

Hall Cliffe School

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

Inspection dates

18–20 September 2018

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The leadership team and directors have ensured that all aspects of the independent standards have been met.
- The headteacher has a strong vision for the future of the school, which staff and other senior leaders support.
- Both deputy headteachers are new to post. They are already working closely with the headteacher to bring about further improvements, particularly within the curriculum and assessment of pupils' work.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The leadership team is using its skills and high levels of knowledge to continue to monitor and improve staff practice after a dip in standards since the last inspection.
- Staff now use information about pupils' previous learning to plan current work. This has enabled work set to match more closely learners' needs and has increased progress overall.
- Currently, pupils' progress in mathematics and science is stronger than in English. Senior leaders recognise this. While they are bringing about improvement in English, further work is needed to improve pupils' writing skills.
- Behaviour has improved both inside and outside the classroom. This is due, in part, to the recently introduced positive behaviour policy and reward system, which, pupils report, 'makes us want to behave'.
- Pupils spoken to commented on how safe school makes them feel. For example, worry boxes introduced by the school council have enabled pupils to share their concerns and this has contributed to them feeling safe.
- The great majority of parents and carers are pleased with the work of the school. Comments made to the inspector included, 'Staff in school are just the best.' However, a small number of parents hold different and more negative views. School leaders are aware of this and recognise that more needs to be done to engage these parents.
- Pupils' attendance has been low in the past. Last year, attendance was lower than it should have been, largely because of a small group of disaffected older pupils. Attendance currently is at 96%, which is higher than that of secondary schools nationally. However, leaders know they need to continue their strenuous efforts to sustain this upward trend.

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?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and outcomes for pupils in English by:
 - increasing the opportunities pupils have for writing longer pieces of work
 - more closely monitoring pupils' progress in writing.
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring pupils' levels of attendance continue to improve
 - increasing the amount of leadership time devoted to engaging with a small group of parents, so as to improve their perception and understanding of the work of the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The leadership and management of the school have ensured all aspects of the independent school standards have been met.
- Despite only being in post for a year, the headteacher has brought about much change, stability and improvement to the school. Her very clear and incisive vision for the future is shared by staff and other senior leaders.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has had five changes to the senior leadership team. As a result of this inconsistency in leadership, standards in the quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils had dipped.
- The leadership team has worked successfully to bring about improvement at a fast pace. Through the implementation of a wide range of strategies, including a team approach to pastoral time and an increased rigour in monitoring pupils' progress, standards in the school have risen over the past year.
- Improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been and remains a significant priority for the leadership team. A rigorous and successful programme of improvement has been in place since the headteacher took up post. The deputy headteacher with responsibility for this area continues to implement the same level of rigour when monitoring and evaluating staff performance. Staff spoken to were pleased with the support and challenge they have received. Staff also feel that leaders have empowered them and given them the confidence to do even better.
- Last year, school leaders recognised that pupils were making stronger progress in mathematics than in English overall. After further analysis they recognised that pupils' progress in reading and communication was not as strong as in writing. A programme has been introduced to improve pupils' communication skills in key stage 3. The scheme has been developed in partnership with the school's speech and language therapist. Early indications suggest this approach is beginning to improve pupils' English skills.
- Work in pupils' books analysed during the inspection showed that pupils' writing skills are not as well developed as they could be. Leaders are aware that this needs to be the next step to bring about improvement in standards in English, for example by increasing the opportunities pupils have for writing longer pieces of work and by the leadership team monitoring more closely the progress being made.
- School leaders and directors rightly identified the need for a broader curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils. A site a short distance from the school was identified and refurbished. This new provision has enabled pupils to access a range of vocational subjects such as catering, mechanical engineering, hair and beauty, and construction. Pupils currently access this new provision and those spoken to comment very positively on their experience. They made comments such as: 'Coming here has helped us to decide what we want to do in the future.'
- School records show that incidents of pupils' difficult behaviour have fallen this year. The number of pupils who needed physical interventions has dropped by two thirds this term, in comparison to the same period of time last year. This reduction is due in part to a range of different strategies introduced by the headteacher. For example, pupils

are now allocated a personal mentor who is 'crazy about the pupil'. The unusual title is designed to reinforce the message that pupils have someone for them who is looking after their needs. Pupils spoken to said how much they enjoyed these new arrangements as they made them feel 'special and cared for'.

