

Hillcrest Slinfold School

Stane Street, Slinfold, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 0QX

Inspection dates

25 July 2018

Overall outcome

The school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material changes relating to the school provision are implemented

Main inspection findings

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 1 and 2

- The school's curriculum for pupils in key stages 3 and 4 continues to meet their needs well. There is a broad and balanced range of subjects that allow pupils to gain recognised qualifications up to GCSE in academic subjects such as English and mathematics. Nationally recognised BTEC National Diploma qualifications in practical subjects such as construction and motor vehicle mechanics are also available. The range of subjects available has not been substantially diminished by the recent reduction in staffing.
- Leaders have sourced a primary curriculum from a commercial provider that will ensure that pupils receive a wide range of experiences and help them acquire essential literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders have well-developed plans to appoint a primary specialist who will adapt this curriculum planning to meet the specific needs and starting points of younger pupils. A bespoke programme of personal, social, health and economic education that takes account of pupils' previous experience and emerging needs will be implemented for primary pupils.
- Individual study programmes will be designed for students over the age of 16. These will include study at a local college or alternative provider, together with bespoke therapy programmes and the teaching of further basic or practical skills at school. The study programmes will aim to help students move on successfully when they leave the school. The current careers education programme will be enhanced so that all students are aware of their options when they leave the school.

Paragraphs 3 and 4

- The recent staff restructuring has ensured that there are teachers in post who are capable of planning and delivering well-structured lessons that meet the needs of the school's pupils.
- Pupils' work on display around the school demonstrates that they make good progress in a range of subjects. For example, in computing, pupils have programmed simple

robotics using appropriate software and hardware.

- There are well-thought-out systems of assessment to check how well pupils are progressing in key stages 3 and 4. The proposed assessment tool in key stage 2 is comprehensive and will help teachers to plan the next steps in pupils' learning.
- School leaders have ensured that standards are likely to be met by the school if the Department for Education (DfE) decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 2. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Paragraph 5

- School leaders have suitable plans to expand the current range of opportunities pupils have to develop their social and cultural understanding. The planned citizenship programme will help pupils to understand their rights and responsibilities in preparation for life in modern Britain.
- Individual programmes, including therapeutic provision, will enable pupils to grow in self-confidence and improve their self-esteem.
- Leaders are confident that having more pupils in the school, with potentially mixed provision, will enable pupils to develop appropriate friendships and social skills. Current pupils are tolerant of each other, and increasing the number on roll is likely to widen the diversity of pupils attending the school.
- Clear rules, routines and rewards will help pupils to develop their moral understanding of what is right and wrong.
- School leaders have ensured that standards are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 7, 7(a), 7(b) and 32(1)(c)

- The current safeguarding policy meets statutory guidance and is published as required on the school website. Leaders have already drafted an updated policy for the autumn term that takes into account the new government guidance in 'Keeping children safe in education' that comes into force in September 2018. Leaders will share this policy with staff at the beginning of the academic year. The new policy also highlights the changes to the deputy designated safeguarding leaders as a result of recent staff changes.
- In her role as designated safeguarding leader, the headteacher has demonstrated a strong awareness of her responsibilities and the risks that pupils at the school face. She has a strong track record of taking decisive action – working with colleagues and other professionals – to keep pupils safe from harm.
- The headteacher has carefully considered the different risks around having older, younger and female pupils attending the school. Together with her team, she will take suitable actions to mitigate these risks and ensure that all pupils are kept safe from

harm.

- The proprietor and chair of governors are committed to ensuring that the designated safeguarding leads and all staff receive all required safeguarding training within the statutory timescales set out in the latest guidance from the Secretary of State.

Paragraph 11

- In the past, staff have reported health and safety concerns in line with the school's health and safety policy. However, on occasion, leaders and the proprietor have been slow to act on the concerns or in making the improvements needed. The proprietor has recently strengthened leadership in this area, making sure that there is greater accountability and that issues are followed up in a more timely fashion.

Paragraph 12

- Appropriate fire safety checks have been carried out by a qualified person on the new and refurbished school buildings. There are adequate escape routes, detectors, alarms, emergency signage and extinguishers. Leaders know that it is their responsibility to carry out weekly tests of the fire alarms and to have regular fire drills. The chair of governors and the proprietor will check that these tests are properly carried out and recorded.

Paragraph 14

- The headteacher has carefully thought-out plans to re-increase staffing levels as the number of pupils on roll grows. Current levels of supervision are very high and this will continue, with two adults assigned to each group of between two and six pupils. There are well-developed plans to appoint a teacher with primary expertise to oversee the supervision of younger pupils.

