded effectively, that the quality of education provided fosters a culture of positive relationships and respect for protected characteristics, and that the school implements a curriculum for relationships and sex education which meets the requirements of the statutory guidance.

Details relating to this particular focus can be found at the end of the Regulatory Compliance section under the heading 'Additional information on particular areas of focus' beginning on page 8.

## 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 statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. 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 REGULATORY COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The 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.

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](#).

**COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.**

## 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 and pre-prep schools, 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 2020 and 2021, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2020 and 2021 have confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 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 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.
- 2.7 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 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**

- 2.12 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.13 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**

2.14 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.

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

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.16 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.

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

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.18 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.

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

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.20 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.

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

## **Additional information on particular areas of focus**

### **Quality of education provided – curriculum [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2; NMS 10] and relationships and sex education [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A]**

2.22 The personal, health, social and economic education (PSHEE) curriculum effectively reflects one of the school's aims and encourages respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equality Act. The curriculum is successfully implemented. In line with statutory guidance for relationships and sex education (RSE) there is a planned programme, with topics being covered at an appropriate age and ability level. Pupils in the pre-prep and junior school have a weekly PSHEE lesson, of which relationships education is a part. This effectively covers the required content. In Years 7 and 8, there is a formal PSHEE lesson once every two weeks. In addition,



relevant material is included in the morning break tutor slots, the weekly year group assembly or the weekly religious service, and in off-timetable lessons. Required content for RSE is integrated into the schemes of work, except for some aspects of sex education which are taught separately by the biology department. In Year 9, pupils participate in a PSHEE carousel delivered by specialist teachers, and this includes topics appropriate to age from the RSE curriculum. Years 10 and 11 pupils have fortnightly tutor-led PSHEE lessons, and participate in a carousel taught by subject specialists in RSE. Sixth-form pupils participate in a life skills carousel made up of four modules, each containing four lessons taught by subject specialists, and a fortnightly bystander intervention programme. Year 13 pupils have fortnightly PSHEE lessons.

- 2.23 The policy for RSE is available to parents on the school's website, and senior leaders have consulted parents, pupils, staff and governors and taken their views into consideration. The schemes of work allow pupils to develop their understanding in this area and is sufficiently flexible to respond to any current issues. In particular, as a result of the issues highlighted by reports about the school in the media and in open letters, there has been a sustained and effective focus on mutual respect and the understanding of experiences of those of a different gender. In the context of the issues reported, the school's PSHEE and RSE programmes have been further enhanced by regular communications with pupils, assemblies, discussion with relevant school societies, and additional seminars run by professionals on the subjects of equality, everyday sexism and other related areas. Many of these focused on behaviour out of school, especially at weekend parties. Pupils have led talks with younger pupils on responsible behaviour and positive relationships. In discussions, pupils expressed their full support for the increased focus and arrangements.

### **Quality of education provided – teaching [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 3]**

- 2.24 Teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of PSHEE and RSE programmes. Pupils are involved in the content but seek to use their own experience to further plan the content and delivery of the programme. Teaching does not undermine the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; nor discriminate against pupils contrary to Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5]**

- 2.25 The school's culture actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. None of the substantial number of pupils involved in discussions could recall a behavioural incident based on racial or religious difference although the school's records did highlight a small number of them. In the context of the visit, the school is highly successful in enabling pupils to develop their self-knowledge and to distinguish between right and wrong; and in encouraging them to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Act. In particular, the school has taken specific, successful steps to address the issues highlighted in reports in the media.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]**

