

# Spring Hill High School

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>

## **Information about the school**

Spring Hill High School is a small independent special school, owned by Thoughts of Others Ltd, which opened in 2005. It provides for male and female students between the ages of 11 and 19 years. There are currently 25 students on roll, 21 of whom are day students; 4 live in residential accommodation provided by the Company. The school occupies six different sites and is registered to educate up to 30 students. Students have a range of difficulties, including severe emotional, social and behaviour difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder. Fifteen students have statements of special educational needs. Most have led chaotic lifestyles and have experienced disruptions to their schooling. Thirteen students are in public care. The school aims to provide a caring, safe and secure environment which values education and enables students to realise their full potential. The school was last inspected in February 2009.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The school provides a good quality of education for its students and meets the requirements of all the regulations. As a result of outstanding teaching, students make good progress over time. Progress is good rather than exceptional due to the anxiety and disorder in many students' personal lives which restrict the consistency of their learning. The school is extremely effective in developing high quality relationships with parents and carers which contribute positively to students' emotional and social development and their readiness to learn. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding, as are arrangements for their safeguarding.

## **Quality of education**

The curriculum is good. The National Curriculum programmes of study provide the basis for long- and medium-term planning, ensuring that all the required areas of learning are included. There is a suitable balance between academic and practical learning, and full account is taken of the individual learning styles and personal learning needs of each student. An excellent range of opportunities for active, practical learning is provided, as seen, for example, in a lesson on cooking crepes which successfully combined food technology with spoken French.

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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).

The development of literacy and numeracy skills forms the core of the timetable at both Key Stages 3 and 4, with appropriate accreditation at Entry Level and GCSE available as students reach the required standards. While subject specialists focus on the development of reading for comprehension, handwriting, punctuation and spelling, staff are not all trained, for example in the use of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), to ensure a consistent approach to the development of literacy across the curriculum. Students enjoy the wide range of practical learning experiences provided in lessons. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good and closely targeted to address individuals' social and emotional needs.

Appropriate provision for careers education and preparation for working life is made, and individuals are well supported as they prepare to leave school and to move on to further education. However, opportunities to experience relevant work experience in Key Stage 4 are currently limited, determined by realistic risk assessments related to the behaviour and anxiety of individual students when in the wider community. Students at post-16 are provided with a suitable individual timetable of activities and one-to-one support as they prepare for employment or further education. Good use is made of Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) challenges, and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has recently been introduced to increase the range of opportunities for older students to broaden their experiences in the local community. Students appreciate and benefit from off-site visits, for example to the Barber Institute of Fine Arts and Birmingham Nature Centre, which enhance their study of particular subjects and broaden their awareness of local facilities and services.

The quality of teaching and assessment is outstanding. Students are taught on six different sites, providing a secure and effective environment for learning individually and in small groups. Students enjoy their lessons and respond positively to the variety of learning tasks provided. Staff are skilled in recognising the impact of students' emotional fluctuations on a daily basis and adapt the pace and style of learning appropriately. Lessons are organised effectively into a sequence of different activities, requiring a range of speaking and listening skills, expression of personal views, and recording in a variety of styles. Good attention is given to the development of students' self-confidence and recognition of when and how they have achieved. Lessons proceed at a good pace and students enjoy the challenge presented by good quality questioning, problem-solving and interesting practical activities. As a result, students maintain their concentration and are actively engaged for significant periods of time.

All groups of students make good progress. The assessment of students' work is increasingly based on National Curriculum levels. Assessment records are maintained for each individual in a manner which provides a secure basis for target-setting and ensuring that teachers' planning takes account of current levels of attainment. However, the structure of these records does not easily support the quick identification of progress over time for individuals and groups of students. Students are provided with effective oral and written feedback on the quality of their work, and targets for further improvement are identified and discussed. Progress over time

for many students is inhibited to varying degrees by the emotional trauma and anxiety presented by their personal conditions and circumstances. Despite these challenges, and as a result of the high quality of teaching and planning, students make at least good and often exceptional progress in their lessons, and many achieve success in Entry Level and GCSE examinations.

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

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school places a high priority on creating effective conditions for learning and is successful in ensuring that students' personal difficulties are addressed promptly. Parents and carers are unanimous in their high regard for the way in which staff understand their children and work tirelessly to develop strong and consistent relationships with students' homes. Students are encouraged to reflect on their personal challenges, whether these be emotional, social or behavioural. Excellent support is provided for students in managing their anxiety and challenging behaviour. As a result, students make good progress in the improvement of their behaviour and in their readiness to learn.

