

Hillcrest Oaklands College

Independent school progress monitoring inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

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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

Hillcrest Oaklands College, formerly Hillcrest Kings Bromley, is a small, independent special school located near Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire. It opened in November 2002 and is owned by Hillcrest Care Limited. It is also registered as a children's home. Until July 2009, the school educated and accommodated up to eight boys aged 11 to 16 years, most of who were looked after by their local authorities and had statements of special educational needs identifying behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school ceased to provide places for boys after July 2009, two months after its last education inspection. Hillcrest Care Limited embarked immediately on a substantial refurbishment of the school buildings and children's home accommodation. The proprietor requested a change to the school's intake from boys to girls in the 14 to 17 years age range. A variation to the school's registration was granted in May 2010 permitting the school to admit girls. The school re-opened in May 2010 as Hillcrest Oaklands College. A further variation was requested by the proprietor in August 2010 to allow the school to admit girls in the 13 to 17 age range and the school is awaiting the outcome of this. A Principal was appointed and took up post in August 2009, taking charge of developing and leading the girls' school. A headteacher has now been appointed who takes up post in January 2011.

The two girls currently on roll and accommodated at the college are looked after by their respective local authorities and are aged 15 – 16 years old. These students have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties although neither has a statement of special educational needs. Since opening as a girls' school, the children's home has had two visits from social care inspectors, once to confirm the registered manager of the home and again to investigate a complaint. The children's home has yet to receive a full inspection.

The school aims to 'provide a curriculum that is balanced and broadly based and provide opportunities for all students to enjoy learning and to achieve high standards and develop self-confidence.'

Context of the inspection

The previous inspections of the school and the children's home took place together in May 2009. The inspection of the school found a number of failures to comply with

the regulations for registration. The action plan to remedy these failures was written in December 2009 and this is the first visit to the school to follow up its progress in implementing the plan.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

The inspection of May 2009 found a number of weaknesses in the planning of teaching, in particular in the use of information from assessment to match lessons to students' needs and in the quality of marking. The school planned to improve the quality of marking, establish target setting for students and the match of work to their needs. Lesson planning has improved because teachers now consciously use information from their assessments to plan the work they set for students. Teachers' knowledge of students' attainments now leads to well-focused learning objectives in most lessons. Assessment is consistent and procedures are used that tell teachers and students about strengths and weaknesses in attainment. Targets for students focus on the areas of learning requiring most attention. Occasionally a target is written in terms which are too general. Teachers' marking has improved. It gives praise when warranted and most provides advice to the students on improving their work.

The inspection found weaknesses in the management of behaviour. Bullying was a problem and sanctions were not always recorded. The school planned to introduce individual behaviour plans and a system of credits to reward good behaviour and also to revise the sanctions policy. Behaviour is now good and the school's credit system is a positive incentive for students to behave well as they value the rewards on offer for good behaviour. An anti-bullying policy which meets requirements is in place and staff are kept aware of the issues of bullying. Records are maintained of rewards and sanctions as well as incidents of misbehaviour. These show that misdemeanours are few and not serious. The students currently on roll are at present being prepared to support a new student arriving soon, which is part of the school's strategy to prevent bullying.

At the time of the inspection, students had insufficient involvement with the school and wider community, and the school did little to raise students' awareness of the multicultural nature of society. The school planned to establish a students' forum, to encourage involvement in the local community and to prepare a range of multi-cultural experiences. As a result, staff now actively encourage students' engagement in the running of the school and home. Evening meeting and weekly meetings between staff and students provide opportunities to decide activities and routines. The students regularly use the leisure facilities in the community. Curriculum plans ensure that the students will learn about different cultures and beliefs. They now take an interest in cultural events and have attended various festivals in nearby cities.

The inspection found omissions in the admission register and weaknesses in the reports sent to parents. The admission register now contains the required information. Satisfactory arrangements for written reports on students' progress and attainment are now in place.

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 students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties		
Date school opened	November 2002		
Age range of pupils	14 – 17		
Gender of pupils	Girls		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Girls: 2	Total: 2	
Number of boarders	Girls: 2	Total: 2	
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Girls: 0	Total: 0	
Number of pupils who are looked after	Girls: 2	Total: 2	
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,336		
Annual fees (boarders)	£170,560		
Address of school	Alrewas Road Kings Bromley Burton on Trent DE13 7HR		
Telephone number	01543 473772		
Email address	Jo.morris@hillcrestcare.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs Josephine Morris		
Proprietor	Richard Grenwell		