

# Hillcrest Park School

Independent special school standard inspection report

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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 purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

Hillcrest Park School, which opened in 1995, is an independent special school owned by the proprietors of Hillcrest Care Ltd, serving three of their children's homes. The school is located in purpose-built premises. The school is registered for up to 24 boys and girls aged between seven and 16 years of age. Currently, 17 pupils aged from nine to 16 years attend. They are placed at the homes and the school by a large number of different local authorities from across England and Wales. Fourteen of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs and most relate to severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. A new headteacher has been in post since February 2010. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in January 2008.

The school aims to: raise pupils' self-esteem and confidence; help them learn strategies to support their behaviour; and to develop their learning skills and their academic knowledge to enable them to become independent and successful citizens.

## Evaluation of the school

Hillcrest Park School provides a good quality of education for its pupils and successfully meets its stated aims. Pupils make good progress over time as a result of the good teaching and assessment and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The daily care of the pupils is good and they feel safe in school. Welfare, health and safety are satisfactory and safeguarding policies and systems are secure. Since the last inspection a wider range of qualifications is now offered and the two regulatory failures have been addressed; this included establishing an effective system to review statements of special educational needs. The school meets all but one of the regulations for independent schools.

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. It is broad, balanced and appropriately tailored to the needs of the pupils and covers the required areas of learning. It is supported by clear policies and modular schemes of work based on the National Curriculum and examination specifications that show progression across Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

However, there is no overall curriculum map, showing for example, cross-curricular links and no links are made between what is taught in the school and the numerous activities that are provided by home staff beyond the school day. As a result, opportunities are lost to broaden pupils' learning experiences and so provide a more cohesive curriculum.

Pupils are taught in five groups according to age, gender and/or ability. The curriculum varies across the key stages with a primary focus for younger pupils and college placements for some in Year 11. There is a high and successful focus on the improvement of basic skills in literacy and numeracy for all pupils, and many commented on their good progress in writing. In addition, the core curriculum includes arts and crafts, science, food technology, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education and religious education. Good quality careers, personal, social, health and education (PSHE) and citizenship is underpinned across the school by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) accreditation, visits and links with the Connexions service. From Year 9 pupils work for other nationally recognised qualifications including: entry level certification in ICT, science and English; adult literacy and numeracy (ALAN); BTEC sport and GCSEs such as English & maths.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers know their pupils well and use this knowledge to plan effective lessons that match pupils' abilities, interests and prior attainment well. The staff work enthusiastically as a team and their commitment to ensuring that all pupils make the best progress possible shines through in lessons and in the excellent relationships they build with pupils. Teachers have good and sometimes outstanding subject knowledge, and most subjects are taught by specialists. They set high expectations for pupils' progress and behaviour, use a variety of approaches and strategies, and effectively make use of questioning to consolidate pupils' learning. However, at times pupils are not fully motivated because learning is not sufficiently based on practical tasks which require pupils to be active. Although teachers make use of ICT, opportunities are missed to use it to support or re-engage pupils in learning when the pace slows or to broaden their learning experiences. Teaching assistants and care staff are skilfully deployed in lessons and they very effectively support pupils' good and sometimes outstanding learning. Books are routinely marked, although comments to show pupils how to improve are inconsistent. Pupils' statements of special educational needs are now routinely reviewed and annual reviews are attended by the school staff. Individual education plans provide guidance to teachers to enable them to meet pupils' academic and personal development needs.

Assessment and tracking systems have been improved and are now good. Pupils all have written targets for behaviour, literacy and numeracy as well as challenging grade targets against which progress is regularly checked through moderated teacher assessments. Data from the new tracking system, evidence from pupils' books and results from accredited courses show that almost all pupils are making

good, and for a few in some subjects outstanding, progress from their varied and frequently below age-expected starting points.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

Pupils' overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The very consistent approach to promoting the moral and social aspects by the school contributes significantly to their good personal development. This is reflected in the respect they show most of the time to staff as well as each other. Pupils' behaviour improves with their time at the school, and while good overall, for some older pupils it is outstanding. Although some pupils do not readily agree they enjoy school, their attendance is exceptionally high and it is evident from seeing them around the school that they enjoy most lessons, want to succeed and take pride in their progress. Pupils contribute well by helping around school, such as keeping the garden tidy and through an active school council. They contribute more widely through community service and by raising funds for a variety of causes, including for breast cancer and the Haiti earthquake victims.

