

Hill House School

Independent school standard inspection report

DfE registration number	850/6031
Unique Reference Number (URN)	116565
Inspection number	393342
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2012
Reporting inspector	Angela Corbett HMI

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 Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, 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 www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090070.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

No. 090070

© Crown copyright 2012



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

Hill House is a residential special school in Lymington, Hampshire owned and managed by Cambian Education Services. The school opened in 1992 to cater for up to 22 students aged between 11 and 19 who have an autistic spectrum disorder, complex needs and associated behaviours. There are currently 20 students on roll aged between 15 and 19, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. Students are placed at the school and funded by a range of local authorities. Prior to joining the school they have all experienced difficulties in their previous schools or placements. Students are supported by the school's in-house multi-disciplinary team of specialists, which includes speech, language and occupational therapists and clinical and assistant psychologists.

The school moved into new and purpose-built accommodation at the start of the summer term 2012 and is now seeking approval from the Department for Education to increase the number of students to 31. The school received a light touch inspection in March 2009 when all regulations were met. The residential provision was last inspected in March 2012. It has also been inspected on this inspection.

The school states its aims as: 'helping students reach their full potential by challenging the limitations of their autism by offering a highly consistent environment; seeking to understand each individual; and focusing on communication and social skills with a strong emphasis on self-management and independence'.

Evaluation of the school

Hill House School meets its aims by providing students with a good quality education based on the high-level experience and expertise of staff. Good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching enables students to make good progress academically with outstanding progress in their personal development and behaviour. The welfare, health and safety of students are good and given high priority at all times, along with safeguarding arrangements that are robust. All the parents and carers and placing local authorities who responded to the inspection questionnaires were overwhelmingly supportive of the school, valuing the care given by staff and the notable progress made by students. The school has maintained its record of meeting all the required regulations and considerable thought has been given to the design of

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

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

the new high quality school accommodation. Consequently, it is recommended that the number of students for which the school is registered be increased to 31.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. It covers the required areas of learning and is well tailored to meet the needs of the students and their statements of special educational needs. It is not outstanding because although residential and school staff plan a good range of out-of-school activities, their planning is not sufficiently formalised to ensure that as many as possible of the activities are available for everyone, thus limiting some students' experiences.

Key Stages 3 and 4 broadly follow the National Curriculum and at post-16 more emphasis is placed on developing life skills and preparing for life beyond school. Over the last year the curriculum and associated policies and schemes of work have been substantially reviewed to provide more guidance for teachers in tailoring lessons to individual needs, making clearer links between subjects and improving progression.

The curriculum is underpinned by the school's new 'Autism Specialist' approach, which aims to develop the autistic spectrum core areas of behaviour, communication and social development. The daily routine is broken down into short sessions, which include access to physical activity and therapies to help students manage their behaviour and make 'transitions' between locations and activities. High priority is given to the development of literacy and numeracy skills, with particular emphasis on improving students' ability to communicate. There is very consistent use by staff of signing and use of symbols, for example the picture exchange communication system, with spoken commentary, and encouragement for students to vocalise and develop signing skills. Individual education plans are written as a result of multi-disciplinary team meetings that involve teachers and residential staff as well as the in-house therapists and assistant and clinical psychologists based on their assessments of students' developmental needs.

Provision for students' personal, social and health education is outstanding and includes citizenship and religious education. It is routinely incorporated into every activity. The school is now using a range of AQA Unit Award Schemes to provide a range of external accreditations. These currently focus on life skills such as teeth cleaning or washing up but the school is rightly looking to expand these to enable students to gain a broader portfolio of their achievements. Careers and work-related learning are also addressed, with the popular careers week providing good opportunities to broaden students' experiences, for example cycle repair and driving a fire engine simulator.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good overall. It is not outstanding because a few teachers have yet to make full use of the full range of facilities on offer in the new accommodation; for example, in their use of the classroom spaces and the interactive whiteboards to enhance and broaden students' learning. Likewise, a few

teachers do not enable students to make sufficient use of information and communication technology (ICT).

