

# Hill Farm College

Independent school inspection report

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Unique Reference Number (URN)	135626
URN for registered childcare and social care	SC377180
Inspection number	345969
Inspection dates	2-3 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon
Social care inspector	Caroline Brailsford

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A<sup>1</sup> of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005<sup>2</sup>, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

## Information about the school

Hill Farm College, owned by the Castle Care Group, is a registered children's home which provides education. A full inspection report of the children's home was published in July 2009. A further inspection of the children's home took place at the same time as the school inspection and focused on evaluating the provision for keeping young people safe and the extent to which they stay safe.

This is the first school inspection of Hill Farm College, which opened in July 2008. It is registered for up to twelve students aged between fourteen and nineteen years, comprising six from the children's home and six attending daily. At present there are five students on roll aged between fourteen and seventeen years, one of whom resides in the children's home. Three live in children's homes nearby, belonging to the Castle Care Group. One student, who attends two days each week, is sent by his local authority. Four students are looked after by their respective local authorities and accommodated with the Castle Care Group. Three have statements of special educational needs which identify behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. One student also has moderate learning difficulties and another, Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism. Before coming to Hill Farm College, these students experienced considerable disruption of their education.

Hill Farm College occupies a large, stone-built period farmhouse surrounded by open farmland. The aim of the college is to provide a safe, secure environment in which students are enabled to re-engage with education.

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is inadequate. Few of the regulations are met in relation to the curriculum, teaching and assessment. The curriculum is not implemented

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

effectively enough to challenge students, meet their learning needs, prepare them for the future and provide a breadth of learning opportunities. Teaching is inadequate because assessment, and its use to plan lessons, is poor. Most lessons fail to engage students and help them enjoy learning. They make little or no progress as a result. The Castle Care Group's arrangements ensure all requirements for safeguarding students are met.

## Quality of education

The curriculum is inadequate as the policy and schemes of work have not been implemented effectively. Sufficient time is available to offer a broad range of work and activities. However, the breadth of work is very limited, notably in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). While all the areas of learning required in the curriculum are represented, they are provided for inadequately. Satisfactory opportunities for physical education come from regular visits to leisure centres for games, sports coaching and swimming. The implementation of the curriculum has been managed poorly such that students' work and activities are neither relevant enough to their needs nor matched to their capabilities. In school, there is no specific provision made for post-16 students, although college courses are available if students are ready for these. Written schemes for subjects on the timetable, where they exist are not used to plan lessons.

English and mathematics have a very narrow focus based almost entirely on students practising for adult literacy and numeracy tests. As a result, they are not acquiring the breadth and depth of literacy and numeracy skills they need and are capable of achieving. Consequently, students are not stimulated to re-engage with education; they are very often dissatisfied with the work they are given and are making little or no progress. The requirements in statements of special educational needs, for those students who have one, are not taken into consideration in planning their curriculum.

Students enjoy practical pursuits such as, in the growing season, preparing garden beds, planting and growing vegetables. They also care for rabbits and, sometimes, chickens. However, opportunities to develop enterprise learning are not planned extensively enough. Constructing with wood and other materials, cycling and maintaining bicycles, are also enjoyed. However, the planning supporting these activities is too limited and the school's intention of promoting a vocational curriculum has not been realised.

The school has a link with the Connexions careers guidance service and each student has met with an adviser. However, beyond this the amount of planned preparation for finishing school and moving on is very little. Care programmes provided by the children's home, which were judged to be good in its last inspection, overlap and positively affect some of the school's work, namely in personal, social and health education. This is reflected in the National Healthy Schools Gold Status. Students have access to good support from care staff and visitors in learning about risks and

managing these as they affect their health, safety, relationships and general well-being.

Teaching and assessment are inadequate. There is too much poor planning of lessons with the result that students' work fails to engage, challenge or help them make progress. Students' attitudes to learning are often negative and behaviour is sometimes unacceptable. They need considerable persuasion to settle and co-operate, which is mostly grudging and only achieved through the strength of relationships with the care staff supporting them in lessons. However, this is not an effective strategy for managing behaviour in lessons. Students' reluctance to learn and incentive to misbehave is provoked largely by work that is a poor match to their capabilities and prior learning. One entire ICT lesson was devoted to them being taught to check spellings in word processing. The students were already competent in doing this, which was the result of poor assessment and tracking of students' progress. Lesson activities are dull, undemanding and fail to make effective use of the technology and book resources available. Students make very little headway in learning and their progress is inadequate.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is inadequate. Their personal development is promoted well through the programmes provided in the children's home. This accounts for students developing self-confidence, a positive outlook and good relationships with care staff. Here, they are prepared, with the support of the care staff, to act fairly and with regard for others. The small animals occasionally looked after by students are cared for well. The school has not established the relationships with students that encourage a similar development of positive qualities. Students do not always enjoy learning, act responsibly, behave properly and contribute in helpful ways to the school community. Attendance is satisfactory as students are escorted to school, although they are often slow in getting to lessons and settling. Students have very few opportunities to work together, independently or to use their initiative. A curriculum has not been implemented that supports students in developing substantially their knowledge of public institutions and services in England or the awareness of, and positive regard for, their own and other cultures. Their knowledge of the work place and their development of work place skills are very limited. As a result, they are not prepared adequately for their future economic well-being.

