

Knowl Hill School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Knowl Hill School, in Pirbright, Surrey, is an independent day special school. It was founded in 1984 to accept up to 60 boys and girls with specific learning difficulties, principally dyslexia. Pupils may also have dyspraxia, attention deficits and some autistic spectrum disorders, for example Asperger's syndrome. The school is registered to admit pupils aged from seven to 16 years old and there are currently 59 pupils on roll. The school provides for a single pupil over 16 years of age. Forty nine pupils have statements of special educational needs.

The school occupies the building of the old Parish Board School which has been modernised and extended, for example to provide specialist facilities for specific subjects. The school was last inspected in March 2009.

The school aims 'to develop lively, inquiring minds and to help pupils acquire the knowledge and skills to either return to mainstream education or gain the qualifications matching their capabilities'.

Evaluation of the school

Knowl Hill School meets its aims and provides a good quality of education. Pupils make good progress over time because the curriculum, teaching and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are good. Provision for welfare, health and safety is satisfactory rather than good, because a few risk assessments related to health and safety lack sufficient rigour. The school has improved recruitment checks on staff and others and has maintained up-to-date child protection training so that safeguarding arrangements are now satisfactory. Since the last inspection the school has improved its compliance with the regulations for independent schools and now meets all but two.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. The curriculum is well matched to pupils' specific needs and enhanced by specialist input from trained speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and a counsellor when appropriate. The school

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

successfully plans personalised programmes of work for individual students based on the National Curriculum and covering all the required areas of learning. The school regularly assesses pupils' progress and uses this information to review individual programmes. Consequently individual education plans are built on careful evaluation of pupils' progress against previous targets. The individual programmes provide whole-school strategies to develop a pupil's knowledge and understanding against clear measurable targets provided by teachers and therapists. As a result, pupils make good progress across the school with the majority going on to complete GCSE qualifications in a range of subjects.

Particularly good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school to provide visual and auditory reinforcement to facilitate pupils' learning. For example, humanities lessons are enhanced by the use of an interactive visual map of coloured links with pupils quickly writing and adding to on their own computers. The school's environment includes a range of good specialist facilities helping pupils to produce high quality art, textile and photography. A well-equipped science room and recent appointment of a teaching assistant with good subject knowledge have allowed the school to broaden the science curriculum to include separate sciences for more-able pupils.

Pupils make good progress in developing their basic skills, with particular attention given to developing speaking and language through drama and through following the English Speaking Board scheme of work. Speech and language therapists work alongside teachers in lessons so that pupils are encouraged to apply their speaking, reading and communication skills across the curriculum. The school is developing a consistent whole-school approach to helping pupils to develop strategies when encountering words they find difficult or unfamiliar words.

The curriculum is further enriched through a broad range of after-school clubs and activities. Pupils are provided with opportunities to participate in annual residential activities and have completed international trips to France and Iceland. An additional strength of the curriculum is the emphasis on preparing pupils for the next stage in their lives. There are good opportunities for pupils to participate in career-related activities and complete work experience, helping to develop their employment skills. Pupils show good enjoyment while using specialist equipment to participate in practical activities and develop their construction skills.

Teaching is good overall. Consequently, pupils' progress across the school is good. Teachers now provide a better balance of their input and pupils' participation in lessons than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are now frequently encouraged to contribute and provide their ideas. Good use is made of questions and explanations to provide pupils with additional challenge. Throughout the school staff develop good relationships with pupils and this is evident in the praise, encouragement and frequent use of gentle humour. As a result pupils show confidence and frequently provide thoughtful responses, deepening their understanding.

Teachers maintain a good pace to learning as they scan and move around the classes well so that in the vast majority of cases they deal with misconceptions and queries swiftly. Where teaching is consistently good, pupils are clear about their learning and expected outcomes. They make good progress in the large majority of lessons because there is a planned structure, a specific purpose and there are opportunities for pupils to evaluate their achievement at the conclusion of the lesson. For example, pupils made good progress in a textiles lesson because they clearly understood what they were expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. They wrote out their personal targets at the start and then evaluated their own progress at the end. However, across the school, the format of planning varies and not all lessons include each of these separate elements.

Teachers' marking is regular and highlights pupils' misconceptions. Teachers get to know the abilities and capabilities of individual pupils well and, together with more formal assessments and tracking, use this knowledge to challenge pupils to improve, pitching questions and encouraging pupils to explain their ideas. In a science lesson, teachers frequently fired questions to extend pupils' explanations of photosynthesis and showed good knowledge of individuals' reading abilities in demanding pupils use scientific language accurately. The school provides good training opportunities for staff to develop their subject knowledge, qualifications and to develop their understanding of the specific needs of pupils at the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Care has been taken to ensure that all students are provided with opportunities to be successful and develop their self-esteem. Relationships between staff and students are good because staff know and understand the pupils' needs well. Consequently, pupils show good levels of enthusiasm and good attitudes to their work and make a strong contribution to learning. This results in a calm and purposeful atmosphere and good behaviour. In this supportive environment they become increasingly confident in their development of speaking and listening skills and their willingness to explain their ideas to others.

Pupils are polite and courteous and able to relate well to visitors. The vast majority of pupils show consideration for others and routinely show responsibility. The few pupils with emotional and social difficulties and prone to outbursts are helped to manage their anger with access to counselling sessions. A large majority of pupils have good attendance. Pupils often share laughter and are encouraged to work together and cooperate in lessons. During the inspection, friendly competition was used to increase the speed and accuracy of pupils' reading and older pupils enjoyed working together to mix cement and build a brick wall.