- 2.26 The school's safeguarding policy and arrangements meet the requirements of statutory guidance and are implemented effectively. They are supplemented by additional policies which outline the code of conduct for staff, whistleblowing, e-safety, and safer recruitment of staff. Records of safeguarding incidents frequently cross refer to particular paragraphs in statutory guidance.
- 2.27 The school keep records and analyses instances of sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online, to identify patterns and intervene early to prevent abuse. Records show clear and timely action and immediate liaison with appropriate local safeguarding partners. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and other pastoral leaders are aware of the range of support available to children and young people who are victims or who perpetrate harmful sexual behaviour, and when appropriate such

support is activated. Incidents of harmful sexual behaviour by pupils are dealt with appropriately and recorded effectively. There is a culture of referral of concerns at all levels amongst staff and pupils. Senior pupils have received safeguarding training, and the training for all staff and DSLs is up to date and in line with local expectations. Staff and governors have been trained effectively to understand, identify and how to respond to sexual harassment; sexual violence, including online sexual abuse; and peer-on-peer sexual abuse.

### **Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9] and bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10]**

- 2.28 Evidence from questionnaires, discussions with pupils, and other documentation supplied shows that there is little bullying in the school, but when it does occur it is dealt with effectively. The behaviour policy follows non-statutory guidance, and the approach, which includes the implementation of effective sanctions if appropriate, reinforces a culture where sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are not tolerated. In their responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, a very small minority of pupils responded that pupils can be unkind or disrespectful to each other. In discussions, some female pupils in one year group reported that, despite the strong messages from the school, a very few male pupils do not treat them with respect, and that the consequent sanctions could be seen as ineffective. Inspection evidence shows that sanctions are effective and the school is taking appropriate action to reduce any such instances. The overwhelming majority of pupils agreed that the school expects them to behave well.

### **Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]**

- 2.29 The school's leadership has made an immediate, detailed and far-reaching response to the issues reported in different media. It has liaised effectively with local safeguarding partners and reported any allegations to police. It has communicated to good effect with the school community: pupils, parents, alumni and staff. The school's feminist society hosted a well-attended meeting during which senior members of the school's pastoral team, including the director of inclusion, answered pupils' concerns. The school launched a listening exercise through an anonymous feedback form which was completed by current and former pupils, current and former staff, parents and carers of current and former pupils.
- 2.30 The school's leadership asked the governors to commission an immediate independent review of the allegations made and the way in which the school responded. This was done and its scope was effective. An inquiry was commissioned by the local authority and local safeguarding partners report that the school has been open and unreservedly co-operative. Senior pupils at the time of the media reports wished to show solidarity with the anonymous survivors of sexual abuse, and their actions, including a walk-out, were fully supported by the school's leadership. Evidence from discussions, documentation and correspondence shows that the school continues to retain as a priority its engagement with the issues raised. School leaders and senior pupils have drawn up an anti-sexism and sexual violence plan.

### 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 excellent.

- Pupils show exceptional attitudes to study and scholarship, collaborate effectively with one another and staff, and consequently achieve at extremely high levels in public examinations and external competitions.
- Pupils throughout the school have exceptional levels of knowledge, skills and understanding for their age in all subject areas and can apply them effectively to unfamiliar problems.
- Pupils develop excellent creative and performance skills in music and drama as they move through the school, and achieve exceptionally high levels of execution in both art and technology.
- Pupils' communication skills are exceptional: younger pupils write using well advanced vocabulary and structure for their age; and senior school pupils speak with passion, listen critically, and argue persuasively.

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

- Pupils show exceptional respect for, and appreciate diversity within the school and wider community, and their own and other cultures, demonstrating sensitivity and tolerance to those from different backgrounds and traditions.
- Pupils develop a high level of social skills from an early age, are unfailingly supportive of fellow pupils, and enthusiastically collaborate on projects in school and the local community.
- Pupils have an acute moral awareness built on clear guidelines in the junior school and an encouragement of debate and challenge as they move into the older year groups.
- Many pupils have an understated but well-embedded awareness of the positive experience caused by the unexpected and intangible.

#### Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes the school might wish to:

- extend opportunities for pupils to review and contribute to the RSE and PSHEE curriculum.

