

The Holmewood School

88 Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SH and 90 East End Road, London N3 2SY

Inspection dates

23–25 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Sixth form provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are highly effective and ensure that all the independent school standards are met. Since her arrival in April 2016, the headteacher has led sustained improvement with professionalism and determination.
- Staff share leaders' vision to 'think differently' about pupils on the autistic spectrum. They are very committed to pupils' welfare, well-being and progress.
- The curriculum is creative and focused on developing pupils' skills for life. It is especially effective in the outstanding sixth form provision. Pupils love attending their school.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils are very well prepared for their next steps thanks to the wide range of therapies, visitors, events and trips.
- Almost all parents and carers speak very positively about the school. For some, the school's work is life-changing. The vast majority would recommend the school to other parents.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The quality of teaching is good and rapidly improving. Where teaching is most effective, teachers plan creative learning activities which facilitate high levels of engagement and rapid progress in pupils' learning and personal development. Leaders are working hard to improve teaching further so that it is consistently highly effective.
- Pupils' outcomes are typically good and often better. However, the school's assessment system is new and is not yet embedded enough to show current pupils' progress over time.
- The proprietor is committed to investing heavily in the premises at the main school site. The proprietor agrees that the buildings and facilities need significant and urgent attention to provide a better learning environment for pupils.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes by:
 - overhauling the school's main buildings in line with the proprietor's ambitious plans to provide pupils with more space, resources and learning opportunities
 - using the current systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and the sharing of the existing strongest practice more regularly
 - embedding the new system to measure pupils' progress over time in all areas of the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher and her leadership team are highly effective. They regularly check compliance with all the independent school standards; this inspection confirmed they are all met.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been many changes at the school. The current headteacher took over in April 2016, and Cavendish Education acquired the school in October 2016. There have subsequently been significant changes to staffing and the curriculum. Leaders have also relocated the sixth-form provision to new, separate premises. The headteacher has also effectively raised professional expectations of staff. The multi-disciplinary staff team is united and shows great determination to meet the complex needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum.
- The curriculum is creative, engaging and tailored to pupils' individual needs. It focuses heavily on raising pupils' self-esteem and preparing them for life and the world of work after school. For example, there is particular emphasis given to rapidly developing their communication and social skills. Therapies, including occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, drama therapy, music therapy, psychotherapy and reflexology, are an integrated aspect of the majority of pupils' timetables. Some parents describe the school as providing everything their child needs 'under one roof'. The sixth-form curriculum is especially outstanding, as it prepares students exceptionally well for their next steps.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development exceptionally well; pupils are very well prepared for their lives in modern London and Britain. The integrated 'life skills' curriculum, the therapeutic offer and the weekly SMSC assemblies are all effective in teaching pupils about the world around them. A range of trips, residentials and visiting speakers enhance this understanding. For example, this year alone, pupils have visited a synagogue, the British Museum, St Paul's Cathedral and the Tate art gallery, and have enjoyed visitors' insights, such as a volcanologist and a blind world record holder. Leaders are committed to promoting equality in all respects; pupils confidently told the inspector about people's different characteristics and the unacceptable nature of discrimination and bullying.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the difference the school makes. Typical of the comments made to the inspector or on Parent View is: 'Holmewood School has made a phenomenal difference to my child's well-being and progress. Previously, he was refusing to attend school. Their focus on the well-being of the children and winning their trust is exactly right. The leadership team is exceptional, and their communication and involvement of parents is an example to others.'
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is typically good and continually improving, despite the constraints of the premises and the challenges related to staff recruitment. Leaders' monitoring of teaching is now regular and thorough. Checks on teachers' performance are robust and securely linked to pupils' outcomes and salary progression. However, leaders' actions are relatively new and yet to yield consistently highly effective teaching and outcomes. In particular, more work is required to sharpen the monitoring of teaching, to share and role-model the strongest practice even more and to embed the new assessment system.

Governance

- The arrangements for governance are effective.
- The proprietor, Cavendish Education, delegates daily governance to the director of operations, who has a secure knowledge of the school and provides regular monitoring of, and support to, the school's leaders. Governors thoroughly consider all aspects of the school's performance at their termly governance meetings. The process for managing the performance of the headteacher is extremely thorough and effective.
- The chair of the proprietorial board told the inspector of the school's intentions to overhaul the premises as rapidly as possible to provide pupils with the physical learning environment they deserve.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils feel safe in their school. They routinely and effectively learn about how to keep safe, including when online.
- The overwhelming majority of parents trust the school to keep their children safe.
- The school's designated safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable, accessible and proactive. They take safeguarding extremely seriously and facilitate a culture of vigilance.
- Staff receive ongoing training, including via the school's innovative digital communication system, to recognise signs that pupils are at risk of harm, and about the latest national, local and internal guidance.
- Leaders record any concerns, referrals and investigations meticulously and follow them up tenaciously. They regularly seek advice and guidance from professionals in the local authority's safeguarding team.
- The school's safeguarding policy fully considers the latest national guidance and is available on the school's website, alongside all the other required policies and information.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is typically good. This enables pupils, many of whom have joined the school with negative experiences of education, to re-engage with learning. Most teachers meticulously plan lessons which effectively consider pupils' individual needs, including in English and mathematics. Lessons generally develop pupils' social, academic and reading skills effectively.
- Pupils have very positive relationships with their teachers, teaching assistants and therapists. Levels of staff supervision are high and very often one-to-one. As a consequence, pupils are provided with an appropriate level of support and the management of their behaviour in class is highly effective.
- Although the timetable is highly structured, teaching is often creative and exciting. For example, in a science lesson about evolution, the teacher had planted different coloured pasta shapes outside the classroom. Pupils enjoyed the challenge to collect as many as

possible in one minute. Pupils analysed their findings and successfully drew conclusions about adaptation and camouflage. Leaders are working hard to share and facilitate the modelling of such good practice to increase the proportion of highly engaging and creative teaching across all subjects.

