

Highgate Hill House School

Whitstone, Holsworthy, Devon EX22 6TJ

Inspection dates

18–20 October 2017

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The passion, dedication and determination of the headteacher to provide the very best care and education for pupils are instrumental to the early success of this new school.
- Staff share the high aspirations of the headteacher. They work tirelessly to provide pupils with the very best learning experiences.
- The quality of teaching is good. This enables pupils to make good progress in their learning from extremely low starting points.
- Staff have a good knowledge of what pupils know, can do and understand. However, pupils do not understand well enough what they must do to improve their work.
- Relationships between staff and pupils in the school are impressive. This allows pupils to quickly build high levels of trust with adults in a caring and nurturing environment. However, on occasion, this leads to pupils being over-reliant on adults to support their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Staff understand pupils' complex needs extremely well and are skilful in managing their anxious and challenging behaviours.
- Staff are vigilant in all aspects of pupil welfare and safeguard pupils effectively.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to meet the individual needs of pupils. It is complemented by a range of enrichment activities. However, the quality of pupils' writing is underdeveloped.
- Pupils have access to a range of high-quality therapeutic provision. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning and emotional development.
- The directors play an active role in the school. Together with the headteacher, they ensure that all the independent school standards are met.
- Parents speak highly of the school. They appreciate the quality of care and education that the school provides for their children.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, development plans do not demonstrate how leaders will monitor identified actions.
- Assessment systems have only recently been introduced and are not yet embedded.

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 leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders, including directors and governors, check that actions identified in development plans have had the desired impact on the achievement and progress of pupils
 - tracking systems provide leaders and teachers with detailed information on what pupils know, can do and understand in order to inform planning to further accelerate progress.
- Further improve pupils' achievement to fulfil their academic potential by ensuring that:
 - staff plan tasks which support pupils to improve their writing skills in pieces of work across a range of subjects
 - staff provide guidance to support pupils to understand what they must do to improve their work
 - teaching helps pupils become confident in their learning and less reliant on adults.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The high-quality leadership of the headteacher is instrumental to the early success of this school. Her passion and drive to provide pupils with the best care and education are demonstrable. She works tirelessly to make sure that all pupils who attend Highgate Hill House School become successful learners.
- The headteacher is ably supported by staff who share her determination and resolve to provide pupils with effective opportunities to develop their love of learning. Staff resolutely believe that their pupils can achieve and succeed during their time at the school. Staff have high aspirations for their pupils, and this is reflected in the good progress pupils make from extremely low starting points.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment effectively. They provide support and guidance to ensure that pupils get high-quality learning experiences. As a result, teaching is good, which impacts positively on pupils' outcomes.
- The core skills of reading, writing and mathematics are woven throughout the curriculum. Teachers carefully plan bespoke learning activities which typically excite and motivate pupils and meet their needs. Consequently, pupils increasingly enjoy their learning and make good progress. For example, pupils were able to demonstrate their knowledge of measurement in their woodwork. They were able to accurately measure the wood required for their project work. However, pupils remain hesitant writers and do not demonstrate their skills in writing well enough.
- Learning is enhanced by a wide range of additional activities and trips. Surfing, swimming, dance and horticulture are among the varied activities made available to pupils. Trips spark pupils' enthusiasm and provide opportunities for them to develop important life skills such as taking calculated risks and building stamina.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is successfully woven throughout the curriculum and clearly reflects the school's core values of being respectful, honest, kind, committed and loyal. Staff are highly effective role models and show pupils, through their own actions and manner, how to work alongside each other and happily get along. They actively encourage pupils to play their part. For example, pupils engage in a range of community activities which include the annual beach clean at Widemouth Bay to help protect wildlife. They learn about other cultures and religions through their topic work on subjects such as China and the Aztecs. This enhances pupils' understanding of other cultures and makes them aware that while everyone is different, all should be treated equally.
- Relationships between staff, pupils, parents and carers are impressive. Pupils feel safe and secure. Staff have a deep knowledge of the many challenges pupils and their families face, which allows them to support pupils' development extremely well. Leaders provide daily reports to parents. This is particularly beneficial as it allows a seamless transition between home and school, which helps reduce pupils' anxieties.
- Parents are unanimous in their support of the school. All parents who responded to the online survey or spoke to the inspector stated that pupils are extremely well looked after, are taught well, behave well and that they receive valuable information about their child's

progress. All also agree that the school is well led and managed and their child is kept safe. Comments such as, 'can't rave highly enough about the school, this place is fantastic and long may it continue', 'absolutely brilliant' and 'this school is phenomenal' are just a few of the accolades from parents about the quality of education and care the school provides for their children.