#### The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils' attainment at A level and in the Pre-U examinations was consistently high during the years 2017–2019, with approaching half of results achieving an A\* or distinction (D1 or D2) respectively, and over three-quarters at least an A grade or any distinction. Results of the centre and teacher-assessed

grades in 2020 and 2021 maintain this strong record. This extremely high level of attainment is a consequence of the pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and a respect by pupils, articulated in their responses in the pre-inspection questionnaire, for teaching that shows a high level of subject knowledge. Pupils respond positively to an approach that promotes learning and scholarship for all in preparation for higher education. Almost all pupils achieve offers of places at universities in the UK and worldwide, or art and music colleges, with highly selective entry requirements.

- 3.6 Results in GCSE similarly reflect the effectiveness of equally high quality of learning and teaching. During the three-year period to 2019 the very large majority of results were at the highest two grades, or equivalent, and over half at the highest level. In 2020 and 2021, in the centre- and teacher-assessed assessments, this attainment was sustained. About a third of pupils achieved ten or more GCSEs at the highest grade. Data analysed show that even from their high starting points, at both GCSE and A level almost all pupils achieve significantly higher examination grades than others of similar ability. This represents rapid progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school. In the questionnaires the very large majority of pupils stated that their knowledge and skills improve in most teaching, with which inspection evidence concurs.
- 3.7 Data show that pupils with SEND make progress in line with their peers. In the questionnaires, the very large majority of parents stated that their child's individual educational needs are met effectively. This is confirmed by evidence from teaching and learning and pupils' comments to inspectors. Senior school pupils spoke of the value and style of the support they are given for any specific educational difficulty. Junior school pupils said that their self-assessment at the beginning and end of topics enables them to make significant progress. All pupils defined as having EAL communicate effectively in English, and they make progress in line with others.
- 3.8 Pupils demonstrate exceptional skills, knowledge and understanding. In the pre-prep and junior school pupils make rapid progress, they show linguistic skills well above those expected for their age. In Spanish, they drew from a wide knowledge of vocabulary to construct sentences, and in English confidently used alliteration, simile and subordinating conjunctions to create more complex sentences when writing a letter. Pupils in GCSE English demonstrated excellent skills when analysing the poem *Those Winter Sundays*. They recognised the tone and impact of the poem along with nuanced understanding of key words and the imagery. Senior school pupils regularly win national titles in linguistics Olympiads and language essay competitions, perform modern foreign and classical language plays to high standard and annually write and publish language reviews. Pupils show excellent understanding of issues in the humanities. Junior school pupils accurately recalled details of the Lindisfarne raids and showed embryonic skills in interpreting written evidence. Sixth-form pupils annually win university essay competitions in economics or the humanities. Some showed acute understanding of the economic issues of expanding trade blocs. All pupils develop good, and in many pupils exceptional, physical skills. School teams are regularly county or regional champions in a wide range of sports, and individuals are national titleholders on land and in water, supported by the school's high-performance programme.
- 3.9 Pupils have strong mathematical skills which they apply confidently in other subjects. Pre-prep children added quantities of money accurately using techniques beyond expectation for their age. They then applied them to calculate the coins needed to buy a Hanukkah artifact. Junior school pupils accurately calculated perimeters and areas of irregular polygons, and in science confidently used graphs to demonstrate the variation of magnetic fields. As they move through the school senior pupils build on these secure foundations, become fluent manipulators of number and algebra, showing excellent skills in statistics, calculus and problem solving. Over half of the senior school annually enter a national mathematics competition, culminating in the British Maths Olympiad, and a high number are awarded a gold medal or distinction.
- 3.10 Pre-prep children rapidly develop in science, including an awareness of how to learn from observation; they showed practical skills well beyond expectation for their age in dissecting an identified animal. They used technical terms with accuracy, and at the end of a lesson confidently deduced whether

animals were herbivores or omnivores from the type of teeth and bone structure. Skills continue to develop, and by the end of the junior school pupils were observed to be using pipettes, discussing relative acidity and alkalinity, and the *ph scale*, and applying their knowledge to digestion in the human body. Senior school pupils use scientific apparatus with dexterous confidence, record and use data and articulate conclusions with precise scientific vocabulary. Pupils have a consistently strong record in international and national physical and biological science Olympiads, and in the last year won a worldwide physics research and problem-solving competition.

