

Hill Farm College

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy
Social care inspector	Katarina Djordjevic

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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

Hill Farm College, owned by the Castle Care Group, is a registered children's home which provides education. A full inspection report of the children's home was published in July 2009. A further inspection of the children's home took place at the same time as the school's first inspection in February 2010 and focused on evaluating the provision for keeping young people safe and the extent to which they stay safe. The school opened in July 2008 and is registered for up to 12 students aged between 14 and 19 years, comprising six from the children's home and six attending daily. At present there are three students aged between 15 and 16 years, one of whom resides in the children's home. Two live in children's homes nearby, belonging to the Castle Care Group. One has a statement for special educational needs, which identifies behavioural, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Before coming to Hill Farm College, these students experienced considerable disruption to their education.

Hill Farm College occupies a large, stone-built period farmhouse surrounded by open farmland. The aim of college is to provide a safe, secure environment in which students are enabled to re-engage with education. Since the last inspection two new teachers have been appointed. A new executive headteacher, to oversee the educational provision for all 10 homes in the Castle Care Group, took up post in January 2010.

Context of the inspection

The school was last inspected in February 2010 and the resulting report covered the educational registration of the school. An inspection of the welfare provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes, at the same time as the last school inspection, with a full report published separately. The inspection of education found that the school failed nearly all the regulations in relation to Standard 1, the curriculum. It also failed to meet three regulations in Standard 2, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, one in standard 4, welfare and one in standard 6, provision of information for parents and carers. As a result, the school was required to produce an action plan to show how it intended to meet the outstanding regulations. The action plan was evaluated in April 2010, based on the evidence provided by the school. The actions and timescales for each regulation were judged as appropriate, although implementation needed to be checked. This is the first visit

to check the school's implementation of its plan. A separate social care inspection took place at the same time as this inspection, focusing on the residential provision in relation to organisation and the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes, particularly staying safe.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The inspection of February 2010 found that Hill Farm College provided an inadequate curriculum and that schemes of work were poorly developed. Students' literacy and numeracy skills were poorly developed. Students were not well prepared for the challenges of adult life and careers education was minimal. The school planned to review and improve the curriculum and its documentation and to establish a careers education programme. The school has made good progress in implementing its action plan. It now meets all the requirements for the curriculum. A detailed curriculum policy is in place, supported by appropriate schemes of work for all subjects for secondary-aged students. A range of subjects within each of the six required areas of learning are taught, with a strong emphasis on developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. It leads to a wide range of accreditation at Key Stage 4, appropriate to the ages and aptitudes of students. These include GCSE, Unit Awards and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards. A personal learning plan has been developed for each student which uses prior assessment information, especially that from statements of special educational needs, to adapt the curriculum precisely to a student's individual needs. This now enables each student to learn and make progress according to their level of ability and aptitudes. A variety of experiences and courses and enhanced opportunities for accreditation ensure that students are well prepared for adult life. A satisfactory programme of careers guidance is in place which includes work experience with the college maintenance department and appropriate links with the Connexions service.

The last inspection found that the quality of teaching was inadequate, with poorly planned lessons which took insufficient account of students' prior attainments and their needs. Teachers did not have sufficient subject knowledge. The school planned to appoint new teachers and to establish a regular programme for staff training and the exchange of expertise between schools in the group. An improved framework for assessment was to be established, along with staff training in the use of assessment information in the planning of lessons. As a result of the implementation of the plan, teachers now demonstrate good subject knowledge. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and good use is made of well-chosen practical resources in lessons. Activities are well matched to students' needs and teachers use accurate assessment information to challenge students' capabilities and to plan appropriate work. Planning is good, with clear learning objectives and opportunities for extending learning identified. Effective systems for assessment are in place, along with consistent marking to move learning forward. Long-term targets are set, based on National Curriculum levels for

all subjects within each student's personal learning plan and these are reviewed termly with the student and parents. Short-term targets are also set, based on half-termly end-of-unit assessments, giving a clear indication of the smaller steps needed to achieve the students' long-term targets.

The inspection of February 2010 found that students' behaviour was not well managed as the behaviour policy was poorly implemented; students took insufficient responsibility for their behaviour. They knew little of the working of public institutions. The school did not support their acquisition of insights into other cultures. In order to remedy these shortfalls, the school planned to establish and implement a new policy for managing behaviour, to initiate improved courses in citizenship and to provide a variety of courses and experiences to provide insights into other cultures. Students' behaviour is now good in lessons and around the school because the school has implemented its new behaviour policy effectively with a clear system of rewards based on a points system and with clear sanctions. A range of opportunities is provided to develop pupils' awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity. These are through students' experience of multicultural events and through an element of 'understanding diversity' in the personal, social and health education curriculum. Students now make a study of world religions within their work in religious education and through celebrating festivals of world faiths, such as Ramadan, Hanukah and Easter. Students also have a range of opportunities to broaden their knowledge and understanding of public institutions, including topics on local democracy, the electoral system, the workings of the magistrates' courts and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The inspection found that the school did not provide all the necessary information to parents and carers. All parents and carers now receive a copy of the school's safeguarding policy, so that the requirements are fully met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Children's home with education		
Date school opened	July 2008		
Age range of pupils	14-19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
Number of boarders	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 2	Girls: 1	Total: 3
Annual fees (day pupils)	£39,466		
Annual fees (boarders)	£202,063		
Telephone number	01536 711111		
Email address	rburrows@castlehomes.co.uk		
Headteacher	Ms Mary Mackinnon		
Proprietor	Castlecare Group		