

School inspection report

10 to 12 October 2023

Highgate Hill House School

Whitstone
Holsworthy
Devon
EX22 6TJ

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Contents

Summary of inspection findings	3
The extent to which the school meets the Standards	4
Recommended next steps	4
Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance	5
Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation	7
Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing	9
Section 4: Pupils’ social and economic education and contribution to society.....	11
Safeguarding.....	12
School details	13
Information about the school	14
Inspection details	14

Summary of inspection findings

1. Leadership and management are effective because senior leaders set high expectations for each pupil's development. The leaders and staff share a continual drive for improvement. Leaders are very clear about what to do to make a positive difference to pupils' academic, social and emotional development and use their knowledge to ensure pupils make good progress.
2. Proprietors, the school advisory panel and staff successfully provide a positive environment to nurture pupils' learning, promoting good behaviour and developing social and emotional wellbeing. Pupils rapidly improve their behaviour and learning when they join the school because of the effective planning for the development of individual pupils. During their time at the school, leaders and staff effectively support pupils' social and emotional needs.
3. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of pupils' strengths as well as their needs. Staff work very well as a team to plan and vary activities so that each pupil's interests and capabilities are considered. Staff use praise and encouragement in a consistent way to enable pupils to grow rapidly in confidence and self-esteem.
4. Staff use their thorough knowledge of each pupil to precisely match learning tasks to different learning needs. They set appropriate targets for pupils linked to the requirements of individual education, health and care plans (EHC plans). Leaders check pupils' progress regularly to make sure that every pupil is helped to reach their potential.
5. Leaders have ensured that staff are highly effective in consistently managing behaviour. This is a significant strength of the school. Pupils' behaviour improves rapidly when they join the school. They have very effective working relationships with staff and with each other. Many pupils have experienced previous disruption to learning; they make significant progress in their ability to regulate their own behaviour which enables them to engage in learning successfully.
6. There is a newly introduced curriculum in place. Much is effective and leaders are exploring ways to enhance the curriculum further by enhancing the literacy programme for younger pupils, and by working with vocational education providers to provide a greater range of vocational pathways for older pupils.
7. Pupils gain a good understanding of life in modern Britain including when they explore the purchase of food from local suppliers for health, nutrition and cooking activities. These and other activities successfully develop pupils' confidence from typically low starting points.
8. The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders carefully consider the potential risks for each pupil. Pupils identified as vulnerable receive well targeted and suitable support to ensure they are safeguarded appropriately.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards:

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met

Recommended next steps

- Leaders and managers should develop the literacy curriculum for younger pupils and extend the range of curriculum opportunities for older pupils.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. There is effective leadership and management at all levels. Leaders demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. They actively promote the pupils' wellbeing, exemplified by the highly effective implementation of the behaviour policy where staff provide consistency of approach. Pupils, many of whom have had difficulty managing behaviour in the past, work harmoniously within the parameters of the policy.
10. Staff share leaders' determination to improve pupils' achievement. Leaders systematically check the quality of teaching and learning. They understand what is working well and where further improvements can be made. Leaders take immediate action to deal with any areas identified for improvement, such as preparing for the proposed entry of pupils with specific learning difficulties. These actions lead to appropriate training for staff, where required. Leaders use regular meetings with teachers to identify pupils who are not making sufficient progress and put additional support in place to ensure pupils make good progress.
11. Leaders have recently and effectively re-organised the core curriculum and an expanded curriculum breadth. They have identified that they need to go further. Leaders have successfully developed a customised literacy programme for the small number of younger pupils in school. They recognise the need to develop this further in preparation for a potential increase in the number of primary-aged pupils. Leaders are sensibly working to extend the working partnership with vocational education providers to increase opportunities for older pupils to access a wider range of courses and therefore develop a wider range of knowledge and skills.
12. Leaders ensure that risk assessments for all aspects of pupils' care are thorough and very well monitored. Staff, pupils and parents contribute to the development of emotional support plans (ESPs). Staff are highly skilled in managing any risks to pupils' welfare by helping pupils themselves to successfully address previous unacceptable behaviour. Leaders provide guidance to staff in adapting existing risk strategies and individual behaviour plans. Staff are adept at identifying and managing the risks to pupils' wellbeing.
13. Leaders provide parents and staff with the required information about the school's policies. Policies comply with relevant legislation, have regard to applicable guidance and are understood and implemented effectively by staff. Leaders respond to any complaints following the school's procedures consistently and promptly.
14. The proprietors monitor the school's effectiveness carefully. They provide appropriate levels of support and challenge to leaders, including by asking pertinent questions about the impact of leaders' actions and decisions. As a result, proprietors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They use this information effectively to ensure that the requirements of the Standards and statutory guidance are met consistently.
15. Leaders ensure that staff treat pupils equally, regardless of ability, gender or background, and foster respectful relationships with and between them. Leaders ensure the school meets the requirements

of the Equality Act.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance:

