

# Highfields

Independent 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>

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

## **Information about the school**

Highfields is a children's home which provides education for boys and girls aged 10 to 16 years. It caters for pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It is owned by the Castlecare Group. The school opened in August 2007 and was last inspected by Ofsted in April 2008. It is registered for three students and there is currently one boy on roll. The student does not have a statement of special educational needs. The care provision was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2011.

The school strives to, 'develop the whole person, academically and personally', with the belief that, 'the development of personal and social skills and values is the essential foundation to making academic progress'.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The overall quality of education is satisfactory. The school is particularly successful in meeting its aim to develop students' personal skills and enable them to engage in education and make academic progress. The school has improved since its last inspection and now meets all of the requirements for registration as an independent school. Arrangements for safeguarding students are robust.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has a suitable curriculum plan based on a thematic approach which applies to all of the group's schools. This plan is based on the National Curriculum and draws on National Strategy materials for literacy and numeracy, and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority schemes of work. These resources form a comprehensive bank of materials which are adapted to meet the learning needs of individual students. Plans for individual students are carefully tailored around each student's interests in order to engage them with their

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

education. This is a successful strategy in motivating the students to learn. However, the students' individual learning plans lack aspiration and do not include sufficient detail about continuity and progression to enable students to achieve as well as they could.

Students undertake courses appropriate to their need to achieve recognised qualifications. There are opportunities at Key Stage 4 for students to follow accredited courses from AQA unit awards and entry level certificates, adult literacy and numeracy certification and GCSE courses. Students have some choice about subjects that they study within the curriculum. Individual timetables and monthly reports show that all aspects of the required curriculum are covered. There is a strong and appropriate focus on achieving qualifications in functional skills. Although the school includes personal, social and health education on each student's weekly timetable, planning for this aspect of learning is weak and teaching tends to be reactive rather than being based on a structured scheme of work.

Older students receive appropriate careers guidance, including support from a Connexions advisor. As a result, they have clear views about their intended careers and a sound understanding about further education.

The school has planned some helpful cross-curricular links. For example, this month's cultural theme about India includes activities involving art and food technology. The teacher used questioning well during an art session to review previous learning about Indian culture. Learning is enriched through appropriate visits out of school. For example, a geography field trip enhanced work on rivers. A visit to a bomb crater inspired a student when completing literacy work in school. There are limited opportunities to use technology to support learning because of poor access to the internet.

Teaching and assessment are satisfactory and students make satisfactory progress. Lessons are planned well to meet the interests of the students and effectively engage them with their learning. Tasks are appropriate and interesting with good links being made to prior learning. Consequently, students have good attitudes to their work. Staff are particularly skilled at motivating the students to learn and building their self-confidence. However, activities are not consistently focused on the planned learning and this slows progress at times. For example, when learning how to make a presentation, a student spent too much time preparing a written report rather than making notes for a presentation.

Teachers mostly have good subject knowledge. For example, in a science lesson the teacher was clearly focused on developing a student's understanding of technical vocabulary when learning about the physiology of exercise. However, limitations to subject knowledge occasionally slow the pace of learning when teachers do not always teach the most efficient methods. For example, in a mathematics lesson the student was taught an unwieldy method when multiplying fractions. At times opportunities are missed to extend learning, for example, when during a science

lesson involving physical activities, poor stretching techniques were not corrected by the teacher.

Work in books is marked and levelled, but opportunities are missed to correct basic errors. For example, simple punctuation errors are ignored and students are provided with too little guidance about how to improve their work. Presentation of work is variable. It is often neat and tidy, with appropriate use being made of a ruler and pencil for drawing diagrams, but frequently students lapse into careless presentation.

Each student undergoes a comprehensive assessment using a wide range of recognised assessment tools and discussion when they arrive at the school. As a result, the school quickly establishes a good understanding of each student's needs. This is used to plan the learning for each student. Progress is assessed each half term and the school monitors the progress of students using a commercial computer programme. Monthly reports include helpful summaries of each student's progress. These reports include targets for improvement but these targets are frequently too vague to provide clear guidance to the student.

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

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. The students enjoy their education because lessons and activities are planned well to match their interests. This is because staff get to know the students very quickly and listen carefully to, and value, their views. Consequently, students feel engaged in their learning and have good attitudes to their work. This contributes to their high levels of self-esteem and respect for the adults that work with them. Although students have good opportunities to get involved in the life of the school, their involvement with the wider community is more limited.

Students' behaviour is good. This is the result of effective behaviour management through the consistent implementation of the school's policy to promote good attitudes to learning. Consequently, adults and students relate very well to each other and the atmosphere during learning activities in the classroom and elsewhere is conducive to effective learning. Students have a good understanding about right and wrong. As a result of the school's work, they have developed positive attitudes towards their future and are determined not to be influenced by unacceptable behaviour that they may have experienced previously. This is contributing to their good levels of self-confidence. Students demonstrate good social skills, for example through good manners at meal times and appropriate conversational skills.

