

Knowl Hill School

Independent Special School

Inspection Report

DCSF Registration Number	936/6554
Unique Reference Number	125436
Inspection number	330409
Inspection dates	3 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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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, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

This was a light touch inspection (LTI) which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

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 such as Asperger's Syndrome. The school is registered to admit pupils aged from 7 to 16 years old and there are currently 56 pupils on roll. While the school's registration does not include students over the age of 16 years, there are three such students on roll. The school occupies the building of the old Parish Board School which has been modernised and extended, for example to provide a separate art block in the grounds. The school was last inspected in May 2006.

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 is a good school which is effective in meeting the needs of pupils with dyslexia and a range of other learning difficulties. Staff are well trained and expert in providing pupils with an education that suits their interests and needs. The quality of education is good and was also judged to be good in the previous inspection. The curriculum is interesting, varied and, together with good teaching, provides pupils with the opportunities which help them make good progress and be prepared well for the future. Pupils' personal development is good and the arrangements for their safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. The school meets most of the regulations for independent schools, although there are a few areas in which the school does not fully comply.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good as it has been developed successfully to provide the work and activities that match closely pupils' different interests and capabilities. The school's substantial knowledge and experience of supporting pupils with dyslexia and other barriers to learning has led further improvement in the effective implementation of the curriculum. The planning and resourcing of schemes of work are even more suited than at the time of the previous inspection to pupils overcoming any reluctance to learn. Work and activities help pupils gain the confidence to learn and make progress. Effective literacy programmes are in place. All staff are trained to provide for dyslexic pupils and the school's speech and language and occupational therapists ensure that the focus on meeting pupils' literacy needs stays sharp. A good range of literacy schemes, each with different emphases, is used well to promote reading, comprehension, spelling and writing skills. A good amount of time each day is given to literacy work and this is done systematically so that pupils quickly develop their knowledge and skills. Pupils respond well as a result, for example making good efforts to read accurately and discuss the plot and characters in stories. Books and other classroom resources have been chosen carefully to make learning as accessible as possible. For example, text appears in small, manageable chunks broken up liberally with illustrations and diagrams. Interactive whiteboards and video excerpts are used effectively to support visual learning.

The broad curriculum strikes a good balance of academic work and practical activities. This makes it acceptable and enjoyable for pupils. In science and geography, where the theoretical and practical have been brought together inventively, pupils thrive and make good progress. The investigative and experimental approach to learning science in the school's laboratory stimulates pupils' curiosity and excitement and encourages their thinking. Art achieves a similar result because activities are based on good expertise. Pupils' work is bold and creative, and explores with a wide range of materials and techniques. In Key Stage 4, pupils have a good choice of academic and vocational examination courses to suit their capabilities and interests. Of the three post-16 students, two are continuing studying for GCSE examinations this year and one, who has completed GCSE examinations, is studying art subjects at AS and A level.

Teaching is good and pupils learn effectively as they are supported expertly by teachers and their classroom assistants. Adults and pupils get on well together and, as a result, pupils arrive to lessons on time and settle to work readily. Behaviour is good, although occasionally one or two pupils have difficulty concentrating. Pupils make good efforts and are cooperative. There is no whole-school agreement on how teachers plan and organise lessons and while this leads to considerable variation in practice, teachers and their assistants are skilful in meeting each pupil's needs. The previous inspection, while judging teaching and assessment to be good, recommended lessons planning as a point for improvement. This has not been tackled resolutely. Some lessons are planned more thoroughly than others. Here, teaching is paced carefully and ensures that pupils learn concepts and vocabulary

quickly. There are also good opportunities for them to work together and use their initiative. These qualities were most prominent in the science and geography lessons seen. There is, in some lessons, a tendency for teachers to do a lot of talking and questioning which leaves pupils passive and too inactive. Here, pupils are not asked to take much responsibility for themselves or their learning, while they are capable of doing much more.

Pupils' progress is measured using standardised tests at two points in the year, which shows any improvements in scores. This is of limited use in analysing progress, although the school is seeking an assessment system that would provide details of strengths and weaknesses. The assessment criteria provided by examination boards are used well. These are much more useful in keeping track of progress and planning future work. Furthermore, the assessments completed by the speech and language and occupational therapists are used effectively to plan the teaching of basic skills. All of this contributes significantly to pupils making progress. Otherwise, the regular assessment in classrooms often focuses on pupils' attitudes and efforts rather than on their attainment. This affects adversely the quality of some targets in pupils' individual education plans. These are framed in vague terms and not sharply focused on something specific and measurable that pupils should achieve.

