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Mr Colin Hall
Headteacher
Holland Park School
Airlie Gardens
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Dear Mr Hall

No formal designation inspection of Holland Park School

Following my visit with Russell Bennett and Sam Hainey, Ofsted Inspectors, and Nasim Butt and Madeleine Gerard, Her Majesty's Inspectors, to your school on 21 and 22 January 2020, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

This inspection was conducted, at no notice, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with Ofsted's published procedures for inspecting schools with no formal designation. The inspection was carried out because Her Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the school, as concerns had been raised with Ofsted. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector was also concerned about the effectiveness of leadership and management in the school (including governance), behaviour and attitudes of pupils, and the personal development of pupils at the school.

Evidence

We scrutinised the single central record and other documents relating to safeguarding arrangements. We met with school leaders, members of staff individually and in groups, pupils, and representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. We visited classrooms in a wide range of subjects and across all year groups, usually accompanied by school leaders. We considered the responses to Parent View, the online survey completed by 200 parents and carers, including the free-text responses. We took into account surveys completed by staff. This included an independent, confidential survey commissioned by the school in 2019, completed by 88% of staff, and surveys completed for this inspection by 62 members of staff, many with extensive additional comments. We considered fully all the correspondence received before, during and after the inspection, including from former members of staff. We held telephone conversations with a parent, and representatives of the local authority, including the

safeguarding lead for schools and education in the local authority. We held informal one-to-one conversations with staff and pupils in and between lessons. We observed pupils' behaviour during the school day. We attended an assembly and observed a rehearsal of the school choir.

Having considered the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

Safeguarding is effective.

Context

The school is larger than the average-sized school, with 1,389 pupils on roll. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is slightly higher than the national average. Pupils represent a wide range of ethnic groups. More pupils than the national average speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who receive support is lower than the national average, while the proportion with an education, health and care (EHC) plan is higher.

You have been headteacher at the school for nearly 20 years. You are supported by a well-established leadership team and a long-standing chair of governors. Together you have set a clear strategic direction based on a vision that is uncompromising in its ambition to ensure all pupils receive a well-rounded, high-quality education.

Senior leaders have a strong presence around the school. We spoke to many members of staff and received written comments from many others. Wholeheartedly they expressed their respect for the school leaders' professionalism, expertise and empathy. The large majority of written responses to Parent View similarly commented on the dedication, care and enthusiasm shown by staff and leaders.

Leaders have had a strong impact on developing the breadth and depth of the curriculum offer. A sense of social justice lies at the heart of the leaders' vision to provide an appropriately challenging and ambitious curriculum for all pupils. Leaders have thought very carefully about how they organise learning programmes for pupils from Year 7 to Year 11. They ensure that pupils have a wide range of options for as long as possible. As a result, almost all pupils achieve 11 GCSEs by the end of Year 11; this is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who enter and achieve highly in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) qualification is also well above the national average. Leaders' expectations are equally high for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds. They ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND receive the right levels of support and encouragement to enable them to achieve as well as their peers.

Leaders provide pupils with very rich and diverse extra-curricular opportunities. This has a strong impact on pupils' personal development, and in particular, their character development and resilience.

The variety of after-school 'post-3pm clubs', activities and enrichment is extensive. The opportunities provided for pupils are of exceptional quality, including sporting, musical, artistic, philosophical and scientific choices. Pupils really value this offer, and uptake and participation are high overall, with over 80% of pupils engaging in at least one activity or club. You place top priority on providing pupils with opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development that they might not be able to gain other than at school. School leaders work hard to ensure that parents and pupils are engaged with the offer and see its value.

The school provides a stimulating learning environment through interesting and informative displays, and resources to support pupils' development of knowledge and skills. Pupils are respectful and appreciative of the high-quality facilities.

Pupils are focused. There is a striking consistency in the high quality of their work across year groups and bands. Pupils, responding to their teachers' example, take pride in their work, demonstrating a high level of diligence and ambition. They value their education and the opportunities the school provides, enabling them to have a wide range of choices and to be well prepared for the next stages of their education.

