

Highfields

C/O Castlecare Education Ltd, The Manor House, Rothwell, NN14 6BQ

Inspection dates

2 May 2013

Reason for inspection

Concerns were expressed to the Department for Education as to whether the school was meeting the education standards for independent schools and in particular whether the quality of the accommodation, the curriculum and the teaching enabled students to make as much progress as they could.

Conclusions

Curriculum and teaching

- Although teaching has been stronger in the past, teaching is inadequate at present because too much is provided by residential care workers who have not been trained for their role. They, and sometimes the teaching assistant or instructor, do not always have the subject knowledge or skills to adapt the learning to ensure that students make optimal progress.
- The company's leaders have recognised the need to strengthen teaching and have been monitoring it carefully. The newly appointed teacher, on leave at the time of this inspection, has improved teaching already and left lesson plans for other staff to teach. Although these identify relevant activities for students to complete they do not make clear what different students will learn. These intended outcomes, and how students will know if they have achieved them, are thus not routinely shared with students.
- Assessments are carried out when students enter the school and their progress is checked on regularly. However, the teaching during the inspection took too little account of any identified next steps and targets for students. Discussions were at times not relevant to the aims of the lesson and, therefore, did not model to the students ways in which they should be thinking.
- Staff focus too much on completing activities rather than the skills and understanding students will gain as a result of doing these. This means that even when it is clear that the work is too easy or too hard, staff do not adapt the lesson accordingly to ensure that the challenge is appropriate and no learning time is wasted.
- Some residential care workers have been trained in their role but this is not yet compulsory for all who help in classrooms; as a result, the quality of support and teaching is inconsistent. Where learning is better, staff are much more confident in the subject being explored and the ways in which they need the student to think about the work. Students feel the work is relevant, interesting and helping them to

learn.

- Some students have statements of special educational needs with clear recommendations about particular teaching approaches and activities that will promote their learning. They do not have these routinely provided.
- Sometimes time is not used well in lessons. Although students do not misbehave they do not always engage willingly in lessons, sometimes sitting passively for long periods of time. Staff wait too long for students to join in the lesson or to respond to a question or idea, rather than giving them further clues or adapting tasks slightly to enable students to complete the tasks themselves.
- Although the school covers all the subjects that it should do and there are appropriate schemes of work in place, these are not adapted sufficiently to meet the varied needs, abilities and ages of the students at the school so that they progress as much as they could do.
- Where students have additional learning needs or a statement of special educational needs staff do not necessarily have sufficient understanding of these needs to adapt their teaching accordingly. Opportunities are then lost, for example to extend students' language skills or literacy and numeracy skills or to work towards their individual education plan target, because not all staff keep these in the forefront of what they do.
- The school has a good range of awards and accreditation that students can study for, but the amount of work completed by students and the lack of pace and challenge within lessons means that some start to fall behind and achieve lower levels.
- There have been some promising recent developments in the curriculum such as themed work integrating English and citizenship exploring topics such as homelessness that are highly relevant to students and engage their interest through field trips. These contribute to students' spiritual, social and moral development and engage their interest well.

Other observations about the school

- Safeguarding requirements are met. Designated staff for child protection have up-to-date training. There are the appropriate arrangements for training newly appointed staff in safeguarding. The single central register contains all the required information. Safe recruitment procedures are secure.
- The accommodation is secure and well cared for, with designated specialist classrooms for food technology, as well as for other subjects. Resources are adequate and improving as the leadership has purchased new textbooks and reading schemes and more technological equipment and have more that is due to arrive.
- The area headteacher is determined that the quality of education should improve but recognises that some improvements such as the appointment of the new teacher have yet to have an impact.
- The residential provision's managers are determined too that students should

benefit as much as possible from education and support the school, helping to improve attendance and supporting during the school day.

- Residential care workers have strong relationships with students and this means behavioural issues are generally well managed and reduce considerably over time. However, there are weaknesses in the teaching of some residential staff and in the role models a few provide. Some do not conform to school rules themselves, sitting with feet on chairs, with their coats on or using inappropriate phrasing or gestures when they join in lessons.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school requires improvement and must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 ('the Regulations'), and associated requirements. The school should:

- ensure the curriculum policy and schemes of work are implemented effectively paragraph 2(1)
- ensure that the subject matter is appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of pupils, including those pupils with a statement of special educational needs paragraph 2(2)(b)
- ensure that where pupils have a statement of special educational needs the education provided fulfil its requirements paragraph 2(2)(e)
- ensure that the teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught paragraph 3(a)
- ensure that the teaching involves well planned lessons, effective teaching methods, suitable activities and appropriate management of class time (paragraph 3(c)) paragraph 3(c)
- ensure that teachers have a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons paragraph 3(d)
- ensure that teachers demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught. paragraph 3(e)

Inspection team

Susan Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Information about this school

- Highfields is based within a small residential provision and provides education for boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years. It is owned by the Castlecare Group. It is currently located in an annex at the rear of the residential provision, on the outskirts of a village not far from Leicester.
- The school opened in August 2007 and was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2011. The school and the residential provision were relocated to its current location, with approval for a material change from the Department for Education, in July 2012.
- The school now provides education for up to 10 students. All are young people from other residential provisions operated by the Castlecare group, or from Highfields itself. Eight students were on roll at the time of the inspection, four boys and four girls. Only four were in school as four were on field trips or vocational placements.
- All students have identified behavioural, social and emotional difficulties and often have had a history of poor attendance or exclusion from their previous schools. Four have a statement of special educational needs, usually for behavioural and social emotional needs, but often with additional learning needs such as speech and language difficulties, attention deficit and hyperactive disorder, developmental delays and/or specific learning needs.
- An area head teacher is the headteacher of this school and of other schools within the group, whilst a lead teacher is based at the school. The school has had some staffing difficulties since it moved site. A lead teacher, appointed when the school moved premises left in January 2013 and there have been a number of temporary staff since then.
- At the time of the inspection a permanent lead teacher had recently been appointed but was absent on annual leave. Lessons observed during the inspection had been planned by this teacher, but were delivered by a teaching assistant/instructor or by residential care workers.

School details

Unique reference number	135370
Inspection number	421537
DfE registration number	855/6031
<p>This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.</p>	
Type of school	Independent
School status	Independent special school for students with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties
Age range of pupils	11-16 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Proprietor	Castlecare Ltd
Headteacher	Mary Mackinnon
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,391.60 - £25,479.00
Telephone number	01536 711111
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