

# Highfields

c/o Castlecare Education Ltd, The Manor House, Squires Hill, Rothwell, NN14 6BQ

**Inspection dates** 11–13 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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

- Effective work between their homes and the school enables students to make good progress and achieve well from low starting points.
- Students join with low attainment but successfully re-engage with learning. They gain accreditation that meets individual needs.
- Teaching is good and students enjoy their learning, so they do well.
- A safe environment helps students to transform their extremely challenging behaviour.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. In particular, it helps them develop far more positive social attitudes.
- Staff help students to appreciate that people might hold different views and beliefs, which helps them prepare for life in modern Britain.
- Leadership focuses on raising standards. Leaders check the quality of teaching and the impact this has on students' learning and achievement. They ensure the school meets all the independent school regulations.
- Those responsible for governance support and challenge staff effectively. They have helped ensure that this is a good and rapidly improving school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers and teaching assistants do not have enough time for planning together.
- There is no link between appraisal and salary progression.
- Self-evaluation is limited because it does not use the most recent version of independent school regulations.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, 'the independent school standards' and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place with one day's notice. Lessons were observed and the inspector spent time talking with teachers and care staff about the ways in which education is supported throughout the whole day. This included the ways in which the company's residential homes work in conjunction with the school.
- Meetings were held with the company's national education manager, the executive headteacher responsible for a group of the company's schools, the centre leader and the manager of the children's home that shares the site with the school. This is one of four residences within the company that sends students to the school.
- There were no responses to the Ofsted online Parent View survey. Since all students are children looked after by their local authorities, the views of staff with responsibilities for acting as carers for the young people were sought in order to gain their views about the quality of education and provision at Highfields.
- The inspector spoke with students to gather their views. Their work was observed in lessons and written work completed over time was looked at to provide evidence of progress. Detailed case studies enabled the inspector to gain a view of the wider provision and support for students.
- The views of staff were gathered from discussions throughout the inspection and from the returned staff questionnaires.
- The inspector checked compliance with the independent school regulations. He looked at a range of written evidence, including data on the progress made by students, teachers planning and assessment, the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, and a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Highfields is part of the Castlecare Group and is a small independent school catering for residential students who live in four of the company's children's homes in the area. The provision in the residences did not form part of this inspection, which looked solely at education in the school.
- It is registered for 10 boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16 years and currently there are eight on roll, all of whom are children looked after by their local authority. Four have a statement of special educational needs, specifying behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and associated complex needs.
- The school was registered in 2007 and had its last standard inspection in May 2013. An emergency unannounced inspection took place in May 2013 and a progress monitoring inspection was undertaken in January 2014.
- The care provision in the residence that shares the same site was last inspected in February 2015.
- At present the school does not use any alternative provision for educational placements and does not enter any students early for GCSE examinations.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Create time and opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to plan together in order to maximise their ability to support students to make rapid progress.
- Develop appraisal and performance management systems that create a clear link between staff performance and their salary progression.
- Strengthen self-evaluation by basing its analysis and judgements on the most recent version of the independent school regulations.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher, who is responsible for a group of the company's schools, and the centre leader provide effective leadership and direction. They ensure that all the independent school regulations are met. Working very closely with the managers of the residences who send their young people to Highfields School, they make sure that students' learning, together with their social and emotional development, are supported in a totally consistent way throughout the whole day. The two teachers at the school, one of whom acts as teacher-in-charge, work alongside staff from the residences who bring the students in to school and then stay to act as teaching assistants.
- Teaching is generally good, supported by effective leadership, and has improved strongly since the last inspection. Good arrangements for monitoring teaching, planning and assessment are effective and inform the process of appraisal and the management of staff performance. Currently, this does not extend to creating a clear link between performance and salary progression. Clear annual objectives are set for staff which strikes a balance between meeting the identified needs of the school and the personal professional development of staff.
- Self-evaluation is effective in creating a picture of strengths and areas for development. However, the documentation used for self-evaluation does not reflect the most recent version of the independent school regulations. This means that some high profile areas, such as the promotion of British such as democracy and the rule of law, do not receive sufficient weight in the analysis.
- The curriculum is based on the national curriculum, giving students a broad and balanced timetable. With very small student numbers it is possible to ensure that individual needs are met and students all learn at the right level. Staff have high expectations and students are supported and challenged in a way that successfully encourages re-engagement. Citizenship is taught as a discrete subject, leading to accreditation, and helps students develop positive attitudes towards the rule of law, views different to their own and the importance of being active participants in society.
- The development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The social elements are particularly effective because they help students develop their ability to collaborate, share and support each other. Over time students develop much greater self-confidence, self-esteem and self-knowledge.
- Great care is taken to support every individual and the school ensures equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination. Care is taken to ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet all legal requirements and are implemented rigorously to ensure the well-being of students. Arrangements for staff recruitment are rigorous and fully in line with requirements. Training for staff is of a high quality and up to date.
- Careers education is taught throughout the school, all students receiving independent advice and having opportunities for work experience. It is a sign of the success of the school that most students choose to stay in education after Year 11 and arrangements to support transition are good.
- Links with the local authorities who place young people at the children's homes are strong. They speak highly of the provision made for their young people. They appreciate the high quality of information and supporting documentation that is prepared for reviews, strategy meetings and other events at which local authorities monitor the progress of their young people. It is clear that the views of the students are taken into full account at all stages. Similarly, strong links are also in place for collaborative working with a range of professionals who work to support the students in their wider lives.
- The premises provide facilities and equipment to support effective education. All required information is available to the local authorities who place students at the school, including details of the fully compliant complaints procedure.
- **The governance of the school:**

