

# Heath Farm School

Independent school standard inspection report

---

DfE registration number	886/6060
Unique Reference Number (URN)	119009
Inspection number	388398
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070).

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2012



## 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

Heath Farm School currently occupies a range of purpose-built new classrooms and a converted farm and outbuildings in a small village near Ashford in Kent. The school opened in December 1988 and is registered for up to 70 students, aged five to eighteen years, who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). There were 37 pupils aged five to seventeen on roll at the time of the inspection, of whom 29 have a statement of special educational needs. Many also have additional identified learning needs such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, and attachment and attention deficit disorders. Young people are grouped according to age and academic ability in small class groups with a high staff-to-pupil ratio. There are also 'Nurture' classes for those aged five to fourteen years.

The school is part of the Acorn Care and Education Group, which owns a number of similar schools across the country, alongside several schools for pupils with autism. Most of the pupils are looked after children. Most are with foster parents arranged through Heath Farm Family Services, with whom the school shares the site, but a few are fostered through other agencies or live with their birth parents.

The school's aim is to, 'meet the educational, social and welfare needs of children through the creation of a caring, supportive and stimulating atmosphere'. The school was last inspected in January 2009.

## Evaluation of the school

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is good. The school successfully meets its aims. The curriculum is good and since the last inspection has improved its relevance to the needs of the pupils. Combined with good teaching, it enables pupils to make good progress overall. A significant contribution to pupils' good personal development is the good welfare, health and safety provision, including safeguarding. The school meets the vast majority of the independent school regulations, and one regulation not met at the last inspection still has not been addressed.

## Quality of education

---

<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 curriculum is good and is relevant to the needs and interests of the pupils. Curriculum policies are appropriate and address the required areas of learning as well as the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational needs. The curriculum has a suitably strong and highly appropriate emphasis on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Science and information and communication technology (ICT) are also given due attention, with ICT being used in most subjects. Planning is informed by national guidance for the National Curriculum and more recently the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) for teaching some subjects that are not taught discretely but are taught through topics.

Examination courses, in English, mathematics, science, ICT, citizenship, and physical education are offered at GCSE, Entry Level and at Functional Skills level. In Key Stage 4, pupils may also attend local colleges of further education where they gain BTEC awards in a range of vocational qualifications. There is also appropriate provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) for all pupils and from Year 9, careers education and guidance which can include work experience in Key Stage 4. There are no extra-curricular activities although an annual sports week is held and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is available to older pupils. The school also operates highly personalised programmes, for example 'nurture groups' to provide additional support for pupils who are developmentally younger than their peers, and the Alternative Education Programme (AEP). The AEP is full-time academic and pastoral support programme designed to secure a return to the school or other placement such as a college of further education, training or employment.

Teaching and assessment are good and meet the range of pupils' needs. Teachers show high levels of expertise and engage the pupils in lessons that have brisk pace and regular opportunities to develop skills. For example, the oldest pupils 'walk through' a play called 'The Young Runaways'. The play portrays conflicts amid complex family relationships. The pupils responded to this activity with enthusiasm and sensitivity. These conditions promote effective learning and a deeper understanding of relationships.

Staff also have expertise in developing pupils' reading skills, specifically using very clear diction, meticulous recording and regular re-enforcement to embed reading skills. The school has adopted a package that uses a phonic approach and this is particularly successful in the younger classes. Pupils of all ages made significant progress in their reading when they engaged fully with this programme.

The most effective lessons are characterised by precise lesson planning, informative marking and assessment alongside well-considered deployment of teaching assistants. Teachers share clear intentions about what is to be taught and how pupils' learning at all ability levels is to be supported. Occasionally, these features are less evident and learning outcomes are not as successful. Typically, lessons are characterised by good relationships between staff and pupils and highly effective behaviour management strategies which are an integral part of school life.

The school makes effective use of recent national guidance for assessment and monitoring the progression of pupils' learning. It has recently modified its assessment procedures and uses the data to inform future learning and the quality of school reports. The school has comprehensive profiling records of pupils' progress in improving their behavioural, emotional and social skills as well as their acquisition of academic skills.

Overall, the pupils, irrespective of gender, special educational needs or whether they are looked after children, make good progress in their learning. In discussion, the pupils confirm that they recognise the support they receive. This is particularly marked in reading skills but also in the range of accredited qualifications that the pupils achieve. The evidence of indicative performance for the current final year suggests higher achievement than the previous academic year.

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

The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. An incremental range of support strategies are in place to ensure that pupils learn to improve their behaviour by reflection upon their actions, anger management, increasing self-control and acceptance of others. As a result, although some challenging behaviours remain evident, overall pupils' behaviour is good.

The staff provide strong and respectful role models for the pupils. They offer the pupils courtesy and patience when managing conflicts and this enables the pupils to feel safe even when vulnerable. One pupil who has been at the school for several years summed up the feelings of many when he commented, 'They look out for you'. The pupils respond well to regular praise and celebration of achievements which does much to boost the pupils' self-esteem and confidence. The pupils know and understand the school's procedures for rewards and sanctions, such as the credit slips, points system and red and yellow cards. Pupils are invited to self-assess their behaviour and they develop a more accurate picture of how they appear to others. As a result, they exhibit increasing maturity in their personal development. Pupils and parents have expressed a wish for additional responsibilities, such as a resumption of the school council, to be offered alongside those currently enjoyed,.