Pupils participate in peer mentoring sessions and weekly meetings with staff encourage them to develop mature attitudes and increase their confidence. Pupils are well prepared for their lives beyond school through life skills work. They develop their social skills as they cooperate and relate well to visitors who help them develop

their construction skills. The content of the school's personal, social and health curriculum helps pupils to develop their understanding of public institutions and services. Older pupils receive good support to develop their understanding of prejudice and culture through good quality provision. In a humanities GCSE lesson, Year 11 pupils showed good understanding and provided thoughtful observations on the effects of class, gender and culture on prejudice. However, pupils' cultural development is less well developed in younger years.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school's provision for welfare, health and safety is satisfactory. Staff show care and consideration for pupils and have improved a number of weaknesses identified in the last inspection.

The full range of required policies is in place, including those for child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, and fire and safety. Procedures are clear and well understood by staff. The school has improved the procedures to ensure all staff and proprietors have been checked for their suitability to work with children. Pupils are well supervised at all times. Safeguarding training is updated for all staff every two years and the Designated Person has recently had training at an appropriate level for working with other agencies. The school works closely with these other agencies to safeguard children and to improve attendance. The school clearly records and supervises carefully any medication administered.

Procedures to monitor health and safety around the school are generally satisfactory. Fire safety equipment is checked appropriately and regular fire drills are completed. Fire protection training has been undertaken by a large number of staff. Comprehensive risk assessments are completed for on- and off-site activities with detailed planning and approval of trips. In the main, risk assessments are thorough although on occasion, a few problems are missed, for example loose computer cables, the unsafe storage of a science chemical and a lack of clarity over the procedures for pupils using the automatic lifts within the school. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has improved recruitment and staff vetting procedures and these now meet regulations. All appropriate checks are carried out on staff and others to ensure their suitability to work with children. The single central register meets requirements.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school provides a good range of ICT equipment. The playgrounds provide a good range of activities and environments for pupils to relax, participate in adventurous play and access hard surface area for ball games, football and table tennis. Specialist facilities encourage pupils to make good progress in their creative arts and scientific knowledge and skills. Therapists are provided with facilities

appropriate to their needs within the school. While the ventilation in the first floor rooms in the art block is satisfactory, the rooms can become overheated on warm days but do not prevent good quality learning. The school has plans to improve the ventilation in these classrooms shortly.

Provision of information

All of the required information is provided, or made available, to parents, carers and others. Parents and carers are provided with annual reports which contain appropriate information about pupils' attainment and progress. The reports meet requirements. In addition, during the term, they also receive reports that contain clear information on pupils' behaviour, effort and concentration. However, these reports do not provide specific details of pupils' progress. Parents are invited to annual reviews and they are provided with regular updates of pupils' individual education plans. Where appropriate, the school provides local authorities with an annual statement of expenditure.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

All except one of the regulations are met. The complaints policy does not clearly state that the school's complaints panel will consist of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in a complaint.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

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

- ensure effective measures are in place to ensure pupils' health and safety which have regard to the Department for Education guidance (paragraph 11).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the manner in which complaints are to be handled (standards in part 7) and must:

- ensure the complaints procedure includes details of the provision for the establishment of a hearing before a panel, appointed by the proprietor, of at least three people who have not been directly involved in the matters detailed in the complaint (paragraph 25 (f)).

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Ensure planning across the school consistently provides a clear lesson structure with specific objectives and includes opportunities for pupils to evaluate their achievement.
- Improve provision to ensure that pupils' cultural understanding is consistently good across the school.

Inspection judgements

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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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special Day School		
Date school opened	1984		
Age range of pupils	7–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 41	Girls: 18	Total: 59
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 35	Girls: 14	Total: 49
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,789		
Address of school	School Lane Pirbright Woking Surrey GU3 0RD		
Telephone number	01483 797032		
Email address	info@knowlhill.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr J Dow-Grant		
Proprietor	Knowl Hill Foundation		

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

24 May 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Knowl Hill School, Pirbright, Surrey GU3 ORD

Thank you for the warmth of your welcome and for the friendly, mature way you spoke and behaved towards us. You are welcoming and courteous and are polite to adults. You enjoy school and many of you stay on after the end of the day to take part in after-school activities and take part in residential trips abroad.

The school provides you with a range of activities that help all of you to find something that you enjoy and do well. You work hard and show good attitudes to your work and make good progress in a range of subjects. You clearly enjoy opportunities to produce art and we were impressed by the impressive range of photographs, textiles and sculptures on display and your well-researched and high quality portfolios. As you get older you are provided with good opportunities to take part in work experience and to develop your skills outside the classroom.

All the adults in your school take the trouble to explain things to you and make good use of computers to help you to learn. We were particularly impressed by the colour mind maps you used in humanities and media studies. Staff get to know you well and because of this they are quick to spot when you need help or when you can do better. They talk and ask questions in lessons that really make you think and help you to understand. We were pleased with the good cultural understanding that Years 11 and 12 pupils showed in their discussions in lessons. However, we have asked the school to make sure that they provide more opportunities for younger pupils to develop their cultural understanding.

We have asked the school to make some other changes and improvements.

- Amend the school's complaints policy.
- Improve aspects of health and safety around the school.

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield
Her Majesty's Inspector