

Inspection of Holland Park School

Airlie Gardens, Campden Hill Road, London W8 7AF

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 April, and 25 and 26 April 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected seven years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Turbulence in leadership and governance has destabilised this school community. Most aspects of school life, and in particular behaviour and attitudes, have declined substantially since the previous full inspection. The new governing body and interim headteacher want to make things better for pupils. However, necessary change is too slow. This is because governors and some established leaders are not working together effectively. In Years 7 to 11, standards of pupils' behaviour have fallen considerably.

Pupils and staff have welcomed the governors' intervention to stop previous behaviour management strategies that they deemed unacceptable. However, leaders have not updated behaviour management policies and procedures. This has led to a vacuum, with staff and pupils confused about how unacceptable behaviour should be dealt with. As a result, serious incidents of poor behaviour have increased, particularly outside lessons, with some spilling out into the local area after school.

Pupils said that they feel safe in school. Nevertheless, some reported that leaders do not routinely resolve incidents of bullying well enough. Even when dealt with by staff, sometimes the bullying continues.

Pupils are proud to attend this school. They are ambitious to achieve as well as they can. They said that staff expect them to work hard and that they help them when they fall behind. However, leaders enter pupils for GCSE examinations early, sometimes as soon as Year 9. This leaves pupils with a curtailed education in some subjects. In some instances, the needs and best interests of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not being catered for as well as they should be.

Students in the sixth form behave maturely and work diligently. They complete their chosen courses successfully and benefit from effective careers guidance. They contribute well to school life and the wider community.

Pupils enjoy using the school's first-rate facilities and taking part in enrichment activities.

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

Leadership is poor and unfit for purpose. Too much responsibility rests with too few leaders. These leaders lack sufficient time and capacity to ensure that all aspects of the school are managed well. They have also not recognised just how much needs improving. Recent instability in the senior leadership team has made this worse. Many remaining leaders are overstretched and overwhelmed. This means that they are not doing enough to tackle weaknesses, particularly the decline in pupils' behaviour and attitudes.

Together with the interim headteacher, the new governing body has started to take steps to address some of these deficiencies. For example, a new leadership structure is being put in place in order to build greater capacity within the school. Governors have also appointed a new substantive headteacher for September 2022.

Nevertheless, there is still a very long way to go. Some governors have had to step in to work alongside the interim headteacher and get involved with day-to-day operations. They have recently had to source support from other schools, on a temporary basis, to keep the school running.

Members of the new governing body are very experienced. They bring a range of expertise and have devoted considerable time to their work following their appointment in September 2021. New governors have quickly got to grips with serious issues that have emerged and are taking significant action to tackle these. They have a credible action plan to secure further improvement and create a more cohesive culture. However, there is dissonance between the governors, some staff (including some established senior leaders), and other stakeholders. This is because not all recognise the need for change. Some hold widely differing ideas for the future of the school. Mutual distrust between the governing body, several stakeholders (including a group of parents and carers) and the local authority is adding to disharmony in the community. Communication has largely broken down and some stakeholders, while possibly well intentioned, appear to be pushing their own agendas, thus fuelling further disharmony. All of this is a severe hindrance in securing the urgent improvements needed. Nevertheless, although acknowledging that differences in views exist, governors and the interim headteacher are determined to press ahead with making and implementing important decisions to improve the school and arrest its decline since the last full inspection.

Securing good behaviour relies too much on a small team of senior leaders, with not enough empowerment of all staff to deal with matters as they arise. Staff lack training and sufficiently well-defined strategies to support them to manage behaviour. This has led to an increase in significantly concerning behaviour around the school and in the neighbourhood. Some pupils are now behaving in a way that they would not normally do. This is, in part, linked to uncertainty and discord in the community about the future direction of the school.

In classrooms, pupils generally want to learn and are keen to succeed. They value education and work hard. On occasion, there is some low-level disruption in lessons. In most cases, teachers restore order, usually through the support of their subject leaders. Even so, there are inconsistencies, with each subject having its own approach. Pupils' experiences of behaviour management in lessons are therefore variable.