- The great majority of parents spoken to were very pleased with the provision for their children. This was evident in the highly positive feedback given to the inspector. However, there remain a small number of pupils who are not completely settled in school and whose parents are not as happy with the provision for their children. School leaders are aware that more needs to be done to improve the relationships with these parents.
- Pupils' attendance is currently higher than that of other secondary schools nationally. However, leaders are aware that they need to continue to monitor diligently recently introduced systems to ensure attendance does not dip to previous levels.
- The headteacher is justifiably pleased with the personal, social, health and enterprise curriculum offered to pupils. Through the democratic elections regularly held within school and visits from a range of organisations, including the police, pupils have a good knowledge of how to become good citizens in modern Britain.

The school's application to make a material change to its registration

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraphs 1–4

- School leaders have ensured that the curriculum provided meets the needs of pupils who attend the school. The newly implemented vocational curriculum, taught within the school's new building, has increased the amount of accreditation pupils can achieve at the end of Year 11.
- Pupils receive independent careers advice at different stages while they are in school. This enables them to make informed choices about their destination on leaving school.
- The assessment system currently in place is effective and measures pupils' progress across the school.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met should the material change be implemented.

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

Paragraph 5

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well provided through the personal, health, social and enterprise curriculum and the work pupils do within the community. For example, pupils raise money for a local hospice, help out at a local fruit and vegetable shop and, at the time of the inspection, were planning a coffee morning to help fundraise for a cancer charity.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 and regularly hold democratic elections to appoint pupils to the school council.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met should the material change be

implemented.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraphs 6–16

- The school has ensured that pupils are effectively supervised, cared for and protected. Safeguarding processes and procedures are in line with the requirements of current legislation.
- All required health and safety policies and systems are in place. Staff training is up to date and is regularly updated. Risk assessments identify risk and take into account the needs of individual pupils when required.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met should the material change be implemented.

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Paragraphs 17–21

- School leaders have made sure that all required and appropriate checks have been undertaken to ensure the suitability of prospective employees and the proprietors to work with children. These checks include an enhanced criminal record check and have been undertaken before the start of the employment of any employees.
- A register has been compiled which details all checks and is in a legible and accessible format.
- School leaders have ensured that standards are likely to be met in this part should the material change be implemented.

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

Paragraphs 22–29

- The accommodation on the main school site is within a 17th century Grade II listed building which was formerly a school and, prior to that, a convent.
- Despite the age of the building, the accommodation is finished to a high standard.
- The outdoor space is restricted to a quadrangle in the centre of the building and some other smaller spaces adjacent to the building. Provision in this area has been carefully planned to maximise pupils' use and includes a small multi-use games area.
- The school has ensured that the requisite number of toilets and showers have been put in place and the on-site medical room meets requirements.
- Adequate lighting is in place both externally and within all areas of the building. Similarly, the acoustics within each teaching room meet requirements.
- The new building recently acquired by the school is also finished to a high standard and mirrors the quality of provision described above.
- All standards in this part are likely to be met should the material change be implemented.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32

- School leaders have ensured that information is shared with parents through termly reports and information displayed on the school's website. Discussions with parents during the inspection confirmed this.
- School leaders have ensured that standards are likely to be met in this part should the material change be implemented.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33

- The proprietors have put in place a complaints policy which meets the independent school standards requirements.
- The policy is clear and easy to follow and is accessible directly from the school.
- The proprietors and school leaders have ensured that standards are likely to be met should a material change be implemented.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

Paragraph 34

- The headteacher and other senior leaders oversee the daily running of the school. During the inspection, the leadership team demonstrated good levels of knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the school. As a result, they carry out their responsibilities well and have ensured that the independent school standards are likely to be met.
- Staff appointments have been undertaken safely and rigorously and the new staff team is knowledgeable. This clearly demonstrates leaders' role in actively promoting the welfare and well-being of pupils.

Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- The proprietors have drawn up an effective accessibility plan.
- School leaders have made sure that arrangements made to meet paragraph 3 of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 are effectively in place.

Governance

- The school governance is provided by a board of proprietors of the Witherslack Group and their representatives.
- Regular visits are made to the school by the education director, who offers support and challenge to the school leadership team. These visits have assisted the headteacher and other leaders to bring about improvement at a fast pace.
- School leaders are also required to complete weekly information on aspects of the school such as attendance and pupils' progress. This enables the proprietors to keep a

close eye on all aspects of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have ensured that the school safeguarding policy is displayed on the school website and meets all statutory requirements.
- Leaders ensure staff receive up-to-date and relevant training. Staff spoken to understand clearly the steps they need to take should a pupil disclose a problem to them. Staff were also clear about the importance of creating a safe and trusting culture in school which enables pupils to speak to staff openly about issues in their lives.
- Safeguarding records are kept appropriately and demonstrate effective multi-agency working to support pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- After the last inspection, the quality of provision within the school dipped. Due in part to fluctuations within the leadership team, the quality of teaching and learning was less well monitored. As a result, standards also dipped.
- The current headteacher has rightly focused on bringing about improvement in this area as a priority. With support from the senior leadership team, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved significantly over the last year. Work in pupils' books reflects the improvements well.
- Teachers now effectively use pupils' previous work to plan future learning. As a result, work matches the needs of individual pupils more accurately than previously. This has accelerated the progress made by pupils overall.
- Staff work closely together in classrooms supporting pupils' learning and behaviour. Overall, pupils are motivated and keen to learn. For example, in a media class, pupils examined a range of famous photographs and discussed their feelings about the images. Pupils' mature, thoughtful and insightful views demonstrated clearly their deepening understanding of how to critique.
- School leaders have identified reading as an area for improvement and have introduced a range of different approaches to bringing about improvement to pupils' reading skills. For example, during team time, reading is practised in a relaxed setting. Pupils and staff all read and discuss the merits of the books they are reading. This encourages pupils to read for pleasure and increases the time pupils spend on improving their reading skills.
- Leaders also identified the need to improve pupils' communication skills. Working closely with the school's therapy team, staff now deliver therapy lessons which encourage teamwork and conversation. Pupils clearly enjoy these sessions and often participate eagerly. However, it is too soon yet to measure the effectiveness of this approach.
- Work in mathematics workbooks shows pupils' strong progress overall. Pupils frequently have gaps in their learning, sometimes due to exclusions for difficult behaviour in previous schools. Teachers identify the gaps pupils have in their understanding of

mathematics and focus on increasing their skills in these areas. This enables pupils to gain lost ground and catch up effectively. Work in books demonstrates that pupils in the school often make accelerated progress in reaching expected standards.