Teachers are trained and supported well and have considerable expertise of the demands of students with autism and complex learning needs. Consequently, lessons are planned well to cater for the mixed-age groups and individual behavioural, academic, communication and social development needs. Good account is also taken of students' individual education plans both in relation to their targets and the advice provided. Teachers set high expectations for achievement and go to considerable efforts to provide variety in approaches and tailor resources to promote independence, motivate and engage students. On a few occasions, however, opportunities are missed to use imagery to enhance students' learning.

In the most effective lessons, relevant contexts and practical tasks help focus students so they show high levels of enjoyment and progress accelerates. This was exemplified when outstanding teaching enabled students to explore colour and texture to make place mats and present their work with pride. Lessons, no matter how short, are structured with time provided for students to reflect on their learning and progress. Symbols, signing and other visual aids for students are used consistently across the school with teachers now setting clear expectations for students to respond and giving them time to do so, if needed. These also help teachers to inform students of the daily programme or to help them make choices both within lessons and for food at break times.

Teachers are skilful at managing students' behaviour in lessons and in making the best use of time. They effectively direct the staff who provide in-class support for students. However, on a few occasions some inconsistency in practice leads to missed opportunities to fully promote students' learning.

The provision of specialist rooms is already having a positive impact on the quality of students' experiences, in particular through practical learning, for example, using drilling equipment in the design and technology room to make a puppet.

Within lessons, assessment of progress is a strength and is used well to inform future planning. Good account is also taken of students' progress towards their individual education plan targets, with school data showing high success rates. The school has a wide range of data that are used to inform reviews and assess progress. Its use to set targets and measure progress is stronger at Key Stage 4 than in post-16.

Current school data and evidence from lessons indicate that students' overall progress is good and for a minority of students is outstanding. All students make outstanding progress in communication.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is outstanding. The excellent programme for personal, social and health education is fully integrated into all lessons and activities. Staff are skilful in promoting students' independence, building on their personal interests, setting high expectations for behaviour and celebrating successes, no matter how small. Every opportunity is taken to maximise students' personal development and experiences from their exceptionally low starting points in terms of social development and behaviour. As a result, students' behaviour is outstanding and they are enabled to make choices, adapt to changes in location and activity and get out into the community. This significantly enhances the quality of their lives and helps to prepare them for life beyond the school.

The excellent new accommodation is being used to promote all aspects of this provision. For example, the new hall is giving students opportunities to come together in one place for weekly assemblies when they celebrate success and learn about wider issues such as St George's Day or for social events run by residential staff, for example the successful evening to celebrate Independence Day that took place during the inspection. Such events help students to learn to get on together, tolerate social settings and develop cultural understanding. Excellent use is also made of students' and staff backgrounds, staff expertise and visitors to broaden horizons and develop cultural understanding, for example, Black history month and Spanish food tasting. Visits into the community enhance students' social development and understanding of the wider world, for example going to the cinema, visiting the local library and shopping in local supermarkets.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good. Staff are vigilant and use their knowledge and expertise efficiently to provide a caring and nurturing environment and to ensure that students are safe. High priority is placed on the day-to-day care of students with at least one-to-one staffing during the school day and on educational trips and visits.

All of the required policies for ensuring students' welfare, health and safety, including for child protection, are in place. These include policies for child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, fire and first aid and pay due regard to national guidance. They provide helpful guidance and are reviewed regularly and are understood and followed by staff.

Staff training for child protection and first aid is up to date and there is in-depth induction training for new staff. A positive approach is taken to behaviour management with incidents recorded and analysed; this information is then used to review approaches to supporting students or the provision of additional therapies to help improve challenging behaviour. Risk assessments for individuals, use of classrooms, and learning activities both on and off-site are all in place. Off-site activities are exceptionally carefully planned and well staffed to minimise risks and

ensure successful and safe experiences for the students. Systems to ensure that school accommodation and equipment are safe are in place, for example, checks of portable electrical appliances and fire drills.

