

Hobbit House

c/o Castlecare Group, Kettering, Rothwell, NN14 6BQ

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2013

Overall effectiveness

	Adequate	3
Pupils' achievement	Adequate	3
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Adequate	3
Quality of curriculum	Adequate	3
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is adequate because

- Teaching is adequate overall, although it is improving and there is some that is good. It is supported by an adequate curriculum which meets the needs of students and supports them to prepare for the future.
- Students' achievement is adequate. They make improved progress in lessons when taking into account their previous learning experiences and starting points when they joined the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is well led and managed. As a result, students settle quickly and start to make progress. The headteacher reports on a monthly basis to the proprietor who has a good knowledge of the quality of education in the school. This contributes to students' achievement improving during their time in the school.
- Students' behaviour in and around school is good. This is a significant improvement on their previous behaviours. They enjoy their time in school and they start to see the benefit of education for them.
- The school has good arrangements in place to ensure that students are looked after well during their time in the school. Students' behaviour is managed positively and consistently throughout the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed four lessons, all of which were taught by the same teacher. Students were observed around the school at break times and during the school day.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff and students were spoken to. Five of the school's staff completed the Ofsted questionnaire. There were no responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire, 'Parent View'.
- Various documents, including the school's self-evaluation summary, staff files, policies and other documents were scrutinised.
- The residential provision was inspected at the same time as this inspection.

Inspection team

David Muir, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hobbit House is a school for male and female students aged eight to 17 who are in the care of their local authority. The school caters for residential students. It is a small school.
- Students often exhibit complex behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and all have had significant disruption to their schooling prior to arriving at Hobbit House. One student has a statement of special educational needs.
- The students have been in the school for one to three months. They are the first to attend the school since July 2012. Students are taught on site but there is the option to attend local mainstream or special schools and other facilities. Residential staff provide support in the classroom.
- The school, which was established in 2000, aims to recapture students' interest in learning and address gaps in their education with a view to reintegrating them into appropriate mainstream or specialist education. It is one of several schools across the country run by the Castlecare Group. The headteacher, also known as the operations manager, has responsibility for other company schools in the south of England.
- The school was last inspected in 2009.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to become good by:
 - ensuring that the good aspects evident in some of the teaching are transferred to other areas so that there is more consistency in its quality
 - judging more effectively when teachers should allow students time to think and reflect on their work
 - focusing questions so as to allow the teacher to understand what has been learnt by students and to use this to more consistently promote good progress.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Adequate

Students' achievement is adequate during their time in the school. Due to their previous experiences of interrupted education, the students are working at standards which are below the national average when they enter the school. However, when they settle, they make adequate academic progress in lessons. After entry, students are tested so that the school has an accurate assessment of the levels that they are working at in all subjects and their progress can be monitored accurately. Teachers mostly use the available data adequately to plan their lessons to meet the needs of the students and this contributes significantly to the adequate progress. This level of progress is relatively impressive due to students' prior levels of disengagement from education. In addition, there are clear individual education plans which are followed by teachers to support students in their learning and their behaviour management.

There is a clear focus in all lessons on the development of basic skills and this has had a significant impact on students' achievement in numeracy and literacy, which is now adequate. There is also some strong progress in these areas, especially in reading and spelling. The school provides opportunities for students to gain qualifications in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics at different levels including GCSE, BTEC, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), Unit Awards and Entry Level courses, which are appropriate to their abilities. The progress that students make in these courses is adequate.

Students make improved progress because of the school's expectations and the successful work done to re-engage them in their learning. In discussions, students were unanimous that they now expect to learn and make progress in their education. They clearly articulate their view that they will now gain positive outcomes from their schooling, which they did not previously feel. They say that this is due to the respect and help that they receive from staff.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students' behaviour and personal development are good. This is due to the improvements they make from their starting points of disengagement. From their previous extremely negative experiences of education, they rapidly become re-engaged in their learning resulting in positive outcomes in their education and behaviour.

Staff have a consistent approach to managing potentially challenging behaviour, which supports the good gains that students make in managing their own behaviour, social skills and emotions. Even though they have only been in the school for a short time, the students are able to talk about the impact that this consistency has had on improving their own attitudes to learning and their self-esteem. They can explain clearly what the school is doing to re-engage them and support them in developing social and other personal skills. The school was able to present some very clear evidence through case studies of the effective work done in this area.

The school's work to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. When they come in to the school, students are given opportunities to integrate into the local community. This helps them to start to regain confidence and starts to prepare them for the next stage of their lives. The students learn about a range of cultures, beliefs and religions. Students have positive attitudes towards those who are different to them, whether it be on the grounds of race, religion, sexuality or any other factor.