Progress is good as a result of pupils' increased confidence in tackling tasks which had defeated them in the past. This has helped them develop a positive attitude to school and improve their efforts. Good teaching, sharply focused on support for each pupil, contributes to good progress throughout the school. The number of GCSE subjects for which pupils are entered has grown each year and all those entered in recent years have achieved a pass grade. Pupils have also gained certificates for computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT).

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and it was good at the time of the previous inspection. Although the school judges this to be only satisfactory, it is effective in meeting pupils' needs with the consequence that their self-esteem grows as does confidence. Pupils' relationships with staff are good and they are influenced positively by the moral and social role models which staff project. Themes in assembly emphasise these personal qualities. As a result, pupils show a good regard for each other and a concern for the needs of others. Their attendance and behaviour are good and they contribute well, particularly by enthusiastically raising money for charities. Pupils' personal development is good and, with this, they are prepared well for the future along with the good progress made in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology and in gaining a range of accreditation.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The arrangements for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory, despite the school judging this to be outstanding. It was good at the time of the previous inspection. There are many strengths giving substantial support to pupils' personal development and progress, which means that in many respects they are cared for extremely well; however, there are also areas in which the school is not in full compliance with the requirements. The school's investment in training staff, their expertise and the specialist support made available through speech and language and occupational therapies all come together effectively and improve pupils' emotional well-being. A healthy life style is encouraged by promoting knowledge and good practice relating to a good diet. Physical education and sports ensure that pupils stay fit and the school develops their understanding of the need to keep physically fit and emotionally strong. Close attention is paid to most aspects of health and safety throughout the school including security. Although the school's procedures for checking the suitability of the staff it appoints have improved since the last inspection, the checks on governors have not been completed, for example to include the required Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks. The training requirements for staff relating to child protection procedures, as set out in the school's policy, have not been adhered to. The specific training for the person responsible for co-ordinating child protection procedures is out-of-date, as is the child protection awareness training required for all staff.

The school has a comprehensive policy on disability but has not yet met its commitment to write, and keep up-to-date, a three-year action plan promoting access for disabled people. The school has toilet facilities for the disabled and a lift in the art block.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

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

- ensure that the appropriate training for the school's child protection officer and the training in child protection for all staff is kept up-to-date (paragraph 3(2)(b)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- for each governor other than the chairperson, check to confirm their identity, right to work in the UK, enhanced CRB check, or where appropriate confirmation that he/she does not contravene section 142 of the 2002 Act(a) (paragraph 4B(4 and 5))
- in relation to each governor, record in the register that a check was made of: their identity; right to work in the United Kingdom; and whether an enhanced CRB check was carried out and certificate obtained, or where appropriate, confirmation that a member of the trustees is not barred from working in school under section 142 of the Education Act 2002, showing the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained (paragraph 4C(6 and 7)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of procedures for handling complaints (standard 7) and must:

- provide that one person on the panel hearing a complaint is independent of the management and running of the school (paragraph 7(g))
- ensure that the procedure states categorically that the complainant, proprietors and headteacher and, where relevant, the person complained about, are given a copy of any findings and recommendations (paragraph 7(i))
- ensure that the procedure provides that correspondence, statements and records of complaints are kept confidential (paragraph 7(k)).

In order to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2002 the school should devise a three-year accessibility plan.

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following point for development:

- improve assessment into a more regular and accurate measure of each pupil's attainment and use this in the precise planning of the next steps in their learning.

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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School details

Name of school	Knowl Hill School		
DCSF number	936/6554		
Unique reference number	125436		
Type of school	Special Day School		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1984		
Age range of pupils	7–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 38	Girls: 18	Total: 56
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 27	Girls: 15	Total: 42
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£15,180		
Address of school	School Lane Pirbright Woking Surrey GU24 0JN		
Telephone number	01483 797032		
Fax number	01483 797641		
Email address	info@knowlhill.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr J Dow-Grant		
Proprietor	Knowl Hill Foundation		
Reporting inspector	Alan Lemon		
Dates of inspection	3 March 2009		