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. Leaders have designed a flexible, personalised curriculum which they adapt well to meet the needs of pupils. Morning activities concentrate on core subjects, such as literacy and numeracy in relevant contexts, with beneficial effect. Pupils make good progress from their starting points in these core subjects and other subjects as part of their bespoke programmes.
17. Pupils enjoy a range of personalised recreational curriculum activities using both indoor and outdoor spaces. These activities enable pupils to develop a range of scientific, technological, aesthetic and creative knowledge and skills. Leaders and staff identify pupils who would benefit from additional support and provide a range of multi-sensory activities to help, such as occupational therapy or speech and language support. Teachers carefully plan and adapt lessons as appropriate to ensure the engagement of pupils. They use well-chosen resources within the newly reorganised curriculum to motivate pupils. Pupils are suitably challenged and encouraged to participate in lessons by their teachers and demonstrate enjoyment in their learning.
18. Staff use their thorough knowledge of each pupil to precisely match learning tasks to pupils' learning needs. They effectively use schemes of work and EHC plan requirements to plan effectively for each pupil. Staff promote mutual respect and tolerance of pupils with different needs, personalities and complex behaviours. Pupils learn and play together across age groups and aptitudes both inside and outside of lessons. Pupils show high levels of co-operation when working and playing together, such as when playing football during break times.
19. Each pupil has a bespoke education plan with targets drawn from their EHC plan. This ensures that staff and pupils are very clear about pupils' next steps. Leaders and staff review these plans daily. They check pupils' progress thoroughly and regularly to make sure that every pupil is reaching their potential. If this is not the case, leaders act swiftly to adapt the curriculum or provide additional support.
20. Pupils have often had periods of disruption to their education which results in attainment on entry being typically low. Younger pupils quickly grasp knowledge of phonics and use this knowledge to improve their reading and writing skills. Many older pupils pursue functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). These qualifications provide a foundation which supports pupils to progress into further education and develop skills for everyday life. Some pupils achieve high grades in GCSE English, mathematics and science subjects.
21. Pupils take part effectively in the Royal Horticultural campaign for school gardening, which includes experiments to grow plants in different soils and establishing a small orchard. Pupils develop teamworking and social skills through these and other activities. Leaders have established a settled environment where staff support pupils to make positive choices and manage their behaviour. Leaders are now investing their efforts into further curriculum development in literacy for the younger pupils and expansion of the curriculum for older pupils.
22. Very effective teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) promotes high expectations for the learning and behaviour of pupils. Pupils' improved behaviour in lessons has a

highly positive impact on their learning and progress.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

23. Leaders ensure that each pupil is treated as an individual. Staff have the highest expectations of pupils' potential. The pastoral care staff take account of pupils' mental health and emotional wellbeing. Leaders have put in place personalised risk assessments, drawn from their knowledge about pupils' previous experience or behaviours. These are reviewed regularly. Pupils become more emotionally stable because they are supported to approach school life in positive ways. Pupils' self-esteem increases soon after their arrival at the school. They quickly learn to do things for themselves because staff encourage them to persevere. Pupils are given extensive advice about how to keep themselves healthy and to avoid unhealthy habits including in cooking activities and physical education.
24. Leaders ensure that procedures and policies for health and safety, first aid, fire safety and maintenance are effective. Regular audits by external agencies ensure that leaders continue to improve the provision for pupils and achieve high standards in all aspects of their work. For example, during the inspection, a visit by the food standards agency confirmed high standards of food hygiene.
25. Admission and attendance registers are accurately kept. Premises and accommodation are suitable and well maintained. Robust systems are in place to assess any potential risks to pupils' safety and wellbeing during school activities and visits.
26. Leaders, managers and governors have carefully considered how to ensure behaviour and anti-bullying strategies are effective and this work has been highly effective. Clear systems of behaviour are expressed to pupils in a way that makes sense to them. Pupils begin to realise how individual people might be negatively affected by the actions of others. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour have reduced considerably because of the work of leaders and staff. Pupils have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying. Bullying of any sort is extremely rare.
27. Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Staff have used their skills, patience and determination to create an increasingly calm atmosphere where pupils' anxiety levels drop, enabling them to be ready to focus on their learning. Pupils respond positively to the high levels of respect shown to them. They are quick to recognise and apologise when they have done something wrong. Pupils take more responsibility for their own actions, such as taking themselves away from situations that are troubling them, before they reach crisis point.
28. Teachers and LSAs work hard to create a classroom environment in which pupils feel safe to make mistakes as they develop new knowledge and skills. Staff encourage pupils through each small step they make. There is a growing 'can do' attitude displayed by pupils throughout the school. Members of staff are with pupils at all times, meaning that supervision is rigorous. Staff are highly knowledgeable about the pupils' needs and take these into account in less structured times as well as when in lessons.

