

Inspection of Hill House School

Rope Hill, Boldre, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 8NE

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils genuinely delight in coming to school each day. They experience a deeply caring and nurturing school environment. Staff know each pupil as a unique individual. They are highly attuned to each individual's needs. The schools' thoughtful work around understanding emotions empowers pupils to develop ownership over how they regulate their behaviour. Staff expertly support pupils to use their 'clever actions' such as taking a short walk, or reading a favourite book whenever they need to. This results in an exceptionally calm learning environment.

The school encourages pupils to let their personalities shine. Staff help pupils to share their interests, and they find out what they do well. This helps everyone to develop a sense of identity. For example, at tutor times, everyone enjoys taking a moment to celebrate each other's interests and share their favourite songs.

The education, care and therapy teams work as a cohesive unit. Pupils benefit immensely from this holistic approach to their provision, and they flourish. From the start of their time at Hill House, the focus is on preparation for a successful future. Pupils learn to become thoughtful and responsible citizens through a rich array of opportunities. They may go to work in the on-site café, learn to care for animals, or work in the allotment. This equips them with valuable skills to become employees or volunteers.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school team have unrelentingly high aspirations for pupils. They share a collective attitude of 'presuming competency' as a starting point for teaching new concepts. This ethos underpins the whole school approach and so any limitations to what pupils may achieve are removed. The distinctively holistic, broad and engaging curriculum facilitates this ambition. This focus enables pupils to develop their skills and abilities in the five areas of communication, self-regulation, resilience, independence and discovery.

Before a pupil even joins the school, staff find out as much detail as possible about the pupils from their families and previous settings. This ensures the transition into school is smooth and successful. Any barriers to pupils' learning are identified, and the dedicated staff team combine their specialisms and wealth of experience to creatively re-engage pupils with education. Expert staff from across education, care and therapy unite to construct a completely individualised curriculum for each pupil. Targets from pupils' education health and care (EHC) plans form the heart of what each pupil will learn. Their learning is meticulously ordered, and they make exceptional progress from their starting points. Their learning achievements are evidenced in photo and video form and shared with families.

The development of pupils' communication is a high priority. Each pupil is provided with a 'talkpad' device. This serves as their voice. Using this, they are taught to

make choices and decisions that other people act on and listen to. As a result, pupils develop a remarkable sense of autonomy. Through the relentless focus on communication development, there are natural connections to literacy skills. As appropriate, pupils are taught to discriminate between photographs or symbols, and build a vocabulary of functional symbols, words, or sentences. Structured programmes help pupils who are ready to read books independently. This develops their reading confidence and fluency. Alongside this, pupils develop a great love of reading. For many, the library is a special place where they relax and enjoy their favourite books and stories.

There is a deeply embedded therapeutic approach in place to support behaviour. Helping pupils to communicate their needs is central to this. Pupils benefit from the expertise of the specialist behaviour support team. When they become anxious or need support from staff, this is provided with compassion and consistency. Pupils are treated with dignity and respect. This sensitive work carries over to pupils' time back at home, with parents noting the improvements the school makes to their child's wellbeing.

The personal development of pupils is a significant feature in everything the school does. Many pupils may have faced considerable limitations to their life experiences prior to joining the school. There is an unwavering commitment to broadening pupils' horizons and letting them show the world what they are capable of. Staff take every opportunity to inspire pupils. A local sculpture park has become a strong partner to the school and pupils participate in their sensory arts festival. The creative arts offer includes visits to the theatre as well as artists and musicians who come in to visit the school. This has exposed pupils to first time experiences that have a lasting impact. One older pupil was eager to describe their role as Captain Hook in the upcoming 'Peter Pan' show. Parents also commend the school for the opportunities provided for their children.

As pupils move on to the sixth form, they benefit from the rich opportunities to work on land studies or participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Through their lessons they engage with the natural environment both within the vast grounds of the school and out on trips in the local area. Pupils achieve relevant accreditations which celebrate their achievements and successes. This helps them prepare for their next steps. Leaders advocate and plan rigorously for the transition on to a pupil's next setting to ensure they succeed.

Leaders have a persistent focus on exploring wider professional learning opportunities to help ensure pupils get the very best education. This sense of moral purpose to continually improve the school has led to their involvement in significant research projects with universities and local autism networks. The influential nature of the school's work benefits both staff and pupils.

Staff express a sense of teamwork. The cohesion of the education, care and therapy teams joint approach helps everyone to develop their specialist expertise to a high standard. There is mutual respect for everyone's individual roles. Staff describe the

school as a 'second family' due to the strong positive relationships and caring culture.

The proprietor has established a robust infrastructure with clear roles and responsibilities in governance. They hold school leaders to account for the impact of their work and ensure that the legal duties around the independent school standards and The Equality Act 2010 are consistently met.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

School details

Unique reference number	116565
DfE registration number	850/6031
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10299160
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	29
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	17
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Farouq Sheikh
Headteacher	Kate Landells
Annual fees (day pupils)	£110,334
Telephone number	0190 672147
Website	https://www.cambianguroup.com/specialist-education/our-schools/autism-schools/hill-house-school/
Email address	kate.landells@cambianguroup.com
Dates of previous inspection	7 to 9 January 2020

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Most have a range of additional needs. Most join the school after a period away from education or a series of unsuccessful placements in other schools.
- Almost all pupils reside full-time at the children's home on the same site. The children's home is registered and inspected separately to the school. At its last inspection in November 2023, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is part of the Cambian group, which provides specialist education and behavioural health services for children. The proprietor is Chair of the CareTech Board.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors held a wide range of meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, senior leaders, and teaching and support staff in the school. The lead inspector met with the representative of the proprietorial body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, communication and personal, health and social education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans, examples of pupil's work, and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during visits to classrooms, during breaktimes and as pupils moved around the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents expressed on Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. Inspectors also considered the views of staff during meetings with them and through the staff survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and

considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Jo Petch, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michelle Payne

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024