The students are helped in numerous ways to learn to be healthy through, for example, making choices about their food, cooking meals and visits to the dentist. Exercise is part of daily routines, with students starting the day with walks in the woodland area and making use of the new courtyards between lessons and at break times. The new assembly hall is meeting the gap identified at the last inspection for indoor provision for exercise and physical activities. The school fulfils its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school's procedures for the recruitment of staff are rigorously and robustly implemented. All staff have been subject to enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks and full details of these and other checks are listed in the well-kept single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The new school accommodation is very spacious, of extremely high quality and provides an excellent range of facilities for safe, purposeful and effective learning. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Three classroom suites form the school and two further classrooms in a separate building the college, which provides a sixth form learning environment for older students. In addition, the accommodation includes an assembly hall, specialist rooms for science, art, music, design and technology and a computer suite as well as several sensory and occupational therapy rooms. All are decorated, furnished and equipped to a high standard; they are light, airy and well ventilated. The one exception is the occupational therapy room, which although satisfactory, becomes a little stuffy at times. A further room has been set aside as a fitness room, although this has yet to be equipped. The courtyard, play areas, small gardens and wooded area with footpath and two tepees provide excellent facilities for students to exercise and relax in.

Provision of information

The school prospectus, which is downloadable from the Cambian website, and admission pack provide parents, carers and others with all the required information and insight into the school's ethos and educational approach. Twice yearly reports, which include photographic evidence, provide good detail on how well students are progressing for parents and carers and inform the required reviews. Annual financial information is sent to students' placing local authorities.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints procedure meets the requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

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

- Enrich the curriculum for all students by formalising the out of school activities programme organised by staff in the school and residential provision.
- Ensure that all students have good opportunities to use ICT in lessons.
- Develop the skills of in-class support staff to provide consistently high promotion of students' learning.
- Provide better ventilation for the occupational therapy room.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
-------------	------	--------------	------------

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		✓		
--	--	---	--	--

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special school for students who have an autistic spectrum disorder, complex needs and associated behaviours'		
Date school opened	1992		
Age range of pupils	11–19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 14	Girls: 6	Total: 20
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of boarders	Boys: 14	Girls: 6	Total: 20
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 14	Girls: 6	Total: 20
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 14	Girls: 6	Total: 20
Annual fees (boarders)	From £214,000		
Address of school	Rope Hill Boldre Lymington Hampshire SO41 8NE		
Telephone number	01590 672147		
Email address	jenny.wright@cambianguroup.com		
Headteacher	Ms Jenny Wright		
Proprietor	Cambian Education Services		

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.

6 July 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Hill House School, Lymington SO41 8NE

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting you and visiting your lessons to see how well you are doing. I could see how hard you were trying to do well. This letter is to tell you my findings.

- Your school provides you with a good quality of education. As you told me in your inspection questionnaires, your teachers plan lessons that are interesting to help each one of you to learn and make good progress.
- As a result of the help staff give you, your personal development is outstanding so you learn to get on better with other people and improve your behaviour. This helps you to enjoy life more and take part in more activities.
- You really like your brand new school buildings which provide you with much better classrooms and places to learn, such as for music and science. It was good to see you enjoying the new design and technology room where I saw some of you learning to use the drill to make a puppet.
- All the staff want to help you do well. I have asked teachers to make sure that your helpers in class always make the most of every moment to help you make even better progress.
- Teachers use the computers in their classrooms to show what they want you to do and help you to learn. Sometimes you get to use computers and other kinds of ICT, for example the 'beebots' and keyboards in music, which you really enjoy and I have asked them to let you do this more often in your lessons.
- You do lots of different things both in school and out in the community. I have asked teachers to think ahead more and make sure that all of you have opportunities to enjoy more activities that take place after school.

Keep on enjoying your new school building and trying hard to do well.

Yours sincerely

Angela Corbett
Her Majesty's Inspector