The pupils enjoy school and this is shown by marked improvements in their rate of attendance, which is good. Break times are typically social occasions where pupils mix easily with peers. The pupils have good awareness of staying safe and understand the conditions for a healthy lifestyle. They take part in physical activities such as sports and swimming, although not all pupils wear appropriate kit for physical education. Competitive sporting fixtures with similar local schools make a significant contribution to their social development and sense of fair play.

Funds are raised for national and local charities and there is a particularly strong link with a local children's hospice. Such activities help to develop an appreciation for others less fortunate than themselves. They also support children's education in Africa. Although students learn about different religions, there are no opportunities

for them to visit different places of worship or to gain from visits from leaders of other faiths.

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

The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. The essential policies and procedures aimed at minimising risks and promoting pupils' welfare, including child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, first aid, health and safety and fire safety are up to date and implemented consistently. Relevant training at appropriate levels is secured for staff in all aspects of safeguarding and first-aid.

A range of therapies is available to pupils according to their statements or subsequent assessment. The school is recognised as an approved training provider to enable the staff to manage challenging behaviour, including physical interventions when required.

All accidents, incidents and interventions by staff are recorded in detail and the data show that the school's comprehensive approach to improving pupils' behaviour is effective. Systematic checks are made on portable electrical equipment. Monitoring in relation to fire safety is very good.

Registers of attendance are maintained as required and the school works closely with parents, carers and external agencies on all welfare matters. Pupils are well supervised and say they feel safe and supported in staying healthy so that they understand the dangers of harmful substances. The school does not maintain an admission register which meets regulatory requirements. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

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

All the required safeguarding checks on staff are made, such as those through the Criminal Records Bureau. These are recorded appropriately in a single central register.

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

The school's premises and accommodation provide well for safe and effective learning. Although only a relatively small part of the fifty acre site is used for the school, there is ample provision for the pupils' needs. Since the last inspection, new, light and airy classrooms have been added and these complement the original refurbished accommodation. There are comprehensive procedures for site maintenance although the temperature of hot water to pupils' washrooms is too hot and there are no on-site showers for secondary pupils' use following physical exercise. Outside, there is a good-sized hard surfaced play area with a basketball net and adjacent grassed areas, including a football pitch. The school makes effective use of other local facilities such as a swimming pool and colleges of further education.

## Provision of information

All of the required information is provided, or made available, to parents, carers and others with one exception. Local authorities support the school's work but as at the time of the last inspection, the school does not routinely provide them with annual statements of income and expenditure in respect of pupils they refer to the school.

Approximately 20% of those eligible to return the parents' and carers' questionnaire responded. The collective view was one of overwhelming support for the school's work in relation to their children and families. One wrote, 'My son is very lucky to be at this school'. A small minority suggested that they would like to have more age-appropriate responsibilities offered to their children and the school acknowledges that this is worth considering. Home-school notebooks for younger pupils and phone calls for those who are older keep all informed. When appropriate, home visits are made to support pupils and families. The school issues academic reports of good quality, including those required for the review of looked after children and annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational needs.

## Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints policy and procedures fully meets the 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 provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that there is an admission register which is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises of and accommodation at schools (standards in part 5) and must:

- ensure that the water supply meets the requirements of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(a))

---

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

- ensure there are sufficient washrooms for staff and pupils, including facilities for pupils with special needs and disabilities, which take account of regulations 3 and 4 of the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 23(j)).

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

- provide to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred in respect of any pupil placed by a local authority (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 lesson planning and marking to be as good as the best examples in the school.
- Extend opportunities for pupils to shoulder responsibilities.
- Ensure that pupils wear appropriate clothing for physical activities.
- Provide more first-hand opportunities for pupils to learn about the different faiths and cultural communities in the United Kingdom.



## Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

### 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		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

## School details

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special school for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1988		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–18 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 28	Girls: 9	Total: 37
<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: 24	Girls: 5	Total: 29
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 22	Girls: 9	Total: 31
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£31,360		
<b>Address of school</b>	Heath Farm Charing Heath Ashford Kent TN27 0AX		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01233 712030		
<b>Email address</b>	school@heathfarm.org		
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Elizabeth Cornish		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Acorn Care and Education		

9 March 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of Heath Farm School, Ashford, TN27 0AX**

I am writing to tell you about my visit when I came to see you last week. I would like to thank you and all your staff for the warm welcome you gave me. I judged that you get a good education at Heath Farm.

It is clear that you enjoy school, get on well with your teachers and make good progress with your studies. There are several reasons you are doing well, and you play your part too.

- The headteacher, the teaching staff and the pastoral staff work very well as a team to provide you with a good quality of education.
- You told me that you enjoy school, you feel safe and that you think you are improving your behaviour and your learning. As I visited you in lessons, I could see that this is true and you usually try your best, but it is important that you wear proper kit for games lessons.
- The teaching you receive is good and the lessons help you to improve your reading and other skills that help you to achieve qualifications which will help you in later life.
- The staff always look for ways to help you with your behaviour so that you can be as successful as possible.

All schools need to improve so I have asked your headteacher to look at the way teachers plan and mark your work. I've suggested you could have more responsibilities around the school and learn about other cultures and faiths from visits and visitors. There is also a need to look at some minor maintenance issues, including providing showers after games.

Thank you once again for all your help during my visit. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Greg Sorrell  
Lead inspector