



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

## **Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports**

**Highfields School**

**June 2019**



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### School's Details

<b>School</b>	Highfields School			
<b>DfE number</b>	891/6000			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	528261			
<b>Address</b>	Highfields School London Road Newark Nottinghamshire NG24 3AL			
<b>Telephone number</b>	01636 704103			
<b>Email address</b>	office@highfieldsschool.co.uk			
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr Richard Thomson			
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr William Bicknell			
<b>Age range</b>	2 to 11			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	139			
	<b>Boys</b>	69	<b>Girls</b>	70
	<b>EYFS</b>	46	<b>Prep</b>	93
<b>Inspection dates</b>	04 to 06 June 2019			

## **1. Background Information**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 Highfields is an independent, co-educational day school for pupils aged 2-11 years. It was given in trust as a preparatory school in 1946 to the children of Newark. The foundation is a registered charity governed by a board of trustees. Set within nine acres of land, the buildings have been expanded during the last 50 years. Since the previous inspection in 2016, the curriculum has been broadened, assessment systems introduced, and an enrichment programme to provide additional opportunities for physical activity has been implemented.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.2 The school's aim is that pupils achieve the highest possible academic standards in relation to their age and ability, and by providing an environment where children experience a sense of pride and fulfilment that comes from working to their full potential. The school seeks to develop strong foundations for pupils' future development, academically, socially and emotionally, so that they will go on to enjoy and lead a happy and fulfilling life. It endeavours to ensure that pupils are polite, confident and well rounded.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.3 Pupils come from predominantly professional and business families, living within a 20-mile radius of the school. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability profile of the school is above average compared to those taking the same assessments nationally. The school has identified 17 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom one has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. English is an additional language (EAL) for six pupils, who receive additional support as required.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

**This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. 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. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. In addition, the standards relating to XYZ are also included. 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 full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets almost all of the required 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. In order to meet all the standards, the school should take immediate action to remedy the 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.
- 2.6 **The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

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

- 2.7 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that generally pay due regard to current statutory guidance. However, this is not always followed with regard to gaining references from previous employers.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 **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 are met but those in paragraph 7 (safeguarding) are not met.**

#### Action point 1

- **the school must ensure that during the appointment of staff references are obtained in line with current statutory guidance [paragraph 7 (a) and (b); EYFS 3.4, 3.9].**

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

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

2.12 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.

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

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

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

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

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

2.16 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

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

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

2.18 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.

**2.19 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.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

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

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Explorers and Adventurers	Nursery
Navigators	Reception

## Key findings

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

- The progress that pupils make from the EYFS through to Year 6 is excellent and reflects carefully structured and rigorous curriculum.
- Close individual attention to all pupils, including SEND, EAL and the most able, and for those pupils who need social and emotional support ensures that all pupils make excellent progress.
- The attitude of the pupils to their learning is exceptional; there is a sense of enjoyment in learning, endeavour and a strong work ethic instilled throughout the school.
- Pupils achieve considerable success in a range of sports and performing arts, due to the opportunities that they have, the encouragement that they receive and the celebration of success.

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

- The moral understanding and behaviour of the pupils are outstanding: they have a very clear understanding of right and wrong, reflected in the uniformly kind and supportive role models they see in all their teachers.
- Pupils' abilities to collaborate with one another are excellent and provides them with invaluable skills for life, in large part due to the listening culture within the school.
- There is a very strong commitment throughout the school to the importance of every individual contribution to the well-being of others, both in school and in the community beyond. This is nurtured constantly, so that it has become instinctive in all the pupils.
- Pupils show a well-developed sense of self. They are articulate and confident and understand how their behaviour may impact their future progress. Pupils show a considerable sense of responsibility for themselves and their learning, which prepares them extremely well for the next stage of their lives.

## Recommendation

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

- Developing pupil responses to marking, to help them understand how to improve their own learning and performance even further.

## The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements

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

3.5 Pupils make excellent progress due to the broad curriculum and carefully planned lessons that consider the needs of all. Pupils with SEND and EAL make good and often rapid progress due to the highly effective support that they receive, and the most able pupils are challenged through use of harder work, often involving problem solving. Children in the EYFS make progress that is in line with their abilities, and data from widely used tracking systems show that older pupils make rapid progress compared to others taking the same tests nationally. This is corroborated by the work seen in work in books and classwork. Older pupils are highly successful in entrance examinations to a range of schools, and a high number achieve scholarships in academic and in other areas.

