

Highfields

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

Inspection dates

21 January 2014

Context of the inspection

The inspection was undertaken at the request of the registration authority for independent schools in order to monitor the progress the school has made since its last inspection. The school was last inspected on 2 May 2013, as part of an unannounced emergency inspection. This was because concerns had been raised about the quality of education, the curriculum, and the quality of teaching. The inspection found that the quality of teaching was inadequate. The inspection also found that the curriculum was not adapted sufficiently well to meet the varied needs, abilities and ages of the students at the school so that they made as much progress as they could do. An action plan was prepared by the school to outline how it intended to address the issues identified in the inspection. The plan was reviewed, and accepted, by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors on 27 August 2013. This was the first visit to the school to check leaders' progress in making the necessary improvements to meet regulatory requirements. The visit was made without notice.

Summary of the progress made in implementing the action plan

Good progress

Leaders have successfully implemented the action plan, which they prepared following the last inspection in May 2013. Consequently, all of the regulations identified as being unmet at the time of the last inspection have now been met. The quality of teaching is improving and is no longer inadequate. The curriculum is now being adapted more effectively to meet the needs of different students. As a result, students are making better progress.

At the time of the last inspection, teachers failed to ensure that students learned enough in lessons. One of the main reasons for this was that staff did not fully understand what they were trying to teach students, because their lessons were not planned carefully enough. In the school's action plan, leaders indicated that they would provide staff with opportunities to become more familiar with the subjects and topics that students are expected to learn about at the school. As a result of this, staff reviewed the school's curriculum policy in September 2013. This has helped staff to become more confident about what they are expected to teach.

At the time of the last inspection, staff did not consider students' individual needs carefully enough when planning lessons for them. Since the last inspection, leaders have raised their expectations of the quality of teachers' planning. As a result, teachers now plan individual programmes of learning for each student, which align more closely with students' needs. Observations of teaching, and checks of students' work, indicate that teachers' plans are being delivered effectively to students.

The inspection of May 2013 found that the provision for students with a statement of special educational needs did not fulfil its requirements. Leaders have successfully ensured that arrangements to support these students have been strengthened. For example, teachers, school staff and care staff now work more closely together to ensure that the

needs and targets identified in students' statements are addressed in a uniform way. Leaders also ensure that they work effectively with other professionals to review and amend students' statements of special educational needs when necessary, so that statements accurately reflect students' needs. When new students arrive at the school, staff ensure that their needs and abilities are swiftly identified and recorded. Staff then make appropriate arrangements to support new students by drawing up individual education plans for them. Staff ensure that these plans remain current, and reflect students' changing needs, by reviewing them on a half-termly basis.

At the time of the last inspection, teaching was not good enough to enable students to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability. Teachers' planning indicates that they now take students' prior learning and achievement more closely into account. For example, planning considers the National Curriculum levels that individual students are working at and outlines activities to meet the abilities of students working at each level. This is helping to ensure that lessons are pitched at the right level for students and is supporting their improved progress. However, on rare occasions, teachers stick too rigidly to their plans, and miss opportunities to extend and challenge the most able students. As a result of improving teaching, students are becoming increasingly engaged in learning. For example, some students, especially those working at GCSE level, know the grade targets they are expected to achieve.

The inspection of May 2013 found that teachers did not use time effectively in lessons, or used inappropriate teaching methods, and sometimes lacked appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught. A new teacher has been appointed since the last inspection, meaning that there are now two qualified teachers in the school. The two teachers work effectively together and have agreed their roles and responsibilities to ensure that they are able to teach to their strengths. This, combined with effective training, has helped to ensure that teaching methods are successful in engaging students in learning. Teachers were observed making effective use of time during this monitoring visit to support students' learning. For example, on some occasions students attempted to divert their teacher's attention away from the lesson. Whenever this happened, teachers resolutely stuck to the learning objectives they had planned. Staff have received training since the last inspection to help them deal with challenging behaviour in a positive way. The training has been effective and, consequently, teachers and support staff manage students' behaviour skilfully to ensure that incidents of disruptive behaviour, although sometimes inevitable due to the nature of this setting, are kept to a minimum.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school has made good progress and now meets all regulatory requirements.

Inspection team

Jeremy Spencer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's 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 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 May 2013. 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 residential provision adjoining the school, but under separate registration, was last inspected in September 2013, and was not part of this inspection.
- The school provides education for up to 10 students. Eight students, three boys and five girls, are currently on roll. All are young people from other residential provisions operated by the Castlecare Group, or from Highfields itself.
- 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 students have a statement of special educational needs, usually for behavioural and social and 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 headteacher serves as the headteacher of the school, and of other schools within the group, but is not based on the school site. A lead teacher and one other teacher are based at the school.

School details

Unique reference number	135370
Inspection number	433373
DfE registration number	855/6031
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.	
Type of school	Independent
School status	Independent special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	8
Proprietor	Castlecare Ltd
Headteacher	Mary Mackinnon
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2013
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,391.60 – £25,479.00
Telephone number	01536 711111
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