- The school is in the process of implementing a new tracking system to carefully check the progress and achievement of each pupil. Leaders are aware that there is further work to be undertaken to embed this system to ensure that pupils make the very best progress across the curriculum.
- The school's evaluation of its own performance is robust and accurate. Leaders link school development closely to their evaluation. However, development plans do not demonstrate well enough how actions taken ensure that pupils make the best possible progress and fulfil their academic potential.

Governance

- Directors and the local board of governors bring a high level of skill and professional expertise to support the school. They have a deep knowledge and understanding of the school's work and share the headteacher's high aspirations and drive for the school to become outstanding. They challenge the headteacher from a position of knowledge and understanding. They work closely with the headteacher to ensure that all the independent school standards are met. Finances are closely monitored to ensure that the financial stability of the school is maintained. For example, while the school does not receive any additional funding, they allocate money appropriately to ensure that they meet the needs of pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a shared understanding of the need to protect these vulnerable pupils against all possible risks. Staff receive high-quality training on keeping pupils safe. Controversial issues are not dodged. For example, staff have undertaken training on radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. This ensures that staff, irrespective of their role, have a secure knowledge and the skills to quickly identify any changes in pupils and take rapid action with confidence.
- There is a strongly embedded culture of safety and security which is demonstrable throughout the school. Safeguarding is the responsibility of each and every member of staff. There is a shared understanding of the need to protect each pupil from all potential risks. Safeguarding policies and procedures are detailed and reflect current government legislation and guidance. These policies are easily accessible to parents on the website or in school. Leaders work closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils receive appropriate guidance and support to keep them safe.
- Risk assessments are completed for a wide range of activities and for each pupil. Leaders carefully check these assessments to ensure that they remain fit for purpose in keeping pupils safe.
- The school's systems to check the suitability of staff to work with pupils meet requirements. Leaders, including directors and governors, understand the importance of safer recruitment. As a result, all staff are carefully vetted prior to commencing

employment to confirm they are suitable to work with children.

- Systems in place at the start and end of the day to ensure that pupils are safe are well planned and help pupils keep their anxiety levels to a minimum. Pupils told the inspector that they are happy at the school and comment, 'The school is good.'
- Parents are confident that policies and procedures are securely in place to keep their children safe. They are in no doubt that their children are kept safe and are exceptionally well looked after during their time in school. 'I am confident my son is safe as he is so well supervised,' is one of the positive comments made.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff create a positive climate for pupils to learn through their passion, enthusiasm and the caring relationships they share with pupils. They know the learning needs of each individual pupil and plan activities which enthuse and motivate. Consequently, pupils make strong progress from very low starting points.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils. There is a shared understanding that pupils will work hard, be successful and achieve well. Staff develop pupils' key skills in reading, writing and mathematics while successfully retaining pupils' interest and willingness to learn. For example, pupils are encouraged to read the recipe and accurately weigh the ingredients when they prepare and cook the lunchtime meal.
- Staff are highly skilled and well deployed. They welcome the professional development they receive and the opportunities to share good practice. This results in consistently good teaching.
- Staff set challenging targets for pupils to help them secure next steps in learning, personal development and behaviour. However, pupils do not consistently know what they need to do in order to improve their work.
- Staff carefully monitor pupils' learning and progress during lessons. They question pupils effectively to check their understanding and deepen their thinking. However, as yet, tracking systems are not securely embedded to ensure that over time pupils make the best possible progress and fulfil their academic potential.
- Pupils' writing does not demonstrate the rapid progress seen in their mathematics. This is because staff do not provide sufficient support for pupils to write at length and build their writing stamina.
- While relationships between staff and pupils are impressive, pupils are often too reliant on the staff during lessons in order to complete their work. Consequently, they do not consistently demonstrate their own capabilities in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders ensure that individual risk assessments are firmly in place and carefully followed. They clearly set out the techniques staff need to successfully manage pupils' behaviour.