- The school identifies pupils' starting points in all subjects. Teachers use this information effectively to inform their planning, including for the most able pupils. However, the school's assessment system to track pupils' progress over time is new. It is therefore too early for staff to make best use of this system, which will be embedded over the coming academic year and beyond.
- Leaders acknowledge that the premises place restrictions on teaching and learning. They are working as quickly as possible with the proprietorial board to develop more modern, spacious and better-resourced premises. Staff have also begun positive work with other schools within the Cavendish Education group to share practice and moderate assessment judgements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff prioritise the raising of pupils' self-esteem and the development of their emotional well-being and social skills. A wide range of therapies, the life skills curriculum and regular visitors and learning experiences help pupils to flourish in their social, communication and personal skills. For example, a nurse has recently visited to talk to pupils about personal hygiene; a visit from the fire service taught pupils about fire safety; and another from the police informed pupils about keeping themselves safe on the streets and about online safety. Pupils' personal development, welfare and safety are taken equally seriously when they are attending external provision, such as colleges, arts centres and the farm.
- As a result, the school's pupils, all of whom are especially vulnerable, are being very well prepared to lead safe and productive lives.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in regulating their emotions and managing their behaviour. Incidents of challenging behaviour typically decrease significantly over time. This is because staff are very well trained, and therefore very effective, at spotting behavioural triggers and de-escalating difficult behaviours. As a consequence, pupils feel safe.
- Records of behavioural incidents and physical interventions, which are relatively rare, are thorough and form the basis of leaders' analysis of trends. Members of the multi-disciplinary team then work effectively together to personalise teaching and support to avoid repeated incidents.
- The school does not exclude pupils and attendance is very good overall. The overwhelming majority of pupils attend very regularly, especially in comparison to their previous placements.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' outcomes are typically good, despite their complex needs and histories of disrupted education. When they join the school, many pupils take some time before they are ready to learn. Collaboration between the school's therapy, behaviour and teaching teams helps to ensure that pupils successfully engage with learning as quickly as possible. Over time, pupils' self-esteem, emotional well-being and social and communication skills all significantly develop.
- The good quality of teaching facilitates pupils' good progress from their typically low starting points. The school's current assessment information shows that since September 2017, pupils are making generally good progress across the curriculum. Progress is especially good in reading, mathematics and computing; it is outstanding in humanities, art and life skills.
- The school's curriculum includes a number of formal qualifications. Pupils are successful in completing GCSEs in English, mathematics, science and French; A levels in history, classical civilisation and mathematics; and accredited learning in personal effectiveness.
- Last year, all leavers proceeded successfully to further education or to other schools. The vast majority transfer after Year 11 or, when they are ready, to the school's outstanding sixth-form provision.

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

- Leadership of the sixth-form provision, which now operates from its own premises, is highly effective.
- Leaders tailor provision individually; each student follows their own timetable. As a result, each student's learning programme is personalised, relevant and effective in preparing them for their life after school. A wide range of subjects is offered, including in collaboration with other settings. In addition, provision includes high-quality mentoring, work experience, careers education and programmes focused on independent living skills and personal development.
- Students work towards one of three 'flexible pathways'. For the most able, this now includes an academic study route to university. Students make excellent progress on a range of accredited courses, including at GCSE and A level. All students work towards a qualification in personal effectiveness, which teachers and therapists facilitate jointly to develop students' independent living and vocational skills.
- Students are very well prepared for life after school. To date, all leavers have proceeded successfully to further education, either to mainstream or specialist colleges.

School details

Unique reference number	136263
DfE registration number	302/6201
Inspection number	10041401

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

Type of school	Day 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	44
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	14
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Cavendish Education Ltd
Chair	Aatif Hassan
Headteacher	Lisa Camilleri
Annual fees (day pupils)	£61,800
Telephone number	020 8920 0660
Website	www.thsl.org.uk
Email address	enquiries@thsl.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–15 January 2015

Information about this school

- The Holmewood School is an independent special day school for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder and other complex needs. It is situated on two sites in the London borough of Barnet.
- In April 2016, the new headteacher took up her post. In October 2016, Cavendish Education Ltd acquired the school and became the proprietor.

- All pupils have education, health and care plans and are placed by a wide range of local authorities.
- The previous inspection was a full standard inspection in January 2015.
- The school makes use of a range of external provision in a variety of ways, including: additional academic programmes for sixth-form students at Barnet College, Barnet EN5 4AZ; collaboration to support the teaching of mathematics, design and technology, and art at Highgate School, London N6 4AY; forest school and farm workshops at Sweet Tree Farm, London NW7 4EY; agricultural studies at Capel Manor College, Enfield EN1 4RQ; arts provision for sixth-form students at The Arts Stable, London N3 2SY.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed a range of teaching jointly with the headteacher and other senior leaders at both sites. He met with a group of pupils and met pupils informally throughout the inspection, including at lunchtime. He also observed an assembly.
- The inspector had several meetings with staff, including all members of the leadership team and the governor with responsibility for operations across the organisation's schools. He also spoke by telephone with the chair of the proprietorial body.
- The inspector met with all staff and considered the 40 responses to the staff survey.
- The inspector scrutinised the school's information about pupils' progress, attendance and incidents of misbehaviour and physical intervention. He also considered a range of pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke with the local authority's designated officer for safeguarding.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including school policies, logs, evidence of staff training and information related to safeguarding and health and safety.
- The inspector considered the 35 contributions to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. He also met with two parents and spoke to another by telephone.
- The inspector toured both premises and considered a range of additional information and evidence in relation to the independent school standards.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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