- 3.11 From entry to the school and throughout the junior school, pupils develop the ability to assess their own design projects, for example in the creation of a pop-up book. Senior school pupils have outstanding design and technological skills. The high standard of finished product reflects their exposure to and use of sophisticated technology, often including robotics or programming. Discussions with pupils and their work display their strong aptitude for identifying problems and creating solutions, for example in the design of a robot to deliver aid to earthquake survivors. Pupils are regularly awarded Arkwright scholarships to study engineering, are highly placed in national engineering competitions and invariably are highly ranked in a world robotics competition.
- 3.12 Junior school pupils showed excellent creative responses in planning for a weaving project, choosing colour and texture to reflect mood. Senior school artists produce work of exceptional standard, with the number of portfolios that are based on sustained drawing a strength. Pupils root their creations in personal experience and draw on the approach of professional artists, for example using Ewan Gibbs' pixelated style to explore the desolation of public space during lockdown. Strong performance skills were evident at all ages during choir, orchestral, band and drama rehearsals. Many pupils reach a high standard in performance by the time they leave, gaining distinctions in external music and drama examinations, including at diploma level, or performing in national youth choirs, orchestras, or drama groups. A consistent number go on to become professional actors.
- 3.13 Pupils display exceptional communication skills in their writing, speaking and listening. Junior school pupils write with invention, using exceptionally advanced vocabulary and structure for their age, for example in describing a magical heath in response to a study of *Macbeth*. Senior pupils' work reveals numerous examples of excellent levels of written communication, across a range of subjects including near flawless and precise writing in Russian. All pupils are outstanding oral communicators. They speak with passion, listen critically, and argue persuasively. In discussions about the school's reaction to media reports during the summer, senior pupils spoke with balance, perspective and openness, choosing examples to support argument, but rarely conjecturing beyond their own experience. In formal settings they present character: GCSE pupils performing a short extract from *The Crucible* displayed exceptional vocal and physical skills to immediately create tension. The level of pupils' reading is excellent throughout the junior school, and in discussion many pupils of all ages identified the library as an area that had stimulated their appreciation of fiction.
- 3.14 Information, communication and technology is used by all pupils effectively to support their learning, and in the questionnaires both pupils and parents commented on the high quality of the online provision during the period of remote learning. All pupils showed a good competence in basic coding, and teams have won national cyber competitions. Pupils studying formal computing or technology courses demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of programming techniques.
- 3.15 The exceptionally high level of study skills exhibited by senior pupils are mirrored in the approaches of the pre-prep and junior school. At an early age, children in the EYFS can make predictions on cause and effect or hypothesise on the basis of observation. By the time they reach the senior school, pupils demonstrate reliable analytical approaches, for example, assessing the value of individual sources for historians studying the battle of Hastings. Pupils show a strong appetite for uncovering different views. For example, projects that drew on experiences of urban life or spiritual but faith-neutral spaces, showed sustained research, a thirst for further influence, and the ability to blend into a coherent finished product.

3.16 Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes towards learning. In the questionnaires a very small minority of pupils disagreed that most lessons are interesting, and occasionally teaching curbs pupils' ability to set their own pace. In their responses to the very large majority of teaching, however, pupils show initiative and independence exploring well beyond the examination specifications. Across a range of subjects, pupils articulate their own ideas, listen to others, and then work collaboratively to improve their collective knowledge. In the junior school, each pupil had contributed a piece in a colour study exercise to recreate with success John Singer Sergeant's *Gas* and Holbein's *Henry the Eighth*. Sixth formers showed independence of original thought in discussing the work of a living artist, listening carefully to others to contextualise the works of art discussed.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

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

3.18 Pupils have a clear awareness of their individuality and their place in the school and wider community of north London. They are confident, reassured and open, and their high self-esteem is based on positive reinforcement of all that they achieve in school both by their teachers and more public acknowledgment in assemblies. They have an honest awareness of their personal strengths and weaknesses and are equally as unafraid to criticise themselves as they are to challenge the behaviour and tenets of others. Over the last two terms senior pupils have avidly supported the school's response to behavioural issues reported in the media, recognising its validity and often taking the lead in collaborative action.