In addition, leaders ensure that the site is safe and appropriately secure.

- Staff receive high-quality training in physical restraint procedures. Consequently, staff are confident in how to best manage pupils when challenging behaviour occurs. Records show that physical restraint in the school is extremely rare and used only as a last resort.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in their regular attendance. Pupils report that they feel safe at school. They can identify a trusted adult with whom they can share their worries and concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils who attend the school have extremely challenging behaviour associated with their complex needs. The training provided by the school, combined with the caring ethos, supports staff to effectively manage pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils behave well and enjoy school.
- Staff plan and deliver lessons that excite and motivate pupils to learn. There is typically a calm and purposeful atmosphere during lessons. Staff expect pupils to work hard and do their best. For example, pupils were engrossed in their poetry writing and wrote their poem with confidence, accurately demonstrating their knowledge of rhyme in poetry.
- Staff keep careful records on each pupil's behaviour. Leaders analyse these records to identify triggers and patterns of behaviour. Therapists work closely with staff to reduce pupils' anxieties and enable them to access their learning more effectively. This contributes to the good progress in pupils' academic and personal development.
- Pupils appreciate the opportunities afforded them to become involved in the school. They describe how they have a voice and are listened to by staff. For example, pupils describe how through the school council their request for fresh fruit to be available was actioned.
- Pupils recognise that at times some of them display challenging behaviours. However, they confirm that they feel safe and secure and are well cared for. Parents agree and describe how staff 'de-escalate situations rather than escalate them'.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school at various ages and at different times during the year. Most have experienced significant breakdowns in their previous education settings and have been out of education for long periods of time. Consequently, pupils start the school with skills and knowledge which are typically well below average for their age. Their confidence and self-esteem are extremely low.
- To begin with, pupils display extremely challenging behaviour which is often exacerbated by the complexity of their social and emotional needs. This can impact negatively on their mental health and well-being. Nevertheless, as pupils settle and receive the support they need from staff and therapists, they quickly begin to make progress and achieve good outcomes.
- A comprehensive look at pupils' work carried out during the inspection confirms that pupils are provided with a range of opportunities to build confidence and subsequently increase their knowledge and skills. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' skills

in the core areas of reading, writing and mathematics.

- In mathematics, pupils learn to calculate number and to apply their mathematical understanding to solve problems. For example, they were able to use their knowledge of money to accurately calculate costs for purchasing a range of products.
- In English, pupils develop their reading and writing skills well. For example, pupils were successful in reading instructions to produce a paper aeroplane when looking at flight in science. However, pupils are not provided with the opportunities to hone these skills at length in their writing within English work or across wider subjects. Consequently, while pupils make good progress and are quickly catching up, they are not yet fulfilling their academic potential. Leaders are taking effective action to tackle this to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress across a range of subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	142763
DfE registration number	878/6065
Inspection number	10033896

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 category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	3
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Highgate Hill House Ltd
Chair	Julie Smith
Headteacher	Vicky Skelton
Annual fees (day pupils)	£27,500 to £80,000
Telephone number	01288 341998
Website	www.hhhschool.co.uk
Email address	info@hhhschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Highgate Hill House School is an independent, co-educational special school. It received its DfE number in May 2016 and took its first pupil in July 2017. This is the first standard inspection of the school.
- The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs: autistic spectrum conditions, attachment disorders, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and specific learning difficulties.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan and are funded by local authorities.

- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The building houses five classrooms, an art room, science room, music room and library.
- The school offers part-time education to families who elect to home educate their children.
- The school does not receive any additional government funding.
- The school does not currently have any children in the early years foundation stage.
- The school does not currently have any pupils in key stage 3 or key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in every class, and all observations were conducted jointly with leaders. The quality of pupils' work was scrutinised.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff and directors. The inspector took into consideration the responses of four questionnaires completed by staff. A telephone conversation took place with a representative from Cornwall local authority.
- A wide range of documentation was examined, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's development plan, and information relating to pupils' achievement and progress. Records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- The inspector considered the three responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and three text messages were taken into account. In addition, the inspector met with parents to gather their views.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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