

Hall Cliffe School

Dovecote Lane, Horbury, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF4 6BB

Inspection dates

9–11 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	N/A

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and managers work effectively with the proprietor and governors to set high aspirations for the school. The governing board holds leaders and managers to account and provides good support.
- Pupils make good progress from low starting points in social, emotional and academic development. Almost all pupils meet, and a few exceed, the expected progress for those with similar starting points. They are on track to meet the school's aims.
- Pupils feel safe. They understand how to keep themselves safe and report concerns. They are tolerant of others and respect all members of society equally.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of British values and public services and institutions in England. They have recently elected their own school council.
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence are developing well, enabling them to engage with learning and make progress. Pupils trust adults and feel safe in their care.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers plan and deliver lessons which enable pupils to re-engage with learning and make individual progress. The proprietor has developed a high-quality framework for assessment without levels.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small group of the most-able pupils are not reaching their full potential.
- Teachers' planning does not take sufficient account of assessment outcomes.
- Behaviour in free time is less good than in lessons.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide planned opportunities for the most-able pupils to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Make references to assessment information in pupils' individual weekly plans to ensure that learning always provides an appropriate challenge.
- Improve behaviour on corridors and at busy times of the day, and continue to challenge occasional occurrences of inappropriate language.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management **is good**

- The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all the independent school standards.
- The proprietor and the governing board ensure good outcomes for pupils by holding leaders and managers to account and providing good support.
- Leaders have high expectations and ambition, and successfully spread these throughout the school.
- Leaders have accurately assessed the school's strengths and areas for development. The link between self-evaluation and the school development plan is clearly evident; it is driving improvement.
- The curriculum fully meets the areas of learning specified in the independent school standards and enables pupils to re-engage with learning after an uncertain period in their lives. Pupils also learn Spanish and follow vocational training on a farm.
- The 'Life in Britain' course provides good outcomes in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as British values, and helps in raising pupils' understanding of extremism. This course includes the development of personal skills and attitudes to prepare pupils for the world of work.
- Impartial careers advice is provided by an external agency. Pupils succeed in work experience placements and reward the trust placed in them.
- Pupils will gain qualifications through a full range of accreditation including GCSE, Entry Level in English and mathematics, BTEC awards and personal development through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).
- Leaders ensure good teaching and learning by monitoring the quality of teaching in the school, including performance management procedures and access to an extensive programme of continuing professional development. Teachers appreciate the support they receive.
- Leaders and managers ensure that pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties are supported to improve their behaviour and personal development. In turn, this enables them to make good progress.
- The school is housed in a former convent. Spacious teaching rooms help to create an appropriate learning environment for pupils with complex learning needs, and the former chapel has an inspiring atmosphere.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Good governance by the school's board ensures that leaders are held to account. The board is chaired by a representative of the proprietor who visits the school regularly.
 - Governors are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development as a result of their discussions with senior leaders about the self-evaluation and development plan.
 - Their control of resources results in good outcomes for pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
 - The single central register fully meets the regulations.
 - The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements and is published on its website.
 - Responsible persons and the whole staff have current training at the designated levels in child protection and safe recruitment procedures.
 - All staff have confirmed their reading of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, as required.
 - Adults and pupils have a good awareness of safeguarding matters.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Teachers help pupils to make good progress by planning lessons for individuals on a weekly basis. However, these plans do not always use the school's assessment scheme to ensure that learning provides an appropriate challenge.
- Pupils make good progress because teachers support their social and emotional progress, which gives them the confidence to learn.
- Teaching assistants contribute to good learning outcomes because they understand the needs of the individual pupil.

- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use teaching styles which interest pupils and challenge them to achieve well. Pupils understand their progress and attainment because they record their achievement on sheets based on the school's assessment scheme.
- Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously and give them advice on how to improve. Pupils do not always respond to questions and requests in the marking.
- Pupils are developing an interest in reading for pleasure. Pupils contribute to lessons by reading aloud accurately and fluently. The school has a well-stocked library.
- Pupils have developed the self-esteem and self-confidence to begin to plan the next stage in their lives. Several who had previously rejected education are now discussing education and career plans.
- Parents receive termly summaries of pupils' progress and comprehensive annual reports.
- Teachers support pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum by introducing key words and calculations into all subjects as appropriate.
- The school is helping pupils to understand their achievement by using a high-quality framework for assessment. The framework records progress on a points scale related to eventual accreditation levels in the available qualifications.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils join the school with low self-confidence and self-esteem, and have often had long periods away from education. They had often found it difficult to establish relationships with peers and adults to support their learning.
- In a short time from when they join the school, pupils are making good progress and know how to make choices and value the opportunity to take responsibility. When the school created its new school council, a large number of pupils wanted to stand for election.
- Pupils discuss openly their previous poor behaviour and reflect on how it prevented them learning. They now have ambitions to plan the next stage of their lives. Much of this success is the result of the work of committed therapists who have an in-depth understanding of individual pupils.
- Attendance is below average because of a small proportion of pupils who are persistent absentees. All other pupils attend school regularly and punctually.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to report concerns. They say there is very little bullying and that which occurs is always well managed by staff.
- Pupils understand the need for healthy eating, which is effectively promoted by the school.
- Through the 'Life in Britain' course, pupils have a growing understanding of issues and are making good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils understand the faith and customs of other cultures and know they must value all members of society equally.
- They understand the difference between right and wrong, and are learning to make the right choices and be accountable for them. They have enthusiastically taken part in the democratic election of the school council members.
- The school has an effective health and safety policy and practice to keep all members of the school community safe. This includes fire safety, first aid provision and risk assessment for both activities and individual pupils.
- The school's leaders monitor pupils' behaviour, safety, attendance and progress related to their activities at Wigfield Farm.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good because they are making significant progress in managing their own behaviour and developing respect for the rights of other members of the school community.
- Behaviour in lessons is typically good. Pupils concentrate on their learning, achieve well and take pride in the outcomes. When there is a larger group or pupils have the freedom of corridors and outside space, behaviour occasionally becomes more robust.
- Pupils understand their past actions and can reflect on them. They are making good progress in developing their self-confidence but when challenged to account for their behaviour, a small proportion of pupils are sometimes inclined to lose control of their language.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Most pupils enter the school with very low prior attainment. A significant proportion of pupils are working at the expectation of a whole key stage below their chronological age.
- Reading and spelling ages of well over half of the pupils tested on entry are at least two years below the pupils' chronological age, and many significantly more. These pupils had become disengaged from education and were demonstrating low self-esteem and poor behaviour.
- Achievement is improving rapidly. In the short time at Hall Cliffe, most pupils have made at least expected progress and a small number have exceeded expectations.
- In order to achieve this level of progress, pupils have improved their social and emotional skills to enable them to access learning. This has been achieved especially well in the 'nurture group' of the school's youngest pupils. These pupils are an excellent example of how the school's aims are being met.
- Pupils' good personal development results in the confidence to discuss their learning with adults and to reflect on their previous achievement and behaviour and look ahead.
- A small number of the most-able pupils are not achieving to their optimum level because individual planning does not take account of their assessment information.
- Older pupils have found the re-introduction into the school environment more difficult. However, they demonstrate good progress in managing their behaviour and in re-engaging with learning.
- Pupils are proud of the progress they have made. Many are now speaking about their ambitions for the future. They are well prepared to be taking such decisions.

School details

Unique reference number	141860
Inspection number	10008622
DfE registration number	384/6003

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	Independent school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8–16 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	37
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Witherslack Group
Chair	Mike Barrow
Headteacher	Linda Nelson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,330 to £81,206
Telephone number	01924 663420
Website	http://witherslackgroup.co.uk
Email address	Linda.nelson@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	N/A

Information about this school

- Hall Cliffe School is an independent specialist day school in Horbury, near Wakefield, which provides education for up to 64 boys and girls aged 8 to 16.
- Pupils have a range of complex learning needs, social and emotional difficulties, and challenging behaviours.
- Each pupil has previously attended a number of schools and most have had an extended period out of education.
- The school admits pupils throughout the year and there are currently 37 full-time pupils on roll. There are 35 male and two female pupils, There are no pupils above compulsory school age.
- Eight of the pupils are looked after by their local authorities.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan to address their needs.
- The school aims to provide its pupils with a personalised, engaging and relevant curriculum aimed at building self-esteem and the social skills to help them integrate into their learning environment and the wider community.
- A group of pupils undertake work-related training on Wigfield Farm, an outreach centre of Barnsley College.
- This is the school's first inspection since it was registered as an independent special school in February 2015. The school admitted its first pupils in February 2015.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards, including the scrutiny of school policies, schemes of work and other documentation.
- The inspector observed seven lessons covering a range of subjects and activities. In two of these observations, he was accompanied by a senior leader.
- The inspector viewed the school's website.
- The inspector analysed the school's assessment records and scrutinised samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, members of staff, the nurture teacher, the group's principal educational psychologist, pupils, a governor and the music therapist.
- The inspector analysed staff questionnaires.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire on the Parent View website to generate a report. The inspector analysed the results of the school's own survey and the comments book.

Inspection team

Peter McKenzie, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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