- 3.6 Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills across all areas of learning are excellent, through well-developed learning behaviours and approaches to learning that are consistent across all subjects. Pupils can transfer their skills between subjects with confidence. Across the curriculum, pupils demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and a willingness to take risks or make mistakes in order to make improvements. Younger pupils in a science lesson were able to explain clearly why it was night in the UK while it was day in Australia. They were able to complete a summary in writing of their observations and the reason for them, incorporating 'wow' words in their writing. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed a lively Theory Club, preparing for their music theory exam, and showed a secure understanding of clefs, key signatures and major keys, and could identify degrees in different scales. In a games lesson, older pupils demonstrated a good understanding of technique when throwing javelins, due to the well-planned teaching and the excellent focus of pupils on their learning. Evidence of pupils' work throughout the school shows that they are acquiring strong skills in subjects across the curriculum, which they are able to transfer across different subject areas, although they do not always respond effectively to teacher's comments in books.
- 3.7 Pupils are excellent communicators. They engage well with the adults around them and with their peers and are respectful, and happy to share with great enthusiasm what they are doing. Pupils of all ages express themselves in an astute, informed and articulate manner. In an English lesson, older pupils worked hard for an hour to produce poems to share, including *Cats* by Eleanor Farjeon and *The Witches' Spell* from Macbeth. They were able to include performance and the use of voices and physical theatre incorporating suggestions on how to make their poems engaging. Younger pupils in an English lesson were able to work effectively in pairs collecting sounds from around the school for their poems, such as the creaking of the stairs. They were all able to translate the sounds they had collected into a verse of poetry which they were then able to share with the rest of the class. The most able pupils were given the opportunity to produce their own rhymes, which was a challenging exercise but which they persevered at. There is a very high level of peer-to-peer communication within the school, as pupils work collaboratively in most lessons.
- 3.8 Pupils show well developed numeracy skills, both in the lessons and in the outcomes of tests and examinations. They are confident to try their best in mathematics lessons, free from fear of failure, across the whole school. Often, pupils can transfer their numeracy skills into other areas of the curriculum. Younger pupils were able to apply halving and doubling to different problems including the number of windows in a castle, the number of sweets needed to share between two people and some were able to identify that an odd number of sweets could not be shared fairly but the last sweet would also have to be cut in half. Work in books throughout the school showed clear evidence of strong progression at every ability level, including SEND pupils.
- 3.9 Pupils use ICT competently in a variety of ways to support their learning. Older pupils demonstrated high-level competence and enthusiasm in using ICT as a tool to present ideas in an alternative format to writing and in registration period pupils used tablet devices effectively to research the questions that they had posed as a team when investigating a problem-solving sheet. Younger pupils were busy and engaged whilst using tablets in an art lesson, which they used with great independence.
- 3.10 Study skills are taught from an early age, with consistent emphasis on using independent and transferable self-help strategies, which pupils use increasingly as they progress through the school. Pupils show a wide range of approaches to their learning and, in general, are able to articulate clearly what they need to do to make further improvement, showing an ability to think about their thinking. They are able to transfer skills between maths and science lessons and 'thinking starters' to the day help promote higher order skills of analysis and hypothesis, as pupils tackle problems in teams. Pupils were able to make suggestions for what would happen when piles of sweets were divided in two or halved. They started with small, even numbers and extended the activity to larger odd numbers.

- 3.11 Pupils achieve notably well in a range of sports and performing arts due in large part to the encouragement of the school and the celebration of success. There is a culture of achievement through challenge and risk-taking and pupils are appreciative of the breadth of opportunity, for example through the Active Enrichment programme, and the chances that they get to take part in activities such as sailing and golf. Achievement is inclusive, for example every pupil gains sailing qualifications by the time they leave school, and many pupils achieve highly in external drama examinations. Pupils are highly successful in their achievements outside the formal curriculum.
- 3.12 Pupils have exceptional attitudes to learning. They demonstrate highly developed learning behaviours and are attentive, engaged and responsive, sustaining focus and effort. Throughout the school, pupils consistently demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively and take leadership in their learning. In the EYFS children learning in the woodland environment were completely engaged and absorbed, listening attentively and responding enthusiastically to questions posed. In English lessons, pupils worked collaboratively in pairs, maintaining focus, with lively task-related discussion, responding well to open-ended questions. In a maths lesson, pupils were immediately supported by their peers to help understand a problem. Pupils throughout the school, and including those with SEND and EAL, are keen and enthusiastic to discuss their work with their peers and with adults in order to help identify areas for improvement and the next steps for improvement, such as in a ICT lesson, when all pupils were avidly working on compiling a film-clip, discussing next stages with their peers and the teacher.