29. Pupils' mental health and wellbeing is at the centre of leaders' decision making. The use of dynamic personalised risk assessments enables staff to adjust plans according to pupils' needs. Much thought and care has been given to the pupils' beginning and end of day routines so that they can feel safe as they make often long journeys between home to school. Leaders build positive contact between pupils and their LSAs to enable pupils to talk about their feelings or express their views. Pupils are helped with strategies to calm down if they are feeling anxious or worried.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing:

All the relevant Standards are met

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

30. Leaders have established an ethos of trust and respect for all pupils. This helps to prepare pupils for adulthood. Leaders deploy staff and ensure that they model positive social skills, reinforce expectations and praise positive social interaction. As a result, pupils' social skills develop well. Staff help pupils understand that in order to be able to contribute to society, they need to become more socially comfortable and aware of others' personalities and behaviours. Staff work effectively to make this happen by teaching social skills alongside all other learning in lessons. During speech and language therapy sessions pupils engage effectively with games and construction activities which also helps them build relationships with each other.
31. The school actively supports and develops pupils' communication skills, through project work and involvement in external campaigns, so that they can interact well with others. Consequently, pupils are confident to talk enthusiastically to visitors about their personal achievement and their work. They can explain what they have been doing in creative activities, or on different projects such as the sequence of events leading up to World War 1 in history. Pupils appreciate opportunities to work together on a project such as designing scrunchies or selling garden produce. This helps develop their economic awareness as well as their interpersonal skills and communication.
32. The planned programme to explain and promote fundamental British values enables pupils to explore their own moral codes as well as standard rules within their communities and the country. For example, work on individual liberty helps pupils to make choices, understand their rights and responsibilities and decide how they would like to achieve set goals. This contributes well to increasing their resilience.
33. Pupils are respectful of differences between people in school and wider society. There is a culture of respect and tolerance of differences throughout the school. Pupils are highly supportive of each other in lessons. They listen to their classmates' explanations respectfully and collaborate successfully when working in pairs or groups. This develops their cooperation skills as part of a team preparing them for the world of work.
34. Pupils are provided with careers advice which is tailored to individual pupils' needs. This supports the development of pupils' economic understanding as well as their independence, particularly when they undertake work experience. For example, staff provide pupils with access to financial services and tools prior to their work placements. Pupils are helped to make sensible choices and decisions about the direction of their lives.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society:

All the relevant Standards are met

Safeguarding

35. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are effective. Proprietors maintain appropriate oversight of safeguarding policies and their implementation. This includes safeguarding procedures that carefully consider the needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Proprietors and school leaders ensure that all required training, policies and procedures to promote safeguarding are in place. They check that the school's monitoring and filtering of internet usage is effective.
36. The record of staff appointments is up to date and contains the required information. Leaders ensure systematic checking of the suitability of any new members of staff to work with pupils.
37. Those responsible for safeguarding hold senior positions. They are suitably knowledgeable and appropriately trained for their role. Senior leaders consider each individual pupil's physical and psychological needs and wishes. This information is used to agree appropriate action where required, including the drawing-up and implementation of individual ESPs. Robust checks are made on any potential risks and staff are vigilant in the supervision of pupils at all times during the day.
38. Pupils develop understanding about how to keep themselves safe because this is explained to them sensitively. Pupils use equipment safely and abide by the rules for the safe use of the internet. They understand the importance of this and the dangers of misusing social networking sites.

The extent to which the school meets standards relating to safeguarding:

All the relevant Standards are met

School details

School	Highgate Hill House School
Department for Education number	878/6065
Address	Highgate Hill House School Whitstone Holsworthy Devon EX22 6TJ
Website	www.hhhschool.co.uk
Proprietor	Highgate Hill House School Ltd
Chair	Ms Tracey Story
Principal	Mrs Kerry Taylor
Age range	5 to 16
Number of pupils	33
Date of previous inspection	11 to 12 March 2020

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

For more information, please visit isi.net