Historically, most pupils and sixth-form students have achieved well in public examinations. Leaders' curriculum thinking has, until very recently, been driven by the aim of getting all pupils to pass as many GCSE examinations as possible. This means that pupils complete some GCSE courses at the end of Year 9. This entails cramming the usual five-year content of Years 7 to 11 into just three years. This narrows pupils' education. Most pupils finish their education in music, for example,

at the end of Year 8. These arrangements are not in pupils' best interests. Pupils are unable to deepen and broaden their knowledge over time effectively. For example, in French, some Year 9 pupils are not secure in their knowledge. Staff therefore drill them into memorising exemplar examination answers. Currently, there is little provision for design and technology courses. Year 11 pupils are not receiving their entitlement to core physical education (PE). Leaders plan to make changes to the curriculum in time for the next academic year. Subject leaders have started thinking about what they want pupils to know, and they are planning for the changes. The school's programme for supporting pupils who struggle with reading is effective. These pupils get targeted support so that they can become fluent readers.

Leaders and staff make sure that pupils with SEND are included in all subjects. However, when planning their curriculum, subject leaders and the SEND team do not typically consider the needs of pupils with SEND. It is left to teaching staff to draw on general strategies. However, staff lack clear guidance from subject leaders on how to adapt these strategies. In a few cases, support from staff is not effective. This is because they do not have enough subject expertise. This holds back some pupils with SEND from learning as well as they could. Parents of pupils with SEND are not routinely involved in working with leaders who have responsibility for SEND. They are sometimes not invited to help identify their children's needs and to co-create support plans. Responses to the Ofsted survey show that a considerable proportion of parents are concerned about the provision for their children.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They benefit from good-quality training that supports them in delivering the curriculum. They break down knowledge into manageable chunks and teach these in a logical order. Teachers generally use assessments to good effect. They check how well pupils are gaining and remembering new knowledge, especially in preparing for examinations. Typically, they use assessments to adapt teaching so that any misconceptions are addressed.

Careers information, education, advice and guidance in the sixth form are effective. This supports students well in taking their next steps. It is less effective lower down the school. There is a variety of activities and experiences provided for pupils from Year 8 onwards. However, individual guidance is down to tutors, whose expertise is variable. Some Year 11 pupils only get bespoke guidance at a point that is too late to help them make well-informed post-16 choices. This is a considerable flaw, given that two thirds of pupils continue their education elsewhere.

Pupils benefit from a range of experiences outside the classroom. They are encouraged to be respectful and active citizens. For instance, they organised a staff versus pupils netball game and a bake sale, raising funds for Ukraine. Recently, leaders introduced formal lessons for personal, social, health and economic education. They have made a start in implementing the new requirements for relationships and sex education and health education. They have delivered sessions on healthy relationships and consent, for example.

The sixth form is well led and managed. The curriculum offers a range of only academic subjects, which students complete successfully. This is in line with

previous leaders' decisions to set high academic entry criteria. Students in the sixth form study with diligence and their work is of a high standard. They have opportunities to take on several leadership roles in the school and to help younger peers, such as with reading. Leaders provide students with opportunities for work experience and visits to enrich their learning and cultural capital. They organise talks and visits about apprenticeships and other careers. Most students continue their studies at university. A small number do not progress to university and leaders know what these individuals want to do, and they support them to achieve their goals.

Staff said that this year, leaders are being more considerate of their workload and well-being. They welcome the decision that delivering catch-up sessions for pupils on Saturdays and during school holidays is no longer compulsory but voluntary.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Despite the turbulence in leadership, leaders and staff make pupils' safety a priority. The safeguarding team, with training and additional support and guidance from the local authority, has the necessary knowledge to carry out its roles effectively. Arrangements are, therefore, both suitable and effective.

The new governing body has also played an important role in reviewing safeguarding arrangements. For instance, following their appointment earlier this year, governors commissioned two independent audits of current safeguarding arrangements. A third is planned for later this term. These audits did not identify concerns with safeguarding arrangements. However, they have helped leaders to identify what is working well and to establish where arrangements could be strengthened further. Leaders have acted effectively in response to the audits' recommendations.

Leaders make appropriate referrals and seek external support to help pupils with their safety and welfare.

Through the curriculum, staff help pupils to understand risks and how to seek help, for example when using the internet or how to get support in the case of an unwanted pregnancy.

Leaders have put in place appropriate recruitment procedures when appointing new staff. They make referrals to the local authority designated officer when any concerns about staff conduct arise.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leadership is poor and not fit for purpose. Too few leaders are expected to do too much. This has diminished leaders' capacity to recognise the extent of the

school's weaknesses and from taking effective action to address these in a timely and effective manner. Governors and the interim headteacher should continue to implement their plans to restructure and add capacity to strengthen leadership across the school.

