

# Hillcrest Oaklands College

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.

## **Information about the school**

Hillcrest Oaklands College is a dually-registered independent residential special school and children's home for girls aged from 12 to 19 years. It admits students who have a diagnosis of behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). As a result, students display associated behaviours. There are 10 students currently on the college roll. Seven of them have statements of special educational need and they have all had disrupted educational backgrounds. The college re-opened in April 2010 as a college for girls, after having previously been a school for boys with BESD since 2002.

All students are taught on-site, although some in post-16 also attend for part of their timetable in a local college. Altogether, nine local authorities fund students currently on roll. Two students attend on a daily basis while the others live in residential accommodation on the college site. The boarding provision was most recently inspected in July 2012 and was judged to be good. The previous inspection of the educational provision was in May 2009.

The college aims to educate students so that: "they are well prepared for the adult world and to live independent lives including meaningful employment where possible".

The current head of education has been in post since April 2012 and the principal has been in post since November 2012. Currently, both of the teachers in the college are employed on a supply basis, although the head of education also has a significant teaching commitment.

## **Evaluation of the school**

The quality of education is satisfactory and all of the regulations for independent schools are met. The college is successful in meeting its aims of preparing students for the adult world and to live independent lives. As a result of the satisfactory teaching and assessment, together with the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, students increasingly become re-engaged in their education, make satisfactory progress overall and develop personal and social skills well. The college uses a therapeutic approach so that all areas of students' development are successfully targeted in a coordinated, cohesive way. Since the previous inspection, the college has tackled the areas for improvement effectively.

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety are good, and the arrangements for safeguarding are robust and rigorous.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It meets all requirements and is supported strongly through the residence to provide 24-hour learning and personal development opportunities. In all three key stages, it is largely based on the National Curriculum with other subjects such as land-based studies and hair and beauty also provided, on site, by the college's own staff. The range of provision on site, including the college's own horses and range of livestock, also adds an important extra dimension to the delivery of the curriculum. There is a strong emphasis on developing students' social and personal skills and re-engaging them in education by enabling them to more effectively manage their own behaviour. The college provides access to a range of college placements. Plans are already at an advanced stage to expand the number of courses available from January. The college offers a good range of accreditation, including ASDAN awards (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network), Entry Level awards, BTEC Diplomas, City and Guilds qualifications and GCSEs.

Students make strong progress in the area of improving their social skills and developing their ability to learn independently and alongside others. This is due to the good curriculum and the focus that the college has on promoting a positive philosophy towards the management of behaviour which students fully understand and value. Staff are consistent in their approach when dealing with students and, as a result, students rapidly develop trust in the adults who work with them. For most, this is the first time that they have formed good relationships with adults, and the support and guidance that they receive helps to boost their feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. All students benefit from the holistic educational approach which includes personalised learning support, help and guidance which leads to good personal outcomes.

Provision and outcomes are monitored by leaders. However many of the systems now in place, or currently being developed, are new and although well-devised, their impact is not yet evident. The development of the systems for monitoring progress, do not have enough historical data to be able to clearly see the progression over time. Leaders have clear plans to develop this area further and are currently researching commercial schemes to track students' progress more effectively. During their time in the college, students develop independence and become less reliant on others to complete tasks. Strong procedures are in place for communication with the residences and homes.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. Some teaching seen during the inspection was outstanding. However some teaching seen was also inadequate and the college's leaders have already taken action to address this. The strongest teaching is in the vocational subjects including land-based studies and hair and beauty. The weaker teaching is the result of the college waiting for newly appointed

staff to take up their posts and the resultant reliance on supply teachers. Recent developments evident in many areas of the school's work are already starting to have a positive impact on the provision. An example of this is the planning systems which are now in place, with the expectation that teachers evaluate their work after each lesson. These structures are consistently implemented and take in to account the needs, likes and dislike of all students in the class.

A strong example of teaching was seen in a land-based studies lesson. Students were involved in a discussion, with visual prompts so that they could analyse the movement of a horse's hooves when walking. The students were then given the opportunity to ride the college's horses so that they could learn to monitor the footfall of the horse they were riding. They were fully involved in this lesson as it engaged them academically and practically. In the better lessons, teachers link the aims of the lessons with previous learning and support staff show that they are highly skilled in supporting the students' learning. In all lessons, relationships are strong and there is a feeling of trust between students and staff.

Students make satisfactory progress. However, in some lessons, the progress made is outstanding and in a few lessons there is also evidence of inadequate progress. This inconsistency is due to the current lack of permanent teachers on the college staff. The better progress seen in lessons is achieved by staff providing a range of enjoyable activities, in short bursts of work, and being very skilful in knowing when to intervene and challenge students' learning and when to step back and allow time for reflection and independent working.

Students undertake a period of assessment when they enter the college. This provides the college with a baseline on which to base their teaching. There is a strong emphasis on developing students' basic skills and skills to develop their employability. However currently, the teaching in the areas of literacy and numeracy is not as strong as in other areas. Students gain confidence rapidly, particularly in the way they participate in lessons and work with others. Records show that at least good progress is made by all students in areas of personal and social development

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

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The development of the moral and social aspects is an especially strong aspect. Students develop an excellent understanding of the consequences of their behaviour and respond extremely positively to support and the therapeutic approach provided within the college. They are strongly accorded equality of opportunity. All students are consulted, listened to and treated with fairness and equality. Lessons observed contained elements which helped students to further develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness well.