- Pupils' progress in writing is slower overall. Work in pupils' books shows that many are offered too little opportunity to write for longer periods of time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The vast majority of pupils settle and thrive in the school's nurturing environment. This enables them to increase their confidence and self-esteem and re-engage with learning. A small group of parents do not agree that their children's needs are effectively met. School leaders are aware of this and recognise that more work is needed in this area to strengthen and improve relationships with these parents.
- Members of the school council recognise the journey many pupils have been on before arriving at the school. Their personal experiences have heightened their understanding. The focus of much of their activity reflects this well. For example, the school council has introduced worry boxes, which members monitor themselves. This enables pupils to share their thoughts and concerns in a safe and non-judgemental environment. Council members are also planning to develop a pupils' counselling service, once training with the school's psychologists is complete.
- School leaders and staff are aspirational for pupils in their care. They recognise that not all have had as wide a range of opportunities as others. With this in mind they have introduced the 'Hall Cliffe 100 experiences' for pupils. Experiences include riding a horse, eating in a restaurant and sewing on a button. Pupils spoken to were excited by the list and keen to start completing some of the challenges in team time.
- Pupils are very aware of the effect bullying can have on others. Some of those spoken to had first-hand experience of being bullied in other settings. However, all were agreed that bullying is rare in the school and should it occur incidents would be dealt effectively by staff and pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- All pupils who attend the school have a special educational need and/or disability requiring the support of an education, health and care plan. Many pupils have identified, and in some cases extreme, social, emotional and mental health needs. This has resulted in some pupils being excluded from school for difficult behaviour in the past.
- Behaviour around school has improved particularly this term. The number of pupils requiring physical interventions has dropped by more than two thirds. Staff and pupils agree that the removal of locks from internal doors has helped to develop an atmosphere of trust across the school. The reorganisation of breaks and dinner times so

that pupils are now together in teams has also helped to improve behaviour overall.

- Pupils' attendance has risen despite the often very long journeys to the school pupils undertake each day. Current attendance is just above that expected nationally. Leaders and staff are working hard to ensure it remains at this level but are aware there is further work to be undertaken to ensure further improvement.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils make good progress socially, emotionally and academically when they join the school.
- The curriculum enables pupils to study a wide range of both academic and vocational subjects. Last year's Year 11 left with academic accreditation in a wide range of subject areas, including mathematics, English, geography, history, science and art.
- Senior leaders have a constant focus on improving outcomes for pupils. The opening of a new vocational centre has increased pupils' access to accreditation in subjects such as hair and beauty, motor mechanics, construction and catering.
- Many pupils arrive in Hall Cliffe School having missed significant amounts of time in school, often as a result of being previously excluded for difficult behaviour. Close working partnerships with members of the therapy team and effective support from staff help most pupils to settle into school and start to re-engage with learning. This enables pupils to make good and better progress from low starting points.
- Pupils overall make stronger progress in mathematics than English. Senior leaders are aware that more opportunities are needed for pupils to develop and improve their writing skills.
- Pupils' good academic, social and emotional progress, coupled with effective careers advice, ensures that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education or training.

School details

Unique reference number	141860
DfE registration number	384/6003
Inspection number	10055380

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.

The inspection of the school's provision in relation to the material change that the school has applied to make 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 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 category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Ltd
Chair	Mike Barrow
Headteacher	Davina Bell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£46,962–£75,690
Telephone number	01924 663 420
Website	http://witherslackgroup.co.uk
Email address	davina.bell@witherslackgroup.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–11 February 2016

Information about this school

- The school is housed in a large Grade II listed building located close to Horbury, near Wakefield.
- Since the previous inspection, 9–11 February 2016, the school leadership team has

undergone a number of changes, including a new headteacher and two new deputy headteachers. Two other headteachers were appointed before the current headteacher.

- The school has increased in size since the previous inspection, from 37 to 64 pupils.
- Sixteen new members of staff have been recruited and started in September 2018.
- The school is now based on two sites. The new site is approximately five miles from the main school site and is a purpose-built vocational centre. Pupils who attend are able to study a range of vocational courses, including hair and beauty, motor mechanics, and catering.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.

Information about this inspection

- At the time of this inspection the Department for Education also commissioned Ofsted to consider the school's application to make a material change to its registration to increase the number of pupils from 64 to 104.
- The inspector undertook a series of lesson observations on both school sites. Most observations were undertaken jointly with members of the leadership team.
- The inspector also carried out a tour of the building to check the school's compliance with part 5 of the independent school standards.
- The inspector held meetings with members of staff, senior leaders and a group of pupils, as well as scrutinising a range of documents including safeguarding documentation, curriculum documentation, and the school's system for measuring pupils' progress.
- The inspector took into account the 33 responses received from parents through Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. The inspector also took into account the views of seven parents spoken to during the inspection process.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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