A reasonable range of trips broaden pupils' experiences particularly in relation to the world of work and in developing their understanding of public services. ASDAN courses together with some other subjects, including religious education, develop their cultural understanding satisfactorily. Although there are daily opportunities for individual reflection on their behaviour and in lessons on the wider world, there is no whole-school planned approach to either spiritual or cultural development.

The high focus on pupils' personal development, on improving their basic skills, the opportunities for work-related learning and in achieving as many qualifications as possible, helps prepare them exceptionally well for the next steps in their education.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

The provision for the students' welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Staff provide excellent supervision of pupils at all times both in school and during off-site visits. As a result, pupils feel safe, receive good day-to-day care and effective support for their learning. A very consistent approach to behaviour management is taken by the school with all staff receiving appropriate training. A new policy for behaviour and discipline is in place. Points are awarded in each lesson together with a comment on each pupil's attitudes. Any serious incidents in the school, including those requiring physical restraints, and/or sanctions, as well as any accidents, are recorded separately for each student. However, any 'consequences' are not centrally recorded to allow the school to monitor and evaluate their impact.

Arrangements for child protection are fully in place and all staff are fully trained. All the required policies for promoting students' health, safety and welfare are in place and adhered to by all staff. Pupils understand the importance of eating healthily and of taking regular exercise. Although, some prefer less healthy foods they particularly

enjoy food technology, known as 'license to cook', and physical education lessons as well as the numerous sporting and recreational activities offered to them by school and care home staff.

Risk assessments are rigorously completed for all activities and regularly reviewed. Health and safety assessments, checks on portable electrical equipment and fire safety monitoring are routinely conducted with appropriate actions taken. Fire drills are carried out routinely so that everyone is aware of the fire exit. The admission and attendance registers meet requirements. Responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended, are fulfilled because the school is accessible and a three-year accessibility plan is in place to increase accessibility.

### **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The systems for the recruitment of staff are secure and meet the regulations. The school's single central register includes the proprietors, and education staff as well as all staff who work for the three residential care homes. It meets all requirements.

### **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The single site and single-storey premises provide both high quality accommodation and a safe learning environment. There is appropriate outdoor space with both a hard-surfaced, fenced court area and a garden area with picnic tables and space for pupils to grow plants and vegetables. There are currently five classrooms each with interactive whiteboards, two small rooms for individual work and three specialist rooms for ICT, art and food technology. All rooms are ideally sized for small-group teaching and well equipped with appropriate furniture and educational resources. Throughout the school the decor is in a reasonable condition and well kept displays of pupils' work reflect the mutual respect between staff and pupils. The provision of toilets and washbasins and space for pupils who are unwell meet requirements. Plans to expand the school and provide specialist facilities for science and vocational learning are well underway.

### **Provision of information**

Some general information about the education provision is provided on the Hillcrest Care website. The school's annually-updated prospectus is clear and provides the required information or makes appropriate reference to it. Detailed reports on pupils' progress are produced twice yearly for pupils' care reviews. However, the school is not providing the required financial information for local authorities who provide funding.

### **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's complaints policy is clear and meets requirements.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of any pupils placed by a local authority is submitted to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 24(1(h))).

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- improve the quality of teaching by making more use of ICT and practical activities in lessons to engage and support pupils in their learning
- expand pupils' learning opportunities by making better links between what is taught in school and the activities provided by the care home to form a more cohesive curriculum
- develop a whole-school approach to spiritual and cultural development.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made)

## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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### The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

### Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

### Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1995		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–16		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 13	Girls: 4	Total: 17
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 13	Girls: 1	Total: 14
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 13	Girls: 4	Total: 17
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£ 37,128		
<b>Address of school</b>	Hillcrest Park, Southcombe, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, OX7 5QH		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01608 644621		
<b>Email address</b>	parkschool@hillcrestcare.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Davidson		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Hillcrest Care Ltd		