

Holme Court School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Declan McCarthy

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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

Holme Court School is a small independent, co-educational, day special school for pupils with dyslexia and associated difficulties, registered to admit pupils aged from seven to 16 years. The proprietorial body, Holme Court School Limited, opened it in 2005 in a small rural location in Bedfordshire. The school was last inspected in May 2008. Since then, the school moved to new premises in Cambridge on 9 September 2011 and was subject to a material change inspection at that time because it wished to extend its registration to include pupils aged 14 to 16 years. There are currently 23 pupils on roll aged between nine and 16 years, 13 of whom have a statement of special educational needs. The school provides short-term intensive programmes for pupils who usually stay for between one and three years, after which most are expected to return to their previous school or move on to a new setting. The aim of the school is to help pupils to overcome their dyslexia by fulfilling their potential as learners and developing as well-rounded mature individuals who are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Although the school is not affiliated to any religious body, its ethos is based on a strong moral code of respect for self, for others and for property. There are strong links with its sister school, The Cambridge International School, located on the same site.

Evaluation of the school

Holme Court provides a good education for its pupils. Outstanding welfare, guidance and support ensure that safeguarding and pupils' welfare are given the highest priority in the day to day running of the school. The school fulfils its aims in developing the potential of its pupils and meets all regulations. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The curriculum meets all regulations and is good. It is highly relevant to the school's extended age range. The oldest pupils, in Years 10 and 11, prepare successfully for a wide range of examination courses. These consist of Adult Literacy and Numeracy awards and the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness, which prepare them for life beyond school. Those who are capable of success in GCSE, follow suitable courses in the International School or at local colleges. The first intake of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are currently making good progress towards

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

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

these accreditations. The school has linked up with local community organisations to implement its planned programme of work experience for the oldest pupils and the school was preparing for this during the inspection. The curriculum policy is well-conceived. There is a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy skills, which are not only taught discretely but also permeate across subjects. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught discretely as a subject within a new ICT suite and, although not seen supporting learning in other subjects during the inspection, analysis of pupils' work demonstrates it is also applied appropriately to support learning within subjects. The curriculum is matched well to pupils with a statement of special educational needs and is highly personalised through individual educational plans, which reflect the provision specified on the statement. A key strength is the dyslexia centred, multi-sensory and highly structured approaches applied across subjects. This ensures that learning and progress in all subjects, particularly in reading, spelling and handwriting are built up systematically in small steps. Pupils are taught a suitable range of subjects, including science, history, geography, religious education, design and technology, art, music and Spanish. There is strong emphasis on personal, social and health education, which enhances their personal development and promotes their independence skills. Good use is made of an adequate range of resources to support teaching and learning in all subjects.

Assessment is good. A range of well-considered assessment systems are in place, which are used effectively in planning and in the tracking of pupils' progress. Baseline assessment on entry includes the use of standardised tests for reading and spelling, the outcomes of which are used to formulate specific measurable and achievable targets in individual education plans. Progress against these is reviewed and recorded each term. In addition, pupils have individual 'Bullseye' targets clearly displayed on classroom walls which relate mainly to their response in lessons. Progress is tracked and recorded against levels of the National Curriculum in all subjects and these are used to plan lessons and also to provide information for reports to parents on a termly basis.

The quality of teaching is good. Key strengths include good subject knowledge and excellent knowledge of methods for teaching pupils with dyslexia. This is as a result of outstanding training opportunities for all staff, in the latest developments in dyslexia, provided by the head teacher. As a result, teachers make good use of well-chosen visual resources when introducing new concepts to learning, and focus on explanations of technical vocabulary to ensure pupils understand their learning. This was seen in a Year 11 mathematics lesson on ratio proportion, where pupils used cubes to represent ratio and then simplified them before recording their calculations accurately. Good support is provided by teaching assistants who explain tasks clearly, promoting the development of pupils' basic skills within the subject. This was seen in a literacy lesson, where a teaching assistant put on a green hat to help pupils remember the mnemonic for the sound -ough, 'o u green hat'. All staff have excellent relationship with pupils and manage behaviour well in lessons. Planning is good and ensures that tasks are matched well to the range of learning needs within each class.

