

Brook House Farm

C/o Castlecare, The Manor House, Squire's Hill, Rothwell, Northamptonshire, NN14 6BQ

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- The leadership and management of the school are good. In the short time since the school re-opened, company managers have ensured that teaching is good and improving in quality.
- Company managers monitor carefully the learning and progress being made by students to ensure that it is in line with expectations and improving.
- The behaviour and safety of students are good. Sometimes, they demonstrate outstanding attitudes to learning.
- Students report that they feel very safe here and the school operates good procedures to keep them safe.
- Through their good teaching, staff skilfully settle students placed here at short notice so that they can successfully return to full-time education.
- In their classes, students generally learn quickly and make good progress in all subjects. Their achievements are good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In lessons, students do not always make as much progress in English and mathematics as they could. This is because they are not always sure what is expected of them, how well they are doing or how to improve even further.
- Following a prolonged period when the school was not operational, leaders and managers have not yet completed the implementation of systems for managing teachers' performance as used in other of the company's schools.
- While the school is effective in supporting students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social developments, it does not provide them with the widest range of practical experiences to enhance their understanding of vocational education and cultural traditions even further.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed parts of four lessons taught by a small number of teachers. He made other visits to the classroom to talk with students and staff.
- Discussions were held with the regional headteacher, the classroom staff, other members of staff, and a small number of students. No staff questionnaires were returned and there were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) for these to be considered. The inspector took account of the views of staff, parents and local authorities in other ways.
- The inspector spoke with students during lessons and took note of their views.
- A number of documents were looked at including school policies, records of students' behaviour and achievements, and samples of their work.

Inspection team

Terry McKenzie

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Brook House Farm is a small school owned by Castle Care. It caters for students who are resident with the company. Students placed here will often have special educational needs relating to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is designed for students who may need to be placed at very short notice and who sometimes stay for very short periods of time.
- Currently, off-site vocational and educational placements are not used. Early entry for GCSE is unlikely to be used in the school.
- The school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2006 when a number of the independent school regulations were not met. Following that inspection, the school remained registered but no students were placed here until November 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - fully implementing the company's systems for managing staff performance
 - ensuring that teachers' performance is related to pay and advancement.
- Ensure that students make the best possible progress in lessons by helping them to understand better:
 - the extent of the learning that is expected to take place in each lesson
 - when they have been successful in their learning
 - how to improve further.
- Ensure that, when students are ready, they are provided with a wider range of more practical activities, such as off-site visits and placements, to extend their knowledge and experience of vocational education and their understanding of people from different backgrounds.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are good

- The good leadership and management of the school by the company directors and area managers have ensured that, following its recent re-opening, the school is fit to serve the students for whom it is designed. They have created a positive approach in school which encourages students to behave well and make good progress in learning.
- They have ensured that all of the requirements for safeguarding and recruitment are met. The policies and procedures that support the welfare, health and safety of students are all in place and implemented effectively. Regular fire practice evacuations are undertaken, evaluated and recorded by senior staff. Contractors employed by the company ensure that health and safety checks are regularly undertaken.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that suitable courses of study have been made available to the recently admitted students. The school is sufficiently well equipped to provide a wide range of educational opportunities for students including the undertaking of externally examined courses.
- The courses are designed to enable students to fill in the gaps in their knowledge and work to their potential in all areas of study required. Consequently, all are included and none excluded from learning and there is equality of opportunity available to all.
- Clear policies are in place to ensure that good relations are promoted between all who come here. None are discriminated against. Courses of study take account of British values. Respect for others from different backgrounds in society and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students are supported well. However, while the regulations are met, the school recognises that more could yet be done to show how, when students are ready, they can be encouraged to take part in activities outside of school to help them understand more about the world of work and to bring them into contact with people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds.
- Computer programmes that enable teachers to track and record the progress made by students have been installed by the company. There is a constant check made by managers on how well the teachers are tracking students' achievements and progress.
- Careers advice is provided to students as part of their studies in the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Staff also talk with students formally and informally in lessons and outside of school time about the opportunities they might have when they move on from school.
- **The governance of the school:**

The governance of the school is good. Company managers have rigorously ensured that all of the regulations are met and this is a significant improvement from the inspection of 2006.

Following a lengthy period of time without students on roll, the methods used by the company to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching here are in the early stages of development. In this very small school, there are no middle managers but teachers have clear roles and responsibilities.