3.19 Pupils' strong resilience is developed from the earliest age. Children in the pre-prep showed perseverance in practising high frequency words and a keenness to improve. Junior school pupils similarly worked for long periods to perfect knot-tying skills that were crucial to a successful weaving project. In discussions, junior school pupils emphasised their belief that they can learn anything if they put their minds to it. Senior school pupils display similar approaches. They volunteer questions or observations in class respectfully and show tenacity if they do not understand concepts first or second time. The school's objective that pupils should strive for continual learning and improvement is very successfully achieved in many areas. Pupils achieving at high level in sport discussed the need for focused training and finished essays or pieces of art or technology are often the result of several drafts. The use of perceptive annotation of essays or text is a strong feature of pupils' strategy for improvement. Almost all pupils have a disciplined approach to their life in a fast-paced environment. They show confidence in and make the most of opportunities to debate and discuss their views in lessons, where teaching almost always provides ample space for this to happen. In the questionnaires the very large majority of pupils agreed that teachers knew how to help them learn.

3.20 Pupils are used to making decisions. Pre-prep children and lower junior pupils make effective choices in free-flow activities, understanding that this is not just an opportunity for random play but a chance to put skills into action. Hence pupils are well prepared to make firm decisions as they enter the junior and then senior schools. They draw on evidence and sieve opinion from fact. In written work, younger senior school pupils reflected on how they gain knowledge, to what extent they could trust their senses, and what is the nature of truth. Having formulated their own individual or corporate responses, they show no fear in addressing difficult school or wider issues. Pupils want to be involved and informed, and consequently almost all make the decision to attend the plethora of societies, clubs and lectures that take place during the school day.

3.21 Pupils have an understated but well embedded spiritual understanding. In discussions, many pupils made clear that their awareness of the non-material aspects of life was not to be inferred as a latent religious faith, whilst acknowledging that for others that might be true. Pupils identified the positive feelings experienced when listening to school choirs rehearsing, or the moment in the day when sunlight transmitted through the stained-glass windows colours the chapel floor. Others identified the collegiate activity, particularly in drama and music, or being reunited with families living overseas, as

moments that take them away from the present. In philosophy lessons, younger senior school pupils demonstrated a good understanding of the human and divine in Jesus, identifying characteristics such as eating or omniscience as respective examples. In response to the school's curriculum, able pupils of this age consider sophisticated concepts such as truth successfully, and further look for beauty in their studies of mathematics and English literature.

