

Inspection of The Holmewood School

88 Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SH

Inspection dates: 17 to 19 May 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say this is 'more than just a school'. Staff really understand them. Parents and carers are delighted by the way staff have transformed their child's confidence. They value the deeply caring attitude staff show towards pupils.

Leaders have very high expectations for what pupils can achieve, both academically and in their personal development. They make sure all staff share a common view that the needs of pupils should never be a barrier to achievement. Leaders provide a strong and well-designed programme of enrichment activities which are popular with pupils. These include sporting, artistic and creative clubs run by staff who know how to make activities accessible and appealing. As a result, pupils flourish here. They are exceptionally well prepared for their futures.

Leaders and the proprietor make sure staff know how to manage and support the behaviour and well-being of pupils and check that they do so. Pupils benefit from exceptionally positive and optimistic relationships with staff. They feel safe and remember the important things they are taught to help protect them from harm or abuse. Bullying is never tolerated. Leaders use robust procedures to tackle and follow up on any discriminatory behaviour when it does occur.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils study a broad curriculum which has been extremely well designed to both meet their needs and help them to fulfil their potential. Staff skilfully use resources and adapt lessons to make sure pupils gain a wide range of qualifications, including GCSEs and A levels. They seamlessly weave into lessons strong support to help pupils, all of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), develop resilience and improve their social skills.

Leaders make sure that the order in which pupils gain new knowledge and skills helps them build on what they have learned before. Teachers, therapists and other adults work as a strong team to identify any gaps in pupils' learning and adapt activities to meet their needs. The sixth-form curriculum is very well thought out so that students achieve exceptionally well from their wide range of starting points. Students' work and attitudes to learning show how well they have benefited from what they have learned earlier in the school. Leaders maintain an excellent oversight of students' progress when they go to another college for part of their studies.

Staff explain the content of lessons very clearly to pupils because they know their subjects and their pupils very well. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 who have yet to securely learn how to read are well supported to learn phonics by skilled staff. Teachers make it a priority to go over things their pupils might find it hardest to learn, such as understanding non-literal language, very carefully and systematically.

Staff consider the individual needs of pupils very carefully. Specialist support and guidance are used skilfully to ensure pupils achieve exceptionally well. For example,

when learning coding in computing lessons, pupils use drones so that they can 'see' the code in action, making it less abstract.

Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. Discussions in lessons are vibrant and respectful. Pupils show great maturity when talking about sensitive or controversial issues, for example when considering if some people put on an act in their relationships. Staff are consistently capable of offering the support necessary to help pupils get back on track if something causes them to lose control of their emotions or behaviour.

The personal, social, health and economic education programme and the school's very thoughtfully designed 'student well-being programme' support pupils' social and emotional development very well. The statutory guidance on relationships and sex education and health education has been implemented well. Pupils become proud of who they are and deeply value the identities and views of others. Pupils' social skills are systematically improved the longer they attend the school. For example, regular 'open mic' events help build pupils' confidence to eventually speak or perform before a wider audience.

Pupils benefit from a wide and expertly organised range of opportunities for them to broaden their cultural and social experiences. Pupils in the sixth form have visited Croatia, taking responsibility for organising the self-catering arrangements in their accommodation. Cultural visits, such as one to the Royal Opera House, are planned with a particular purpose in mind. Leaders support pupils to stay in touch with one another after they leave the school. They want to protect pupils from the risk of social isolation as they become more independent and move into adulthood.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel well supported in managing their workload. They say that though the work is hard there is still 'lots of laughter'. Staff appreciate the efforts of leaders to look after their well-being, including clear guidelines about communicating about work outside normal hours.

Representatives of the proprietor maintain strong oversight of the school's work. They take account of pupils' views when deciding the next steps in the school's development. They work successfully with leaders to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.

The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors adapt safeguarding training to help staff understand how to identify and manage concerns about pupils with SEND. They are rigorous in checking how well staff understand statutory safeguarding guidance. The safeguarding policy is published on the school's website.

Leaders use safeguarding information to look for patterns and trends in concerns. This helps them decide how best to help pupils and offer support. Staff are successful in teaching pupils how to identify concerns for themselves. For example, pupils remember warning signs of unhealthy relationships and can explain how to protect their personal information when online.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	136263
DfE registration number	302/6201
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10210721
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	21
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Cavendish Education Ltd
Chair	Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Lisa Camilleri
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,120
Telephone number	020 8920 0660
Website	www.thsl.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@thsl.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 to 25 January 2018

Information about this school

- The Holmewood School is an independent special day school located in the London Borough of Barnet. Its lower school premises and administrative centre are located at 88 Woodside Park Road, London, N12 8SH. Its upper school premises, including the sixth form, are at 8a Muswell Hill, London, N10 3TD. The school does not currently use further premises at 90 East End Road, London, N3 2SY.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan for their autism spectrum disorders. They are placed in the school and funded by a range of local authorities.
- The school is part of, and governed by, Cavendish Education Ltd.
- The school makes use of several external providers of further education for some students in the sixth form, who attend them on a part-time basis with support.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- During the inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher and other leaders, including representatives of the proprietor.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, computing and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils, sampled pupils' work and visited lessons. Other subjects were also considered.
- Inspectors toured both school premises and examined a range of documents, including those related to safeguarding, the curriculum and pupils' behaviour. The views of parents and staff were considered through responses to Ofsted's surveys and those conducted by the school.
- Inspectors held telephone discussions with a representative of a local authority which uses the school for a number of its pupils and with a leader from one of the colleges which offer courses for some pupils in the sixth form.

Inspection team

Andrew Wright, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lucy Bruce

Her Majesty's Inspector

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