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

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils show a well-developed sense of self. They are articulate and confident and understand how their behaviours may impact their future progress. Pupils show very strong self-awareness and self-esteem. Their self-discipline is very high from an early age and older pupils show a considerable sense of responsibility for themselves and their learning. Self-reflection is clearly evident on the bravery tree in the school reception hall, where pupils and staff have posted leaves that include statements about everyday bravery, with adults modelling self-awareness and pupils able to reflect on how they feel. In a poetry slam, older pupils were able to reflect on and evaluate their contributions while rehearsing in preparation for the final performance. They constantly suggested how they could adjust body language, pace, style or tone of delivery in order to make the final performance fit with the style of the poem chosen.
- 3.15 Pupils feel very confident they can make right decisions for themselves, based on a very well-embedded sense of morality and the secure knowledge they can seek guidance from their teachers whenever they need it. In discussion older pupils explained what they had learned on a financial trip about making decisions in life and that these are important for their later life. Other pupils were clear about the importance of working hard and being kind and caring to others, that they get help from the teachers to make sure that they can be the best that they can be, and the importance of this in order to gain entry to their chosen senior schools. Older pupils were articulate about their choice of senior school, aware of the differences in their profiles but at ease that they and their parents had selected the right school for them and their ability level.

- 3.16 Pupils readily give of themselves to each other, in class and in the playground, and have a well-developed spiritual understanding. Their outdoor learning and experiences in the woodland environment give them a fervour to do everything they can for conservation and ecology, and the school environment and grounds make a huge contribution to this. Pupils were able to show their knowledge of the Torah and why it is sacred. Pupils throughout the school learn about other religions in school in religious education lessons, why it is important to understand why people are different and that there are pupils in school who have different beliefs, which provides opportunities for them to reflect and to grow in their spirituality. In an assembly for older pupils about the anniversary of the D-Day landings, there was a tangible appreciation of the sacrifices that people gave and an appreciation of the lives that we have, and of the peace for which soldiers fought.
- 3.17 Pupils exhibit a very high standard of moral understanding and responsibility, and a clear view of right and wrong, reflected in the uniformly kind and supportive role models they see in all their teachers. In the lunch hall, pupils were welcoming and friendly, going out of their way to greet visitors and check they have everything needed. The standard of behaviour in the lunch hall was exemplary, with little need for adult direction or intervention. In discussion, pupils agreed that knowing right from wrong starts at home, but felt the school instils this from the time they become pupils, and heavily influences their actions and friendships. In a maths lesson, younger pupils asked before joining or leaving the circle at the start of the lesson. They are courteous and well-mannered towards one another and the adults. Throughout the school, from EYFS to Year 6, pupils demonstrate high standards of behaviour and a clear understanding of what is expected.
- 3.18 Pupils' social development and their ability to collaborate with one another is excellent and provides them with invaluable skills for life. They work together in a highly effective way, in large part due to the listening culture within the school, the numerous opportunities to develop their social skills and the importance placed on them. Pupils in a science project collaborated very well when working as a team on their 'bubble geometry'. Younger pupils were able to understand that when they were moving around the school collecting sounds for their sound collector poem that other pupils were working and they had to listen carefully while being mindful to be quiet and not disturb them. During break time, pupils played together well, whether playing football on the multi-use surface, on adventure play equipment, or in a small group reading. Pupils with SEND quickly become socially integrated within the school.
- 3.19 There is a very strong commitment throughout the school to the importance of every individual contribution to the well-being of others, which is reflected in the relationships shown between pupils. This is nurtured constantly, so that it has become instinctive in all the children. Older pupils said that undertaking school duties helped them to take responsibility and be independent. Pupils show and articulate a profound and genuine sense of pride in being part of the school and report that they develop teamwork and collaboration through the many charity days, school and camping trips that are arranged.
- 3.20 Pupils show a highly developed sense of tolerance of others as evidenced in how they support each other during lessons and pupil discussions that were conducted on the inspection. They are also able to explain how they learn from one another and how their teachers are role models for them. Pupils are comfortable to share things about themselves, such as saying their prayers and bringing in religious symbols to share with others. Pupils talked about coming to school wearing henna Mendi patterns on the backs of their hands in order to explain their beliefs and culture to others.

3.21 Healthy eating, a well-balanced lifestyle and regular exercise are promoted, and pupils show an appreciation of this. Pupils of all ages feel they have a positive attitude to healthy lifestyles and have a strong sense of mental well-being, which clubs such as yoga and meditation help to improve. The importance of, and opportunities for sports of all types contributes hugely to this, as do the excellent food choices, which help pupils to understand the importance of a varied diet. Pupils explained clearly how the school gives them delicious meals and a salad bar and that this encourages them to vary their diet. Friday afternoon activities, including sailing, golf and swimming make pupils look forward to sports and to take these up outside school.

## 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 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. 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 Brian Hays	Reporting inspector
Mrs Shona Colaco	Compliance and Team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Jane Stevens	Team inspector (Enrichment co-ordinator, ISA school)