Pupils make good progress in lessons as a result of good teaching. Good progress is also seen in pupils' written work, which is carefully marked to inform pupils how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. The highly accurate school data show good progress made by pupils, most of whom make better than expected gains in their National Curriculum levels and significantly increase their reading and spelling ages. Although the first intake of oldest pupils, have not yet taken their examinations, their work shows that they are making good progress towards their predicted grades. The school is in the process of developing new technologies for pupils with dyslexia to support learning and progress further.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school meets all the regulations. Many pupils enter the school lacking in confidence and with low self-esteem. The strong focus on the individual, together with timely use of praise and encouragement, enables pupils to develop their confidence and engage with learning. As a result pupils respect staff and listen carefully in lessons. In discussion, all pupils said how much staff help them when they are stuck. They like their teachers and enjoy coming to school, as reflected in the questionnaire responses of pupils and parents. Pupils' behaviour is good. The few pupils with histories of challenging behaviour make rapid improvements, responding well to the classroom code of conduct and to the school's system of rewards and sanctions. They make a good contribution to their community, for example, by taking on responsibilities for small jobs in school and by fund raising for a range of good causes. All pupils are members of the school council, which meets once each week to suggest improvements in the school. The strong emphasis on developing pupils' appreciation and understanding of different cultures is reflected in the study of world faiths, the celebration of world religious festivals and participation in International Day held in the Cambridge International School. The citizenship programme, together with planned visits, ensures that pupils develop their knowledge of public institutions and services in England.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding and the school meets all the regulations. This is reflected in the strong views of parents, carers and pupils who say they feel safe. Arrangements for child protection are outstanding. All staff have received appropriate up-to-date training. An excellent range of policies and procedures are in place and implemented effectively to safeguard the welfare and interests of pupils. These include policies for child protection, safeguarding, anti-bullying, behaviour and discipline, safer recruitment, health and safety, fire safety, and first aid. The active encouragement of pupils to stay safe, through for example clear guidance on internet safety and the use of mobile phones, ensures that they stay safe. A clear system of rewards and sanctions, used consistently by staff, promotes good behaviour. Risk assessments in school and for educational visits are very thorough and meticulously recorded. A high level of staff vigilance, at all times, is a strong feature. Any incidents, accidents and safe handling are recorded in detail, complying fully with requirements. Full fire certification is in place with a record of

regular testing of fire and electrical appliances. Strong pastoral care ensures that pupils' medical needs and emotional wellbeing are carefully considered at all times. Pupils eat healthily and exercise regularly. Admissions and attendance registers fully meet requirements. The school also meets all the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school meets the regulations. Rigorous procedures are in place to check the suitability of all staff, proprietors and any visitors to the school to work with children. These checks are recorded on a single central register which is dated and signed as checks are completed.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school is located in the grounds of Cherry Hinton Hall, set in eight acres of parkland and woodland, providing for a variety of outdoor games and activities. The premises and accommodation are located in two buildings, the Cottage and the Phoenix Wing. Both premises are in a satisfactory state of repair and are suitably decorated. Three light, spacious and well insulated classrooms are located in the cottage for pupils at Key Stages 2 and 3 and further spacious classroom accommodation and an assembly hall, which also serves as a dining area is provided for pupils at Key Stage 4 in the Phoenix. There is adequate storage space and wash room facilities for staff and pupils in both premises. The school benefits from a new ICT suite as well as a suitably resourced rest room for pupils who are ill. Good use is made of the well-equipped outdoor area, the local park and leisure centre for recreation and exercise. The accommodation is suitable and safe for the maximum number of 30 pupils for registration.

Provision of information

This provision meets all regulations. A new prospectus has been drawn up, which takes account of the changing age range and needs of pupils within the new premises. Parents and carers are informed of all available policies in the school and receive regular newsletters updating them on any developments within the school. Annual written reports on pupils' progress are detailed and informative. Parents and carers who returned their completed questionnaires, highlighted the good communication between home and school

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedure meets all the regulations. There have been no complaints in the last year.

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 point for development.

- Extend the resources of specialist technologies to further support learning and progress for pupils with dyslexia.

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	Day special		
Date school opened	2005		
Age range of pupils	7-16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 15	Girls: 7	Total: 22
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 11	Girls: 2	Total: 13
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 13,185		
Address of school	The Cottage Cherry Hinton Hall Cherry Hinton Road Cambridge CB1 8DW		
Telephone number	01223 778835		
Email address	dyslexiaschool@yahoo.co.uk		
Headteacher	Julia Hewerdine		
Proprietor	Holme Court Cambridge Limited		

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.



12 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holme Court School, Cambridge, CB1 8DW

Thank you for making me feel welcome when I visited your school recently. I was impressed with your good behaviour and the way you were learning and making good progress in lessons. Thank you for telling me about your school. I agree with you and your parents, that yours is a good school. Teaching is good, as is the curriculum and use of assessment to help you learn and record how well you are doing. The school looks after you exceptionally well so that you always stay safe. You and your parents and carers also confirmed this in discussion and in questionnaire returns. The school carefully checks on all staff and visitors to make sure they are suitable to work with children. Your new accommodation is suitable for your education and you benefit from spacious classrooms and outdoor recreational facilities.

Your school meets all requirements and I have suggested one thing which might help your school to be even better.

- Extend the resources of specialist technologies to further support your learning and progress.

Yours sincerely

Declan McCarthy
Lead inspector