- There is mistrust and disharmony between the governing body, some school leaders, some parents, the local authority and some people in the wider community. This is a serious impediment to securing the much-needed school improvement. The governing body should continue to seek ways to communicate more effectively with other stakeholders, notwithstanding the need to ensure that confidential and sensitive information is not divulged. School leaders too should play their part in behaving professionally and calming matters.
- Leaders have not put in place clearly defined, understood and coherently implemented strategies for managing pupils' behaviour. This, combined with limited leadership capacity, has had a detrimental impact on leaders' work to secure appropriate behaviour in all aspects of school life, particularly outside lessons. Leaders must review their policies and practices. They should ensure that staff understand and apply agreed approaches to securing good behaviour, including using rewards and consequences consistently and fairly. Staff need to receive suitable training and guidance, so that they can put the revised policies and procedures into practice. This includes managing incidents of bullying effectively.
- The school's current curriculum is overly focused on pupils passing GCSE examinations early. This means that pupils do not routinely gain a deep and broad enough knowledge in some subjects. Pupils do not receive their full entitlement such as in PE in Year 11. Leaders should make sure that pupils study the full curriculum for as long as possible, especially at key stage 3, so that they benefit from a rich, broad and ambitious education. They should also make sure that all pupils participate in core PE, and that this forms part of leaders' work to promote pupils' physical and mental health.
- When planning the curriculum, leaders do not routinely give enough thought to how it needs to be developed and adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. In some cases, parents are not sufficiently involved in identifying their children's needs and how their children should be supported to overcome any barriers to learning well. This means that some additional support is not well targeted to pupils' specific needs. Leaders should, as a matter of routine, put the needs of pupils with SEND at the forefront of their curriculum thinking and should involve parents more in decision-making processes.
- Careers information, education, advice and guidance in the school are not as developed as they need to be. Pupils do not receive clear information to support their post-16 choices. Some of the programme is not coherently planned. In addition, some staff do not have the right expertise to deliver one-to-one sessions and sometimes pupils get the information too late. Leaders should make sure that there is a comprehensive programme in place, delivered by well-trained experts in a timely fashion, so that pupils can make well-informed decisions about their next steps.

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

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	140134
Local authority	Kensington and Chelsea
Inspection number	10212549
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,396
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	205
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jane Farrell
Headteacher	Arwel Jones (Interim Headteacher)
Website	www.hollandparkschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 and 22 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The previous governing body resigned at the end of summer 2021. The new chair and most governors were appointed in September 2021. Some members of the governing body were appointed more recently. All governors are also trustees.
- The former long-serving headteacher left in January 2022. The interim headteacher took up post in February 2022. The governing body has appointed a substantive headteacher, who will take up post in September 2022.
- Several senior staff have been on long-term absence since the autumn term.
- The school had a no-notice, no formal designation section 8 inspection in January 2020. 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. This inspection found that safeguarding arrangements were effective.

- The school uses two registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- The trust was issued with a Notice to Improve on 2 November 2021 by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. This was specific to making improvements to financial control and governance at the trust. Actions required included the trust to consider starting the process of moving to a multi-academy trust.
- The school admits 10% of pupils each year according to their artistic aptitude.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The Office of the Schools Adjudicator ruled recently that some aspects of the current admissions criteria, including for the sixth form, are not consistent with the code of practice. The new governing body has reviewed and changed the admissions criteria.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors were made aware during the inspection that the governing body had commissioned an independent investigation to consider a range of complaints and allegations. Inspectors had sight of the full report. It is up to the governing body to decide what action it will take in response to the investigation findings.
- Inspectors were also aware that the local authority's local safeguarding children partnership has been carrying out a learning review of the school during the past few months. The report has not yet been completed.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: English, science, geography, art and languages. This involved discussions with leaders and teachers, visits to lessons, looking at examples of pupils' work and discussions with pupils and students in the sixth form. Inspectors also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with the chair, other members of the governing body and trustees. They had separate telephone conversations with three local authority representatives. The inspection team also spoke with the interim headteacher, other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, and other school leaders and staff.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including records relating to safeguarding and the checks carried out before the appointment of staff. Inspectors also looked at records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors took account of the 287 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, which included many written comments. They considered the many emails and letters they had received from parents, members of staff and other stakeholders. They spoke in person with parents who had requested a meeting with the inspection team. Inspectors also considered the 56 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and 339 responses to the pupil survey.
- Two members of the inspection team also gathered additional evidence for this inspection on 25 and 26 April 2022. This included meeting remotely with some members of the governing body.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mark Smith	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lascelles Haughton	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lisa Strong	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jude Wilson	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Kennedy	Her Majesty's Inspector

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