Quality of teaching**Adequate**

The quality of teaching is adequate overall. This supports the school's view of teaching, based on staff observations. The quality varies between subjects, reflecting different degrees of knowledge and understanding. In the subjects where there is the most confidence and expertise, teaching promotes better learning. The better teaching encourages students to develop an interest in learning and to make progress, whereas before, they were making none.

Students' work is marked to varying degrees of quality. Where there is more expertise, the best feedback provides students with clear advice on how to improve further. Learning support assistants are also key elements in supporting the learning by providing support which encourages students to develop confidence by knowing when to offer help and when to stand back and allow independence. Nevertheless, on occasions, students are not given more time to process information and think through their responses without being interrupted by staff. One consequence is that on occasion, staff do not know precisely what students have understood.

Lesson plans are detailed and provide a high level of personalisation so that it is clear what each student needs to learn in each lesson. Assessment, which takes place throughout the lessons, also allows teachers to closely monitor the learning taking place. However, this is not always acted on in a timely manner and, in a few instances, students can sometimes get demotivated and frustrated as activities are not amended to meet their needs and interests.

Quality of curriculum**Adequate**

The curriculum is adequate. It is varied and is complemented by a range of other activities across the education and residential aspects of the school. This helps students to start to develop their academic skills and also supports the rapid development of their personal skills. There is a suitably wide choice of subjects and courses available within the school at all levels appropriate to the students. There is an appropriate focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science as well as personal, social and health education. This programme of personal, social and health education supports the students adequately in developing their understanding of the wider world and helps them to prepare well for life after Hobbit House.

All subjects have detailed policies and schemes of work in place to ensure that there is clear progression and coherence across the years and key stages. In some cases, the school has worked with other schools and colleges to provide a further opportunity to access other the curriculum opportunities. However, this is not currently happening for students, as they are in the early stages of their placements. The school is currently researching opportunities with a local college to provide more opportunities for new students.

The school provides suitable careers education and guidance and students say that they feel better supported in making choices relating to their futures. The school has plans to develop this area further to make it more effective and to minimise the uncertainty for the young people as they near the end of their time in school.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Good**

The detailed procedures that are in place for minimising risks for individual students are key factors in ensuring that students are safe when in the school. All the regulations are met.

All recruitment checks are undertaken correctly and the evidence is correctly recorded in the single central register. Each student has a risk assessment which members of staff are aware of and use to plan for pastoral activities. These assessments are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure

that they remain fit for purpose.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding including the teacher with overall responsibility. Training in safeguarding, first aid and other areas is up to date. All staff are suitably trained in managing behaviour and there is a clear and active focus in the school on defusing any potential for challenging behaviour. This approach helps students to manage their own behaviour very effectively and avoids situations where challenging behaviour could escalate. The systems for monitoring behaviour are very effective. They are applied consistently across the school, so that students are very clear about the consequences of their behaviour. As a result of this, within a very short time of arriving in the school they are much better at managing their own behaviour, which leads to the behaviour in the school being good overall due to the improvements made. Students are aware of different types of bullying and know what to do if they are being bullied.

There are strong links with other agencies, such as social services, and child and adolescent mental health services. This helps students in their personal development and in understanding how they can overcome the personal issues that led to them coming to Hobbit House.

Students enjoy healthy lifestyles and understand what it means to be healthy. The school undertakes regular health and safety checks in all areas and fire equipment is kept in good order. The site team ensures that the standards of maintenance are high across the school site.

Leadership and management

Good

The leadership and management of the school are good. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and shows that leaders know the school well and know what it needs to do to improve further. There are regular reviews of all aspects of the school's work, including the curriculum and the quality of teaching. The accuracy of the headteacher's judgments on teaching was illustrated during discussions around the quality of teaching seen during the inspection. The school's staff have already addressed a range of issues and have taken appropriate action to improve the overall consistency of teaching and other areas of the school's work. This means that although students' achievement is currently adequate, this is a strong improvement on the progress being made prior to their placement in Hobbit House. Leaders' awareness has also resulted in students making good progress in managing their own behaviour. There is now a focus on improving the teaching of the subjects where improvement is most needed and this is already having success.

Students' work is scrutinised by leaders so that they have a clear idea of the progress being made in lessons as well as the quality of feedback to support learning over time. The headteacher is currently working on how to develop systems to better assess achievement over time, due to the often short nature of students' placements. There is no governing body, but the headteacher has the responsibility to feed back information about the education in the school to the Castlecare Group which owns the school.

All requirements relating to what parents and carers should receive are contained in the school's information pack. They also receive reports about the progress that students are making. The procedures for handling complaints are clear, concise and meet requirements. The proprietor and senior staff have ensured that the premises and accommodation are suitable across the site and that all the independent school standards are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	131564
Inspection number	397639
DfE registration number	886/6112

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Special
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	8–17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Castlecare Group
Chair	Castlecare Group
Headteacher	Mrs M Paige
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 June 2009

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