Students' cultural understanding is also strongly supported through themes where they learn about other cultures, often through food and reinforced in both care and education. There are many examples of activities which promote students' spirituality, such as learning about religious festivals, including Diwali, where

students experimented with henna and learnt about rituals associated with the festival from external visitors. There are also plenty of opportunities to meet people from other backgrounds. Students have visited a Sikh Gurdwara and Anglican churches and are developing strong links with the Buddhist community which is established next door. Students are helped to reflect on such events as remembrance Sunday. These events support students in developing a sense of respect and tolerance. Students have raised money for a range of charitable causes, including a local hospice, McMillan coffee mornings and Red Nose Day. The college has an active student council, which helps students to understand democratic processes and civic responsibilities' and the council meets regularly to discuss college issues. Several students also choose to attend places of worship on a regular basis.

Students' behaviour is good. They make excellent progress in managing their behaviour and anxieties. Some disruption to learning was seen during the inspection, but the majority of lessons proceed with students fully engaged and on task throughout. Behaviour improves impressively for all students as a result of the college's therapeutic approach, support and interventions which are provided, in partnership with the residence and outside agencies. Staff direct routines or activities positively so that students are able to experience success regularly. Students appreciate this. Students' attendance is very high as they enjoy being present and the college's culture of high attendance and engagement influences this. This shows a significant turnaround in attitudes for these students who had been disengaged learners prior to attending the college.

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

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. All of the required policies, including detailed guidance for child protection, are in place and are implemented well so that students feel safe and are safe. Policies are robust, comprehensive and clear, and provide all of the necessary guidance for staff. The college's behaviour policy is effectively and consistently implemented, so that it is instrumental in bringing about the significant improvements in behaviour.

Robust risk assessments are in place and they accurately identify any risks associated with students, external activities or classroom activities. Procedures to ensure that the premises and accommodation are safe are also robust. The college carries out checks on portable electrical appliances to ensure equipment is in good condition. Very good attention is paid to fire safety, with regular fire drills and evacuations in place. Smoke alarms are tested regularly and clear records are kept of fire alarm tests and checks. All staff, including the designated people for child protection, have been trained at the appropriate level and very effective systems are in place to ensure the suitability of staff through recruitment checks.

Students were regularly involved in discussions with the inspector, over the two days of the inspection, and they confirmed that they feel safe in the college. They also value the work of the college in supporting their behaviour needs. There is no evidence of bullying and the college and residences have clear procedures in place should it occur. Students lead healthy lifestyles and eat healthily. They participate in

a range of physical activities, including horse riding that help them to keep fit and get some exercise. This plays a vital role in the personal, social and emotional development of the students.

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

All of the required checks on staff and others are carried out and are recorded appropriately in the single central register.

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

There are good quality facilities and accommodation which enable students to learn safely and effectively. Classrooms are of a reasonable size and are used as generic and specialist teaching areas. The buildings and grounds are secure and well maintained throughout. There is plenty of space for outdoor recreation activities as well as a well-used indoor riding school on site. The college also keeps livestock, including pigs, goats, hens, geese and sheep on the college site. The college has plans in place to provide further residential and educational accommodation through a comprehensive building programme.

### **Provision of information**

The college's prospectus provides parents, carers and others with all of the required information. It is clear, accurate and detailed, but needs updating due to the recent appointment of the new principal. Parents and carers are provided with suitable regular reports about the attainment and progress made by their children, and contribute to the annual review process

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

The complaints procedures meet all regulatory requirements.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements**

The proprietor has ensured that the college 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 college might wish to consider the following points for development:

- Implement new systems to monitor the progress made by pupils in all subjects
- Use the best practice in the school to model good and better teaching so that a higher proportion of lessons taught are better than satisfactory.

## 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>	April 2010		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	12–19		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 10	Total: 10
<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: 10	Total: 10
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 0	Girls: 8	Total: 8
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£23,595 - £24,102 (39 weeks)		
<b>Address of school</b>	Alrewas Road Kings Bromley Burton-on-Trent DE13 7HR		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 473772		
<b>Email address</b>	oaklands.principal@hillcrestcare.co.uk		
<b>Principal</b>	David Biddle		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Hillcrest Care Ltd		

**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.**



14 December 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Hillcrest Oaklands College, Burton-on-Trent, DE13 7HR**

I would like to thank you very much for giving me such an enjoyable and memorable experience and sharing your views of your college on my recent visit. I found that your college provides you with a satisfactory education. All government requirements are met for the education provision. The college's leaders successfully ensure that you are well cared for at all times. We found the college to be good in the areas of behaviour and welfare, health and safety. It is also good in helping you to develop your understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural areas and in the curriculum it provides for you. It was clear during my visit, from your attitudes and comments, that you appreciate the staff and the way they care for you and that you largely enjoy college. Your improved behaviour and attitudes to your learning are clear strengths of the college and it is clear that you appreciate this. Teaching is satisfactory overall and as a result, you make satisfactory progress in your lessons. This means that by the time you leave, you are better prepared and have developed a level of confidence and independence with which to enter the next stage of your lives.

I have asked the college to consider the following points for development.

- Use the best teaching to model good teaching so that less is satisfactory or inadequate.
- Better monitor the progress that you make in all subjects.

You should be very proud of yourselves and your contribution to the college. We particularly enjoyed meeting you. Thanks to you all for the time you spent with us during the visit and I would like to wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Muir  
Her Majesty's Inspector