

# Hall Cliffe School

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

**Inspection dates**

6 October 2020

**Overall outcome**

**The school meets all of the independent school standards that were checked during this inspection**

## Main inspection findings

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

*Paragraphs 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16 and Part 6, 32(1)(c)*

- Leaders have ensured that a child protection/safeguarding policy is available on the school website. This policy follows all up-to-date government guidance. It gives clear procedures of who to contact and what to do in the event of a concern around pupils' welfare or safety. All staff have appropriate up-to-date training, including in safeguarding and first aid. Leaders are very conscious that staff must receive the most relevant training, so that they can meet pupils' needs.
- All staff keep meticulous records of incidents that pupils are involved in. Middle leaders and senior leaders monitor these records daily. They track any patterns in behaviours and people involved. Members of the school board receive this information regularly and, subsequently, so do the proprietor board.
- Overtime, the number of behavioural incidents decreases for most pupils, including incidents requiring physical intervention. For some pupils, the decrease is not always on a smooth, downhill trajectory. This fluctuation is often due to personal anxieties and situations, for example anxieties around COVID-19 (coronavirus), moving schools or residential accommodation.
- Every pupil has an individual risk assessment. These note actions staff should take to avoid unwanted behaviours such as physical aggression, for example guiding pupils away from the source of their anxiety or using other rooms for relaxing and reflection.
- The Department for Education (DfE) received a concern that suggested that pupils may not always be safe and that, at times, physical restraint is not used appropriately. None of the pupils or staff who I spoke with expressed any concern over the use of physical restraint on pupils. Incident forms show that in most cases physical restraint is avoided as a way to manage pupils' behaviours.
- A range of policies, for example those for positive behaviour, first aid, safety, health and environment, and risk assessments, are all reviewed on an annual basis. These policies focus on supporting the safety and well-being of staff and pupils.
- Recently, school leaders have written risk assessments which include procedures to try and avoid the spread of COVID-19. For example, all staff, pupils and visitors undergo temperature checks when entering the buildings. Hand sanitisers are available at

every entrance and in other areas, as are anti-bacterial wipes. All procedures follow government guidelines.

- Staff and pupils who I spoke with during the inspection said that they felt the school was a safe environment to be in. All knew who to turn to if they had any concerns around safety or pastoral needs. The ratio of adults to pupils is high.
- These standards remain met.

#### Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

*Paragraphs 18, 20, 21,*

- All appropriate recruitment checks are made on staff prior to them working with pupils. All checks are recorded on the school's single central record.
- These standards remain met.

#### Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

*Paragraph 33*

- The complaints policy can be downloaded from the school's website if needed. During the inspection, one word was changed in the policy to clarify that should a panel committee be required the complainant would be invited to attend.
- This standard remains met.

#### Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

*Paragraph 34*

- There have been several different headteachers leading this school since it opened in 2015. Some staff comment that this rapid change has caused them some difficulties. They say that new leaders generally bring in new procedures and accountabilities. They say that this, and the building of new relationships, can at times lead to disruption to both staff and pupils.
- Members of the proprietor board acknowledge that the school's leadership needs stability. They are currently taking steps to recruit the most suitable person for the post of substantive headteacher. In the meantime, the interim headteacher will continue in post. The interim headteacher is also a regional director in the company.
- The regular monitoring and support given to the school by the regional director and by the chair of the school board enables any weaknesses to be addressed as they arise.
- Senior leaders have taken the decision to increase the number of staff who have dedicated roles to support pupils' safeguarding and pastoral needs. They recognise that pupils demonstrating any emotional anxieties need to be quickly identified and supported in an appropriate manner to help them regulate their behaviour.
- These standards remain met.

## **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 that were checked during this inspection. Not all of the standards and associated requirements were checked during this inspection.

## School details

Unique reference number	141860
DfE registration number	384/6003
Inspection number	10145032

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	Other independent special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Proprietor	Witherslack Group Ltd
Chair	Philip Jones
Headteacher	Chris Williams
Annual fees (day pupils)	£46,962 – £75,690
Telephone number	01924 663420
Website	<a href="http://witherslackgroup.co.uk">witherslackgroup.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:chris.williams@witherslackgroup.co.uk">chris.williams@witherslackgroup.co.uk</a>
Date of previous standard inspection	18–20 September 2018

## Information about this school

- The school received a full standard inspection in September 2018 when its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The school is located in a large, Grade 2 listed building. The school is situated on the outskirts of Wakefield.
- The school is based on two sites. Pupils on the main site follow a broadly academic curriculum. The second site is approximately five miles away from the main site. It is a purpose-built vocational centre where pupils study a range of vocational courses, including hair and beauty, motor mechanics and hospitality. Some pupils attend both sites.

- Most pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.
- Since the school opened in 2015, there have been significant changes in leadership. Seven different headteachers have been in post, including the current headteacher, since the school opened.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Due to restrictions caused by COVID-19, standards in part 1 of the independent school standards were not checked. These restrictions also meant a limited amount of time was spent walking around the school buildings.
- The inspection was commissioned by the DfE following concerns they received about pupils' welfare and safety.
- The inspection was conducted with 30 minutes' notice so that the school's protocols with regards COVID-19 were followed.
- I met with the interim headteacher, the regional director, the pastoral lead, members of the teaching staff and the safeguarding lead. I also held a telephone conversation with a representative for the chair of the proprietor board.
- I had very brief visits to both sites. During these visits, I was able to speak briefly with several pupils and staff.
- I also studied a range of documents, including those around safeguarding and pupils' welfare. For example, recruitment checks and records of incidents relating to pupils' behaviour.

## Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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