Leaders are held to account for all aspects of their work by the leaders of the company. This effectively supports the good achievement of students and delivery of the curriculum. Reports ensure that directors are aware of the quality of teaching and learning, and how this supports the improving levels of students' achievement.

The company is committed to supporting rising standards and national leaders support schools across the country. At the same time, care is taken to ensure effective financial management underpins the quality of provision.

A senior director has specific responsibility for safeguarding, ensuring that legal requirements are all met and that staff training is of high quality.

The national education leader ensures that challenging annual objectives are set for school leaders and holds them to account for the quality of their work. However, currently there is no direct link between performance and pay.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. When students are first admitted their behaviour is extremely challenging and on occasions remains so. The very careful and extremely effective liaison between the residences and the school leads to consistent expectations about behaviour which supports rapid improvement. Students develop a greater resilience, together with the ability to take responsibility for their own actions and the impact they will have on other people. No students have been excluded from school and the very good condition of the buildings and facilities reflects students' growing respect for the environment and for each other.
- The school and the residences share the view that all behaviours are a form of communication and they listen carefully. Students form strong relationships with education and care staff, who act as very positive role models. This presents students with a model from which they start to transform their own behaviour.
- This approach supports re-engagement in education and the current Year 11 students are all looking forward to moving on to further education. Some have aspirations for going on to higher education, yet when all students arrive they have previously experienced patterns of failure in the education system.
- There is a culture of high expectations, yet when students fall short of this they are never allowed to slip back. There is a constant expectation of progress with social and emotional development as well as improving educational standards.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and meet all legal requirements. All staff are given thorough training in fire safety, first aid, child protection and in the safe use of restraint, which is used as a last resort and with a clear focus on de-escalating incidents. Carers, as well as the students themselves, believe this is a safe place.
- All serious incidents and uses of restraint are logged and analysed carefully by the school and by the company centrally, so that any lessons can be learned that might help improve practice. The need for any restraint reduces over time as students settle into school life.
- Risk assessments of students, the site and of any places where a visit is proposed are detailed and thorough. Full approval has to be obtained from the executive headteacher before any visits can be made to ensure high levels of safety.
- The different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, together with the risks of misuse of the internet and social media networks are covered in lessons and students show a good understanding. Supervision is effective in school and there is little opportunity for any bullying to take place, so incidents are very rare.
- Punctuality is good. All students are driven to school by a member of the care staff who then stays to act as a learning support assistant in lessons. Students develop good habits by arriving promptly to lessons.

Attendance is transformed and currently the majority are attending for over 90% of the time. This supports their capacity to learn and to make up the sometimes huge gaps in prior knowledge that have come about as a result of long periods out of education in the past.