In their questionnaire responses, students state that they enjoy school, feel safe and that teaching is good. Behaviour in school is good. Occasional incidents of frustration and anger are managed skilfully by staff resulting in students' prompt return to effective learning. Students' attendance is recorded rigorously and shows excellent improvement over time from mostly poor or non-attendance in previous settings. Half of the students achieved attendance of over 90% in the last year. Students value the points award system, and records demonstrate good achievement of the certificates and awards available.

The school is very aware of the students' disrupted previous educational experience and the negative impact this has had on their personal development and attitude to learning. Staff ensure that students' self-esteem and self-confidence are developed continuously through all the formal and informal daily experiences. Lunchtimes, for example, provide a calm and cooperative social occasion through which students learn how to manage their personal relationships with each other and with adults. Good opportunities are provided for students to learn about local services and facilities, for example, through shopping and using public transport. The curriculum in PSHE and in ASDAN courses includes themes which enhance students' awareness and respect for diverse cultures and lifestyles. The school itself presents an environment of cultural diversity and harmony. Students demonstrate their empathy and consideration for others through charitable collections for national and global causes, including a developing link with a school in Kenya.

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

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of students are good. Policy documents are clear and underpin effective practice. The school makes a strong commitment to the training of staff in child protection, physical restraint and first aid. All staff are trained to the appropriate levels and documentation makes clear who the appointed persons are for child protection and for first aid. Good attention is

given to all aspects of health and safety including stringent arrangements for any off-site visits. Fire safety arrangements are implemented appropriately on each of the school sites, including appropriate fire risk assessments and regular checks on fire safety equipment. All staff receive appropriate induction training and are familiar with required policies and procedures, including anti-bullying and behaviour management. Implementation of policies is consistent and monitored appropriately. Good attention is given to healthy eating and to the maintenance of healthy lifestyles, both in practice and through the curriculum. Students state that they feel safe in school, and well supported in addressing their personal challenges. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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

The school has appropriate arrangements in place for the recruitment of staff and ensuring their suitability to work with children. The single central register of checks on the suitability of staff and proprietors is up-to-date and meets regulatory requirements.

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

The school is located on six sites, all of which consist of appropriately refurbished and maintained former residential properties. Classrooms are of an appropriate size for safe and effective learning, including practical activities. All sites have suitable outdoor space for play and recreation. These are supplemented appropriately by the use of local parks and leisure facilities for physical education. There are sufficient washrooms, office spaces and dining facilities to support the work of the school on each site.

### **Provision of information**

The school provides clear, suitable and up to date information for the parents and carers of students and prospective students. The admission pack provides good information about the daily routines of the school, together with information about the availability of the full range of required school policies. Regular reports are provided for parents and carers giving appropriate information about students' progress and personal development. Parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire overwhelmingly stated their support for the quality of the school's provision and relationship with students' homes.

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

The school's arrangements for the management of any complaints meet statutory 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').

## **What the school could do to improve further**

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

- provide training for all staff in the use of phonics for the teaching and development of reading skills
- develop centralised systems to monitor systematically all aspects of students' performance and achievement across all the school sites
- extend the opportunities for students in Key Stage 4 and post-16 to experience work-related learning as a planned element of their curriculum.

## 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 school for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.		
<b>Date school opened</b>	2005		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-19 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 18	Girls: 6	Total: 24
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 13	Girls: 2	Total: 15
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 9	Girls: 4	Total: 13
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£13,300 to £83,980		
<b>Email address</b>	barbara@springhillhighschool.co.uk		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Barbara Scrivens		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Jim Sullivan		

**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.**



1 June 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Spring Hill High School**

I very much enjoyed my recent visit to your school. Thank you for your welcome and your willingness to talk to me about your experiences. The inspection judged that Spring Hill High School provides you with a good quality of education and helps you to overcome your anxieties and concerns about attending school. I was particularly pleased to see:

- that a number of you told me, through conversation and through your questionnaires, that you enjoy attending school and feel safe there
- that you work very well with the staff on each of the school sites
- the excellent quality of the teaching which you receive
- that the majority of you have made great improvements in your attendance since joining the school
- that you are making good progress in your learning and many of you are preparing successfully to take examinations in various subjects
- the good progress you are making in controlling your behaviour and cooperating with others
- the range of activities provided for you through sports, visits to places of interest and outdoor activities.

To bring about further improvement I have asked the proprietor and staff to focus on the development of your reading, spelling and handwriting skills; to provide more opportunities for work-related learning; and to make sure that they assess and record all aspects of your learning and personal development. You can help to get the best out of your school by making sure that you continue to work cooperatively with the staff and put all your efforts into your lessons.

With all best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Young  
Lead Inspector