- 3.22 Junior school pupils have excellent moral understanding built from an early age through an appreciation of restorative justice. Pre-prep children drafted letters of apology from the Hanukkah bear who stole the latkes and through this task showed a moral understanding well beyond the norms for their age. Pupils are very respectful of one another in lessons, politely asking to borrow equipment, asking if others need help and praising one another naturally for tasks well done. In discussion junior school pupils showed good understanding of the school's RED lines of *Respect, Equality and Decency*, and cited them as important reminders about appropriate behaviour. In the questionnaires the overwhelming majority of pupils stated that the school expects them to behave well, and most that it takes bullying seriously. In discussions, some female pupils in the senior school reported that, despite the strong messages from the school, a very small number of male pupils do not treat them with respect, and that the consequent sanctions might be seen as ineffective. Leaders are taking action to address these concerns. Sixth formers demonstrated a firm understanding of ethical frameworks, highlighting the impracticalities and weaknesses of utilitarianism. In geography, GCSE pupils reflected maturely on the balance between individual and national interests.
- 3.23 Children in the pre-prep demonstrate excellent social skills for their age. They share naturally in free choice activities and collaborate in building structures or using play equipment. The emphasis on collaborative pursuits continues to develop pupils' ability to work with, rather than alongside, each other as they move through the junior school. In the senior school examples of strong collaboration with other pupils or teaching staff are ubiquitous. Pupils have a good cognisance of other's skills, support and build on other's ideas, and are flexible in response to suggestions. For example, in drama younger senior school pupils collaborated with energy and focus to perfect a performed stanza in the style of Roald Dahl, and sixth-form pupils together argued out the disconnect of the meaning of a T S Eliot poem through the disconnect of the rhyme.
- 3.24 Following reports in the media and in open letters about sexual harassment by pupils from the school, current male and female pupils decided on a strong cohesive response, including a walk out; the school's leadership supported their actions. Collaboration, for example attendance at the school's feminist or pride societies, transcends pupils' identity or gender preference, and, with the school's support, continues to be a force for continued change. In discussions about PSHEE and RSE, younger pupils reported that they value the contributions of teaching staff and external speakers but stated that the messaging given directly by older pupils was often the most effective. In parallel, senior pupils offered that they would welcome further opportunities to contribute to both planning and delivery in these areas. The mindset evident in these views shows that the school is highly successful in achieving its objective that pupils use their minds and voices to make a difference to the world around them.
- 3.25 Junior school pupils enthusiastically respond to opportunities to support others, whether as librarians, on the school's eco-council, or more informally in their approach to each other or teachers in lessons. Although stalled in extent by COVID-19, senior pupils contribute in myriad ways to their school and in the north London boroughs, often through joint music, art and sporting events with every age in the area. Almost all strata in the school raise amounts that are significant to local charities. In discussion, many senior pupils reflected on the positive personal impact of the school's link with a local academy school, and in particular the strong development gained from recognising common aspirations with those from different economic backgrounds.
- 3.26 Almost without exception, pupils respect and value diversity within society, show respect for and appreciation of their own and other cultures, and demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance to those from different backgrounds and traditions. This respect is a major strength of the school, strengthened by recent events. None of the pupils who took part in discussions could identify any behavioural incident

based on racial or religious difference, and indeed some pupils offered that they recognised the beauty and power of the school's cultural mix. In parallel, pupils are watchful of any complacency, seizing on opportunities to discuss issues. Pupils at GCSE level showed a good understanding of the challenges faced by African Americans and the prejudice against homosexuality in early twentieth century America, when analysing a poem by Langston Hughes. Sixth-form pupils recognised the contribution of disruptive artists in their own cultures, and how they can challenge society and individuals to re-evaluate their own cultural understanding. Pupils' thirst for such debate ensures that the school very successfully meets another objective to strive for continual improvement, particularly with regards to equality, inclusion and diversity.

- 3.27 Pupils have a clear view of the need to maintain mental and physical health. Pupils have a good sense of what is needed to keep physically healthy, promoting the need for regular exercise, and in the questionnaires eschewing any sugary food. Pupils develop an astute understanding of how social anxiety and mental anguish can develop through relationships with others. In discussions, pupils used their experiences to illustrate their awareness of the differences between stress and pressure, and between mental health and well-being.



## 4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. 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

Mr Stephen Cole	Reporting inspector
Mrs Vivien Sergeant	Accompanying reporting inspector
Dr Brendan Stones	Compliance team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Richard Evans	Team inspector (Former head, IAPS school)
Mr Jesse Elzinga	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Giles Hopkirk	Team inspector (Director of teaching and learning, HMC school)
Dr Tracy Johnson	Team inspector (Head, SoH school)
Mr Kit Perona-Wright	Team inspector (Assistant head, IAPS school)
Mr Bruce Whymark	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)