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The arrangements for students' welfare, health and safety, taking into consideration the contribution of the children's home, are satisfactory. The procedures for safeguarding students and preventing bullying, which cover the school and children's home, are robust and managed effectively. Students are closely supervised and kept safe, although the implementation of the school's behaviour policy is not effective. The care staff, who play a significant part in supporting students during the school

day, are alert and respond effectively to incidents and ensure students stay safe in school and around the grounds. Cycle outings along the country lanes, for example, are set up very carefully with staff posted at key points ensuring students are always well supervised and kept safe. Risks associated with all trips away from school are assessed comprehensively. First aid, fire precautions and the maintenance of electrical equipment are all well-managed.

The school has a three year action plan in place which meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

## Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The implementation of the Castle Care Group's policy on safer recruitment is effective and rigorously administered. All of the required information on the suitability of the proprietorial body and staff is carefully recorded in a single central register.

## School's premises and accommodation

All of the regulations governing premises and accommodation are met. The premises are safe and secure. The main classroom is suitable in size for a total of six students and, together with the three smaller rooms adjacent, space is sufficient for the maximum of 12 students. The smaller rooms provide reasonable space for a few students at a time for woodwork, art or to use computers. The garden has small areas laid out for growing plants and keeping small animals.

## Provision of information for parents, carers and others

All but one of the regulations are met. There is no procedure to ensure parents, carers and others can access or, alternatively, are sent a copy of the school's safeguarding policy. Otherwise, a comprehensive range of information is provided for parents, carers and others in the school's prospectus and in the Hill Farm College statement of purpose.

## Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints policy and procedures meet all the requirements.

## Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision was judged to be good, and national minimum standards were met. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- implement a curriculum supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work (paragraph 1(2))
- ensure the curriculum gives students experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, aesthetic and creative areas of learning (paragraph 1(2)(a)(ii))
- plan subject matter appropriate for the ages and aptitudes of students, including those with a statement of special educational needs (paragraph 1(2)(b))
- ensure the curriculum policy enables students to acquire skills in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy (paragraph 1(2)(c))
- where a student has a statement of special educational needs, plan their curriculum to meet the requirements of the statement (paragraph 1(2)(e))
- develop a comprehensive programme of careers guidance (paragraph 1(2)(g))
- provide a curriculum appropriate to the needs of students above compulsory school age (paragraph 1(2)(h))
- ensure the curriculum provides the opportunity for all students to learn and make progress (paragraph 1(2)(i))
- plan a curriculum offering students an adequate preparation for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (paragraph 1(2)(j))
- provide teaching which enables students to acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught (paragraph 1(3)(a))

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<sup>3</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20031910.htm)

- encourage students to apply intellectual and creative efforts and to show interest in their work and to think and learn for themselves (paragraph 1(3)(b))
- ensure teaching is well-planned, teaching methods are effective, suitable activities are used and class time is managed wisely (paragraph 1(3)(c))
- develop a good understanding of students' aptitudes, needs and prior attainments and ensure these are taken into account in the planning of lessons (paragraph 1(3)(d))
- ensure that teachers demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught (paragraph 1(3)(e))
- ensure that classroom resources are used effectively (paragraph 1(3)(f))
- put in place a framework to assess students' work regularly and thoroughly, ensuring assessment information is utilised to plan teaching so that students can make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g))
- develop effective strategies for managing behaviour and encouraging students to act responsibly (paragraph 1(3)(h))
- put in place a framework by which students' performance can be evaluated by reference to either the school's own aims, as provided to parents and/or, by national norms (paragraph 1(4)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life (paragraph 2(c))
- provide students with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 2(d))
- assist students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (paragraph 2(e)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- implement the policy to promote good behaviour in school, setting out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of students misbehaving (paragraph 3(2)(d)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- send to parents and/or carers and prospective parents and/or carers a copy of the school's safeguarding children policy (paragraph 6(4)).

# Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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## The quality of education

Overall quality of education				✓
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils				✓
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs				✓
How well pupils make progress in their learning				✓

## Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development				✓
The behaviour of pupils				✓

## Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			✓	
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## The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision		✓		
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## School details

Name of school	Hill Farm College		
DCSF number	999/550		
Unique reference number (URN)	135626		
Type of school	Special		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	18 July 2008		
Age range of students	14–19		
Gender of students	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time students)	Male: 2	Females: 2	Total: 4
Number on roll (part-time students)	Male: 1	Female: 0	Total: 1
Number of boarders	Male: 1	Female: 0	Total: 1
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Male: 2	Female: 1	Total: 3
Number of students who are looked after	Male: 2	Female: 2	Total: 4
Annual fees (day students)	£28,840		
Annual fees (boarders)	£233,244		
Headteacher	Mrs M Mackinnon		
Proprietor	Castle Care Limited		
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon		
Dates of inspection	2–3 February 2010		