You and your staff set very high standards for how pupils communicate with each other and their teachers. Promoting pupils' ability to articulate clearly and develop their vocabulary and correct use of English is integral to the routine of the school. In lessons and other activities, staff check pupils' understanding of more complex terminology. They are quick to spot misconceptions and misuse of language, helpfully enabling pupils to refine their responses and improve the precision of their oracy skills.

You ensure that staff receive regular training and are clear on your high expectations of pupils' conduct. This helps to ensure a consistent response to managing behaviour. Pupils and staff know what is expected of them. Pupils conduct themselves very calmly and sensibly around the school and in lessons. Pupils told us that they are motivated to win house points and are keen to avoid any incidents that may lead to the deduction of points. They said that behaviour is typically as we have seen it during the inspection.

You and your staff do not tolerate bullying. Serious incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying, are rare. Pupils are confident that staff deal with any instances effectively and quickly. Incidents involving aggression or inappropriate language are dealt with swiftly.

Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons. Attendance rates are high for all pupils.

In recent years, no pupil has been permanently excluded. Fixed-term and internal exclusions are used appropriately. Leaders, including governors, scrutinise carefully the reason for pupils leaving the school. They are inclusive and focus strongly on supporting all pupils to achieve their best. There is no evidence that off-rolling is the basis for any pupil leaving the school.

School leaders, including governors, have carefully considered ways in which staff manage their workload. All the members of staff who spoke to us and completed the survey for this inspection were unanimous in expressing how they feel very well supported by senior leaders. They are appreciative of your acknowledgement of different styles of working and the flexible approach in which staff can manage their workload. They value your clear guidance on leaders' expectations over time, enabling them to plan their work accordingly. Initiatives such as joint planning, the careful thought given to deployment of staff and clear guidelines on the reasonable use of emails all support staff to achieve a manageable workload.

You use an extensive range of means of communication with parents, including the termly magazine, informative website, regular newsletter, and by providing planners for parents and pupils. Most parents who responded to Parent View indicated that the school keeps them well informed about their child's progress. However, some parents stated that leaders do not deal with their concerns swiftly enough. You are exploring ways in which you can ensure that all parents feel that leaders are approachable and respond effectively to any concerns.

Well-organised record keeping shows that leaders take any safeguarding concerns very seriously. Your well-trained team makes timely referrals to external agencies, seeking and acting upon advice appropriately.

Leaders have a strong awareness of local risks and safeguarding incidents, and ensure that school staff respond to them effectively. Leaders regularly review and develop their safeguarding procedures so that pupils receive the right support when needed. For example, you recognised the need to develop staff expertise, and opportunities available in school, to promote and support pupils' mental health. Counsellors work in the school and there is a 'drop-in' available for pupils if they have any worries. Younger pupils have especially benefited from and appreciate this provision. You are now rightly looking at ways of extending this facility so that older pupils, including those in the sixth form, have more opportunities for one-to-one counselling if they have any concerns.

Governors are kept well informed by senior leaders about pupils' achievement, as well as attendance patterns and any gaps in provision. They focus effectively on key priorities, such as the consideration of staff workload and the quality of education in the school. Governors have been recruited so that they can apply their professional backgrounds to specific aspects of their governance role. Their training is ongoing, driven by the knowledgeable and experienced chair of governors. She is determined

to ensure that governors are independently well informed and confident to ask school leaders the right questions about all aspects of school life.

External support

Leaders liaise efficiently and regularly with a range of outside agencies, including the local authority, to ensure that safeguarding policy and practice in the school are effective. You collaborate with other schools to provide valuable professional development opportunities for staff.

Priorities for further improvement

- Refine and adapt styles of communication with parents and carers so that all feel well informed and confident that leaders will resolve any concerns swiftly
- Ensure that the support for pupils' mental health and well-being extends more widely to older pupils, including in the sixth form.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors, the regional schools commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Kensington and Chelsea. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Carter-Fraser
Her Majesty's Inspector