Students have good opportunities to develop their cultural understanding through the curriculum. For example, the school plans international themes each month. The students relate well to these and clearly enjoy learning about different cultures. During the inspection, artwork and cookery relating to the India theme inspired learning. Although the number of students at the school at any one time is small, the school organises events with other schools in the group wherever possible. For

example, it hosts an annual football competition. This provides a good social opportunity as well as a cultural link as each team represents a different country. The teams wear costumes and prepare food relating to their country.

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

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. All of the required policies for ensuring that students are kept safe are in place and are reviewed regularly. The policies are comprehensive and clear, providing helpful guidance to staff. The policy to promote behaviour for learning is based around a positive approach to behaviour management. It clearly describes sanctions and when they will be applied, including those relating to abuse of technology. It is implemented effectively and, consequently, there is a good environment for learning in the school. The school has ensured that all of the required staff training, for example in child protection and first aid, is up to date. Students say that they feel very safe and are well cared for by the staff, reflecting the very good levels of supervision throughout the day.

Risk assessments for the classroom and for activities on and away from the school site accurately identify potential risks and provide appropriate actions to minimise these risks. Procedures to ensure that the learning environment is safe are robust. For example, the school carries out sufficiently frequent checks of portable electrical appliances and smoke alarms. The school keeps clear records of practice evacuations and checks on fire-fighting equipment. The shortcomings in the admissions register noted at the time of the previous inspection have been rectified.

The students are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles. They respond well to the opportunities they are given to take part in physical exercise, for example through frequent visits to a local gym. Those that smoke are provided with practical support with smoking cessation and they respect the smoking ban throughout the school day. They understand what constitutes a healthy diet, but do not always choose the healthiest options at lunchtime.

The school has prepared a three-year plan to improve access for students with disabilities, meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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

The school has robust recruitment procedures. All of the required checks on staff and others are carried out and the school's single central register meets requirements.

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

The spacious classroom is within the main house. It provides adequate accommodation for teaching up to three students and is well maintained. There is ample outdoor space for recreation, including a five-a-side football pitch. The large

kitchen provides good opportunities for food technology. Other design technology activities are carried out in the classroom as there are no specialist facilities. Good use is made of off-site facilities, such as the library for printed resources and internet access, and a local gym to enhance facilities for physical education.

## **Provision of information**

The school's prospectus provides parents, carers and others with all of the required information. Parents and carers are provided with clear and helpful information about the attainment and progress made by their children in monthly reports. Placing authorities are provided with an annual account of income and expenditure for each student. The information provided to parents and carers, and to placing authorities are improvements on shortcomings identified at the previous inspection.

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

The school has clearly written complaints procedures for students and others which meet the requirements.

## **Leadership and management of the residential provision**

The care provision was judged to be good and national minimum standards were met. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

## **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

Please see the report on Ofsted's website relating to the care provision in the children's home which should be read in conjunction with this report.

## **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 planning for individual students to ensure that expectations are high and progression routes are clear.
- Increase the pace of learning in lessons by ensuring that all activities are focused on the planned learning and are sufficiently challenging.
- Provide better guidance to help students improve their work through marking and target setting.

## 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 – social, emotional and behavioural difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	14 August 2007		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	10 to 16 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<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: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£25,391.60 – £25,479.00		
<b>Address of school</b>	c/o Castlecare The Manor House Rothwell NN14 6BQ		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01536 711111		
<b>Email address</b>	rburrows@castlehomes.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Mary Mackinnon		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Castlecare Group		

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



20 October 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Highfields**

Thank you for making my colleague and me so welcome when we visited your school this week. We really enjoyed talking with you and observing your lessons.

Your teachers and carers know you very well and plan interesting lessons for you. You respond well to the activities and have a good attitude to your learning. As a result you are making satisfactory progress in your learning. You could make even more progress so I have asked your school to consider challenging you a little bit more and setting more ambitious goals in your education plans. I have also asked the teachers to make sure that all of your lessons are focused on the planned learning and to provide you with more helpful guidance about how to improve your work when they mark it or set you targets.

You told me that you feel very safe. That is because the staff take good care of you and have good systems in place to keep you safe. You are given a lot of good opportunities to participate in activities that you enjoy, such as training at the gym. You also seem to enjoy the good range of things you do to learn about other countries. Your international themes seem like great fun and we enjoyed tasting the Indian curry you made.

I hope you continue to enjoy your education and I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby  
Her Majesty's Inspector