Company managers have ensured that the premises and accommodation of the school are maintained in good condition.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Occasionally, their attitudes to learning are outstanding. Students are generally relaxed in class and form positive working relationships with staff. An example of this was seen during one lesson where a student was reluctant to complete some mathematics work but was persuaded gently by the teacher to not give up.
- When speaking with other students or with adults they are polite and well mannered. Visitors are treated with respect and made to feel welcome. The positive working relationships promoted by staff encourage students to attempt more in class than they might otherwise.
- Students attend extremely well here. They say that they enjoy coming to school. Indeed, staff report that students and staff can frequently be found working together long after the official close of the school day.
- There have been no serious incidents or exclusions since the school re-opened in November 2014.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. School staff and company managers are

diligent in ensuring that the regulations for spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments of students are met.

- Students report that they feel very safe here. When asked by the inspector, one student said that bullying is unheard of and there is no harassment of any kind.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments of students are supported by education and residential staff. For example, some days have a theme to encourage students to think and learn about people from other cultures and backgrounds.
- Staff do more than they are required to do under the regulations with regard to the welfare, health and safety of students. For example, a number of staff have undertaken higher levels of training relating to child protection matters. The company rigorously checks new staff and supply staff and maintains the details on a single central register of staff appointments.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The good teaching is directly responsible for enabling students who have previously spent considerable time outside of education to return to productive learning. This is a significant strength of the school. This occurs because teachers are skilful in overcoming students' reluctance to take part in lessons.
- Students placed here often have great gaps in their learning. Nevertheless, all are making good gains in their literacy and numeracy. Teachers focus on helping students to gain confidence in their reading, writing and number work. As a result, some students have already been awarded certificates from the AQA Unit Award Scheme and this has greatly boosted their self-esteem.
- Teachers demonstrate the required subject knowledge and skills, and plan well for the lessons. They take good account of the prior learning and individual needs of students so that activities are well matched to their interests and abilities. They make good use of the resources available in the school and when necessary bring apparatus and equipment in from other schools owned by the company.
- On occasions, teachers do not explain carefully enough to students what will be required of them during the course of a lesson and what the exact nature of the learning will be. As a result, students are sometimes unsure what is expected of them and what they must do to make the best progress in their studies. Occasionally, the feedback given by teachers is not accurate enough and students are left unsure about how to improve.
- Opportunities exist within the timetable for staff and students to read newspapers together and reflect on what is current in the news. When questioned by the inspector, the teacher explained this provides plenty of opportunity for students to consider British values and to debate aspects of democracy, such as how the political parties are beginning to make themselves ready for the forthcoming general election. Elements of some of the specific courses taught by staff refer directly to the public institutions and services of England and can lead to an accredited qualification.
- The personal, social and health education course (PSHE) taught by staff provides opportunities for students to learn and consider potential difficulties faced by those in society from different backgrounds or who might suffer from a disability.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The achievement of students, including those with special educational needs, is good. All have experienced previous extreme disruptions to their schooling and have fallen behind in their studies. Their attendance has previously been erratic and, on starting here, their standards are much lower than for most students nationally.
- Nevertheless, they are filling in the gaps in their learning and beginning to catch up with others of the same age. The gains they are making even at this early stage are equipping them to undertake courses that will be externally examined such as in Functional Skills, Entry Level Certificate and ASDAN. The school makes use of the AQA Unit Award Scheme so that students can feel successful and gain confidence in their own abilities. Students are already been awarded a range of certificates of achievement.
- The school was without students for a very long time and there are no historical records of students' attainments or progress. Nevertheless, company managers have a clear understanding of the expectations of progress and national standards. They have ensured that teachers keep careful records of each student's progress from the time of enrolment. Consequently, it can already be seen that students, including the most able, are making rapid progress in English and mathematics from their very low

starting points.

- Students make good progress in their reading and spelling. The evidence of this was seen during the inspection and is confirmed by the records that teachers keep. The gains made in other subjects are beginning to be evidenced through the computer-based systems that teachers maintain. Students have access to all of these records and are keen to be involved when they are updated.
- Students take great pride in their work and enjoy showing how well they are doing. For example, during the inspection one student told the inspector to make sure that he looked at his ASDAN folder as well as his English and mathematics work because 'my best work is here!'
- Homework is undertaken by students almost every day and their efforts are well supported by the residential staff. It is often the case that school extends until late in the afternoon because students become particularly interested in following lines of enquiry in the studies or simply wish to complete a piece of work. Here, they are willingly supported by teachers.
- Teachers and residential staff report that since their enrolment in the school, and with the successes gained in education, the self-confidence and self-esteem of students has risen dramatically. As a result, they become ever more willing to take part in learning and are prepared to attempt more regularly those aspects of learning that they find particularly challenging.
- When the rate at which students make progress falls back it is because their concentration waivers. This is usually when they are unsure of what exactly is expected of them or how they can improve.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	131289
Inspection number	451867
DfE registration number	896/6033

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	10–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Castle Homes Care Limited
Headteacher	Mary Mackinnon
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2006
Telephone number	01536 711111
Fax number	01536 712994
Email address	rburrows@castlehomes.co.uk

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