Paragraphs 16, 16(a) and 16(b)

- There is a clear risk assessment policy in place. Leaders and staff assess risks associated with different teaching spaces, activities, vulnerable pupils and trips and excursions. The headteacher has taken appropriate steps to ensure that risks are controlled and mitigated appropriately, for example when going on a local excursion to the beach.
- School leaders have ensured that standards are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 23 and 28

- There are appropriate toilet, washing and shower facilities both for boys and girls. The boys' facilities are located in the main teaching block, while the girls' facilities are a short walk away in the annexe. There is ample hot and cold running water.
- Drinking water is well labelled and always accessible in the kitchen areas. Pupils are required to be accompanied by a member of staff to access the kitchen areas. Bottled drinking water is normally also available in classrooms.

Paragraph 24

- There is a purpose-built medical room with all the required facilities, including running water. There are lockable storage facilities available for any medication. There are toilet facilities close by.

Paragraphs 25, 26, 27 and 27(a)

- The new classrooms are of a suitable size, with ample natural lighting and good acoustics. They are decorated and maintained to a high standard and are well resourced.
- The new primary classroom is appropriate for up to six key stage 2 pupils. The current configuration is not suitable for younger pupils: for example, it is too far from the nearest toilets and washing facilities and does not have quick access to outdoor space.

Paragraphs 27(b) and 29

- There is ample outdoor space for pupils to enjoy free time and physical education (PE). Outdoor spaces are adequately lit.
- The school also makes regular use of local leisure facilities to enhance the PE provision for pupils.
- School leaders have ensured that standards are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraphs 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b) and 34(1)(c)

- The proprietor recognises that the school has been through a recent unsettled period and sees this material change as a fresh start.
- Since the recent restructuring, the principal and regional director have left, and the director of Hillcrest Children's Services is taking a much more active role in the strategic leadership of the school.
- The appointment of a new chair of governors has already strengthened the leadership oversight of the school. She has introduced rigorous systems to check compliance and to hear from leaders about the quality of provision. The chair of governors knows the independent school standards well and is committed to ensuring that they are consistently met.
- Directors have made a conscious effort to link the school with other schools in the Outcomes First Group to share good practice and improve standards.
- The headteacher has maintained stability for the remaining pupils, and has actively promoted their well-being during a period of change. She now has sole responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the school, and has clear plans – and the determination – to help it grow and flourish.
- School leaders have ensured that standards are likely to be met by the school if the DfE decides to approve implementation of the material change.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school is likely to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements that are relevant to the material change.

School details

Unique reference number	131139
DfE registration number	938/6255
Inspection number	10054346

This inspection was carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's likely compliance with the independent school standards relevant to the material change that the school has applied to make.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Proprietor	Outcomes First Group
Chair	Sophie Garner
Headteacher	Alison Dobbie
Annual fees (day pupils)	£37,128–£47,840
Telephone number	01403 790 939
Website	www.hillcrestchildrensservices.co.uk
Email address	slinfold@hillcrestcare.co.uk
Date of previous standard inspection	17–19 January 2017

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal	Inspector's recommendation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16	5 to 18	7 to 18
Number of pupils on the school roll	4	24	24 (Maximum of 6 pupils under 11)

Reason for inspector's recommendations

The current accommodation is not suitable for key stage 1 pupils. The current accommodation would not comfortably accommodate more than six key stage 2 pupils.

Pupils

	School's current position	School's proposal
Gender of pupils	Boys	Mixed
Number of full-time pupils of compulsory school age	4	24
Number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities	4	24
Of which, number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	4	24
Of which, number of pupils paid for by a local authority with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan	4	24

Staff

	School's current position	School's proposal
Number of full-time equivalent teaching staff	4	10
Number of part-time teaching staff	0	0

Information about this school

- Hillcrest Slinfold School currently has places for 20 boys between the ages of 11 and 16 years who have severe emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties. The school is located in Slinfold, a village to the west of Horsham.
- The previous inspection of the school took place in January 2017. At this time, the school was judged to be good.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. All pupils have challenging behaviours and require a high level of support. Some have had gaps in their education or have been excluded from other schools. Some pupils have been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder or autism spectrum disorder.

- Pupils join the school at different times and with very different abilities. Some pupils leave the school before they reach age 16. At the time of the inspection, there were four pupils on roll.
- The school uses alternative provision at Brinsbury College, Chichester College and Releasing Potential.
- The aim of the school is to 'encourage all children to be as independent as possible, both in their learning and in their social and personal development'.
- The school is part of the Outcomes First Group, which owns several schools across the country. Hillcrest Children's Services is a subsidiary of the Outcomes First Group.
- There has been a recent restructuring of governance across the company. A new chair of governors has been appointed very recently. A recent restructuring of senior leadership roles means that there is no longer a principal overseeing the school. It is now led solely by the headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- This material change inspection was commissioned by the DfE to assess the school's request to extend the age range of pupils, increase capacity to 24 and admit girls as well as boys.
- Her Majesty's Inspector toured the school and held extensive discussions with the headteacher. He also met with the chair of governors and the director of Hillcrest Children's Services, who is the proprietor's representative.
- The inspector looked in detail at school documentation relating to the independent school standards being evaluated.
- There were no pupils present at the time of the inspection as it was the first day of the school summer holiday.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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