



Dear Parents,

22nd October 2018

As many of you will know, last month the school was inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. The inspection lasted for three days and involved a team of inspectors observing lessons and extra-curricular activities, examining large quantities of documentation and data, interviewing staff and pupils and conducting surveys. The resultant report, which spans fifteen pages, is attached hereto.

You will note that the report comprises two main parts. First, the "Focused Compliance Inspection" (pp.5-7) which concerns the school's compliance with a range of regulatory requirements contained within the Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014, and the material parts of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. This part of the report does not deal in qualitative assessment: the task of the inspectors is simply to investigate whether or not the requirements are met in each case. I am very pleased to tell you that the school was found to have met all of the requirements, which are categorised as follows:

- * Quality of education provided
- * Spiritual, moral social and cultural development of pupils
- * Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- * Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- * Premises and accommodation
- * Provision of information
- * Manner in which complaints are handled
- * Quality of leadership and management

You may gather something of the scale and thoroughness of this part of the inspection from the range of categories set out above. Although the language used to describe the findings is necessarily sparse, dealing as it does with the binary choice of "met" or "not met", being judged compliant in every areas with no further action required its a very considerable achievement, and one for which the entire staff body deserves to be warmly congratulated.

The second part of the report, entitled "Educational Quality Inspection", is, by contrast, a qualitative assessment of the school's offering (pp.8-15). In my view, it is a most encouraging and constructive analysis which recognises the school's key strengths and helpfully indicates where there is scope for further improvement. Whilst I encourage you to read the report in its entirety, the following findings are worthy of quotation, not least because they represent a great deal of hard work by pupils, staff and you the parents, which deserves to be celebrated.

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Headmistress: Mrs S. Palmer (BMus Hons) PGCE

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In relation to academic achievement, the inspectors found that, **"Pupils achieve excellent results in competitive entry examinations for senior schools, with most being successful in gaining places at the school of their choice"**. They praised the **"very good knowledge"** which teachers have of the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils, and the way in which work is matched to their ability. They further praised the good attainment of pupils of all ages and abilities, noting in particular the **"rapid progress"** which most in the Early Years make towards expected learning outcomes - which are in many cases exceeded; and the **"high standards"** which are achieved by older pupils in their standardised assessments in English, Mathematics and Verbal Reasoning. They commented upon the **"great creativity"** shown by all pupils in music and art; the **"effective study skills"** which are developed from the earliest age; the **"strong communication skills"** which pupils across the school demonstrate and successfully apply to all areas of learning; and the **"positive attitudes to learning"** which pupils of all ages and abilities have. Furthermore, **"Where lessons allow pupils to interact, discuss and explore, they participate fully and take great pride in their learning. Lively delivery, fast pace and the posing of thought-provoking, challenging questions make pupils keen to participate and extend their knowledge further"**.

Pupils' personal development was also examined by the inspectors. They found their **"social development"** to be **"excellent"**; moreover, that the **"School's culture, whereby older pupils actively look out for the welfare of younger ones, is tangible, and they readily take on responsibility when the opportunity allows"**. Indeed, they commented specifically on the **"strong leadership skills"** which the older pupils were given many opportunities to develop. In relation to the school body as a whole, the following was observed: **"Pupils feel positive about the school community and their place within it. They build strong relationships and feel respected by their warm, friendly teachers, who have high expectations of them in all aspects of school life"**. The **"high self-esteem"** which is developed by pupils of all ages was noted, as well as the way in which they **"unquestioningly respect the rights of people to hold differing views to themselves"**. The range of **"healthy choices"** at lunchtime did not escape the Inspectors' notice, neither did the role accorded to pupils in helping to develop them.

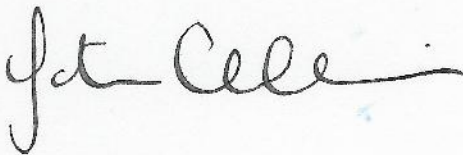
The Inspectors' recommendations for improvement, which are three in number, concern the sharing of best practice to improve independent thinking and verbal contributions to questioning by pupils; increasing the range of extra-curricular activities; and developing further pupils' ICT skills, especially the younger pupils. Work is already well underway to address those matters, determined as we are to pursue nothing short of excellence in our quest to give your child the very best start in life.

Regardless of the school, inspections are an invariably challenging time for even the most experienced and able staff, anxious as they are to demonstrate high standards to the inspectors in the limited time available. I wish to record my sincere gratitude to every member of staff for the professional and dedicated manner in which they set about giving a very good account of themselves and the school and, in a broader sense, achieving the success which is described by the Inspectors. I would also like to thank you, the parents, for

your continued faith in us and all that we do at Norfolk House. I trust that this report will assure you that such faith is well placed.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to express my great thanks to, and admiration for, our Headmistress, Susannah Palmer. It ought to be well noted that this inspection commenced on the fifteenth working day of the new academic year, and the seventeenth working day of Susannah's career at Norfolk House. As you will readily appreciate, it occurred at a time of transition, both for the school at large and for Susannah personally. To be perfectly frank, I am not sure that many other Heads or staff bodies would have coped with the timing. Susannah and her staff did more than cope: they shone. In all the circumstances that was a remarkable achievement, and it is especially gratifying to see praise in the report for changes which Susannah had introduced in the very short period before the Inspectors visited. Far from being a matter of good fortune, the successful outcome of this inspection was ensured by Susannah's unstinting commitment to the task of preparing for her new role over several months, and the ease with which she has settled into the Norfolk House family. It is clear that the future of the school is very bright under her stewardship, and that this report represents a most solid foundation to support yet greater endeavours and achievements.

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Challinor
Chair of Directors