

Hillgate Farm

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Martyn Groucutt

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.

The inspection was conducted at the request of the Registration Authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made in implementing its action plan following the previous inspection.

Information about the school

Hillgate Farm is a children's home which provides education for boys and girls aged 8 to 17 years. It caters for pupils who have complex special needs. It is owned by Da Capo Caring for Kids Ltd. The school aims to provide integrated therapeutic care and education and is located in a rural setting in Shropshire. It opened in 2006 and is registered for three students. There are currently three full-time students on roll, two with statements of special educational needs.

Context of the inspection

The school received its first inspection in September 2009, when it was found that a small number of important regulations were not met. An action plan to address these deficiencies was submitted to the Department for Education and this is the first visit to monitor the implementation of this plan.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The previous inspection found that while the curriculum and teaching and assessment were good there were deficiencies in the quantity and range of resources. This reflected an additional problem with inadequate teaching space, which made it difficult to provide adequate learning stimuli, as well as to the actual stock of learning resources. At that time the school was preparing to build a new education block, separate from living accommodation, but work had not begun due to earlier delays in finalising planning permission. In order to provide separate, purpose-built teaching accommodation the school therefore constructed two new classrooms in a demountable building and these were commissioned in February 2010. At the same time it constructed new facilities to support a practical outdoor education facility in horticulture and animal husbandry since the site is registered as a smallholding. These new facilities have enhanced the quality and effectiveness of education. The new teaching block is now on the verge of completion. It will provide discrete classrooms, equipped to a high standard, as well as other space that will provide flexibility and allow a range of uses.

The school planned to improve the range of resources for teaching and learning and to improve access to them. As a result, the utilisation of general resources for

teaching and learning has been restructured. The creation of the new classrooms means that it is now easier to display pupils' work and appropriate resources can be kept in the rooms. This includes information communication and technology (ICT) facilities which are used effectively to support learning. Other resources which are maintained centrally have been fully audited and the post of teacher-in-charge, originally a part-time post, has been made full-time since September 2010. This has enabled a greater clarity in the process of identifying, purchasing and managing resources. Resources are now adequate.

At the time of the September 2009 inspection, arrangements for ensuring that a designated officer for safeguarding was on site at all times were found to be in contravention of the regulations. In order to meet this requirement Da Capo Caring for Kids, as proprietor, planned to send all care staff who have duty manager responsibilities to undertake the designated officer training provided by Shropshire Safeguarding Children Board. This has been done and it means that there is now a designated officer with sufficient deputies who have the required level of training and expertise in child protection, to ensure 24-hour coverage at Hillgate Farm. The residential, as well as the education provision is now in compliance with the regulations. There is a commitment that all trained staff will receive update training every two years.

The last inspection found that while procedures for undertaking risk assessments for off-site visits were in place, they were not undertaken with sufficient rigour. In response the school planned to revise the procedures for completing and monitoring risk assessments. Two company representatives were appointed to ensure that the process was being implemented efficiently and they report to the Da Capo Caring for Kids monthly management and development meeting. Prior to outside visits being undertaken all sites are visited and detailed planning and risk assessment procedures are set out. In addition to site-specific assessments each pupil has an individual risk assessment that is updated throughout the year. This is used to assess their suitability to undertake a planned activity or visit.

Risk assessments pertaining to fire safety have also been revised following the last inspection. It found that, while risks were being identified, the procedures through which they would be minimised were not always clear. The procedures have therefore been re-written. They now include room-by-room assessment of risk and these are reviewed annually. Arrangements for ensuring that fire risk assessments are updated regularly are robust and the requirements are now met.

Arrangements for the maintenance of an admission register in line with the regulation have been revised since the last inspection, when the associated regulation was not met. A new register was created in October 2009 within a very short time of the inspection. This meets all requirements.

Similarly, deficiencies in the single central register of staff checks identified during the inspection have been fully addressed. The need to ascertain an applicant's right to work in the United Kingdom is now included in the register and the requirement is

also specified in application procedures. The results of these checks are now included in the register together with the date and the name of the person who undertook the check.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements.

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for pupils who have complex special needs		
Date school opened	January 2006		
Age range of pupils	8-17 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Number of boarders	Boys: 3	Girls: 0	Total: 3
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,960		
Address of school	c/o Da Capo Caring for Kids Ltd Millview Church Stretton Shropshire SY6 6JG		
Telephone number	01743 891862		
Email address	hillgate@dacapo.uk.net		
Headteacher	Mr J Hanley		
Proprietor	Da Capo Caring for Kids Ltd		