- Students' respect for others improves as they develop their social skills and awareness. As a result, once they have settled in, there is little use of derogatory and abusive language. The school is a positive community where people generally get on well together. At the same time, care is taken to ensure that visitors are suitable, and are checked and monitored.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and there are now two experienced and well-qualified full-time members of teaching staff. They work well with learning support assistants so that students benefit from high levels of individualised support that helps them make good progress. Emotional as well as educational progress is good, supported by the close working between school and the residences that ensures full consistency of practice and expectations. The regulations relating to the quality and impact of teaching are all met.
- There are high expectations and strong support so that students come to see effective learning as the norm. This helps them make good progress and they enjoy learning, encouraged by the success they start to achieve. Teaching is consistently good in the key areas of reading, writing and mathematics, and opportunities are taken to develop these skills across all the subjects that are taught.
- Work is marked regularly and is often accompanied with positive support in the form of advice on next steps or on how a piece of work could be improved. Teachers are well aware of the progress and current levels of the students. However, there is little reference in students' books to the individual learning targets that are set for each student, or what they have to do to reach them.
- Lesson planning by the teachers is good and addresses each student's individual needs and ability. At the moment, they have little time in the week for planning or to work with learning support assistants to plan together, which can sometimes limit the effectiveness of these additional adults.
- A good feature of lessons is the use of questioning. This involves students in active learning and helps staff to know that topics are being understood. Students enjoy discussions and, in turn, this helps them develop social awareness, such as learning that the views of others are valid and should be heard.
- Topics covered in lessons, as well as the variety of strategies used to engage students, appeal to them so they enjoy lessons and participate positively. Strong relationships with adults support students in helping them to realise their potential and to start to fulfil it, sometimes for the first time in their school lives.
- Learning is often supported by the good use of technology and all students have access to lap-top computers, which are used well. At the same time, their access to other modern forms of technology, such as hand-held tablet computers, is very limited.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- The patterns of broken education that all the students experienced in their lives mean that, when they arrive, their attainment is low. The strong support they receive from staff in school and the residences helps them to transform their attitudes to education as they re-engage with learning. By the end of Year 11, attainment is therefore much nearer to the average and supports students in going on to further education. Some express hopes to eventually go on the higher education and start to map out clear routes to future success.
- Since the last inspection, the school has developed robust systems for measuring progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This shows that a high proportion are making at least the progress expected from their individual starting points and many are making better than expected progress. This means that achievement is good. In a school where all students are disadvantaged, attainment and progress is

improving rapidly compared to students nationally, albeit from low starting points. With such small numbers of students, currently eight in total, the focus of analysis is on individual outcomes rather than in looking at the progress of identified groups. Teachers have a clear picture of the current levels of every student.

- Care is taken to assess accurately the levels at which students are performing when they first arrive and where the gaps are in their learning and understanding caused by the large amounts of time they have spent out of education in the past. This enables challenging, yet realistic, targets to be set and progress towards these is assessed every half-term, giving a clear picture of individual progress.
- Where this is not as rapid as expected a range of additional support for reading, writing and mathematics is available. This helps students to get back on track and so all are making progress over time in these subjects. In turn, this supports good progress in all subjects that are taught.
- There is good support for the most able, who make rapid progress once they have become inspired to learn. Specialist teachers from within the wider company provide individual teaching and learning. Sometimes this is supported by good use of technology, such as using face-to-face internet communications for teaching individual lessons. This enables such students to go on and gain GCSE success at the end of Year 11.
- There is a clear expectation that all students will be successful in gaining external accreditation. Care is taken to match individual students with accreditation opportunities in which they can be successful. Opportunities exist to gain Unit Award, Entry Level and GCSE success, together with awards from the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Last year, every student left with some form of accreditation to acknowledge the progress they had made.

## What inspection judgements mean

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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook).



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135370
<b>Inspection number</b>	454279
<b>DfE registration number</b>	855/6031

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special school – behaviour, emotional and social difficulties
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	8
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Castlecare Group
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mary MacKinnon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 May 2013
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£176,212 - £213,564
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