

Hillcrest Glebedale School

Grove Road, Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 3AY

Inspection dates

12–14 June and 3 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders understand the requirements of the independent school standards and ensure that these are met in full.
- The headteacher leads a cohesive teaching, learning and pastoral care team. All staff have high expectations of pupils and strive to help them achieve their very best.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers plan carefully to meet the individual needs of each pupil. Teachers use questioning particularly well to move pupils' learning forward. Consequently, pupils make good progress in most subjects.
- In key stages 3 and 4, teaching in science and information and communication technology (ICT) is less effective. As a result, pupils make slower progress in these subjects.
- Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to develop their confidence in writing. While pupils' progress in writing for different purposes is strong, they do not make as much progress in using correct grammar and punctuation, which reduces the overall quality of their writing.
- Leaders make sure that pupils' views are considered in the day-to-day running of the school. As a result, pupils feel that they are valued, and they treat adults with respect.
- Pastoral care and support is exceptionally strong. As a result, pupils with a variety of serious emotional and mental health difficulties make outstanding progress in their personal development. However, impartial careers information and guidance is yet to be developed fully.
- Staff provide pupils with highly effective and individualised support to help them manage their own behaviours. Teaching is also carefully planned to meet pupils' interests. This helps pupils to improve their behaviour considerably and attend school more regularly.
- Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school's performance. They provide effective challenge and support to leaders to further improve the school.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Pupils feel safe at all times. This feeling of security helps pupils to settle and to engage in learning.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide a wider range of impartial careers information, advice and guidance to further develop pupils' personal development and welfare.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress in grammar and punctuation to raise attainment in writing.
- Develop the quality of teaching and learning in science and ICT in key stages 3 and 4 to improve pupils' outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders ensure that all the independent school standards are met. They have a precise understanding of the school's strengths, but also where further developments need to be made. Leaders' development plans are focused carefully on the actions that need to be taken to enable all pupils to achieve as highly as possible.
- Qualified teachers, experienced pastoral staff and learning support assistants, working alongside the clinical team, provide pupils with comprehensive support and guidance. The senior leadership team has expertise in pastoral care, special needs education and behaviour management and has created an environment where pupils can engage in positive educational experiences. This enables pupils to make good academic progress while having their social and emotional needs met.
- The bespoke nature of the curriculum enables pupils in the secondary phase to follow suitable education programmes for pre-GCSE, GCSE, functional skills and entry-level BTEC qualifications. Pupils at the primary stage follow the national curriculum programmes of study. Leaders ensure that staff have consistently high expectations of pupils and strive to ensure that pupils achieve as highly as possible.
- Relationships at all levels are good. The vast majority of staff who completed the Ofsted inspection survey indicated that they very much enjoy working at the school. Staff said that the management are considerate of well-being. From the large numbers of written comments from staff, a typical response was: 'I have never worked with such a wonderful team who support me in school and outside. I believe that this reflects on our students and most of them enjoy school.'
- The school keeps detailed records of its pupils and their individual needs. Education, health and care (EHC) plans for pupils are well documented and followed carefully. Records of each individual pupil's behaviour and starting points are thorough and provide a reliable basis for discussing their academic and social progress. Strong leadership ensures that pupils' individual needs are catered for well. Before pupils join the school, leaders work closely with parents and other stakeholders to gather information, which assists with the smooth transition process. Close working with a variety of other agencies contributes well to improvements in pupils' personal and academic development.
- Leaders have developed assessment procedures to monitor and record pupils' progress effectively in the subjects they study. Consequently, they know pupils' starting points and how much progress they have made. They identify gaps in pupils' previous knowledge so that these can be addressed in teaching to help pupils achieve more closely to the standards expected for their age.
- Leaders assess, monitor and track pupils' improvements in behaviour. They analyse behaviour patterns and identify quickly any changes in pupils' behaviour, and the reasons for these changes. Leaders then provide support swiftly in response to pupils' individual needs to help them engage more positively in school again. This further supports pupils' good academic progress.
- Hillcrest's team of educational psychologists, psychotherapists and forensic psychologists, who are resident in the school building, support leaders exceptionally well. Educational

psychology provides a bridge between pupils' carers and the school, as well as supporting pupils who live at home with their parents. This close work with the clinical team contributes well to pupils' emotional and mental health development.

- The school has good relationships with relevant external agencies. Managers are appreciative of the support external specialists give to the school. They act swiftly on advice to create better working arrangements for pupils.
- Leaders have created strong relationships with parents and carers. They keep them well informed by telephone, text and email as well as providing more formal reports every half term. Parents and carers know that they can contact the school for support at any time and that leaders will listen to their concerns. All parents spoken to were highly supportive of the school. Typical comments from parents and carers were: 'I can't fault the school at all. It's brilliant!'; 'There is a massive change in my child. The school has helped him loads.'; and 'My child loves maths now and he really enjoys cooking.' One of the pupils' carers said the school is 'Fantastic!'
- Leaders have embedded spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the planning of all subjects. Educational visits and whole-school events such as Black History Month and involvement in supporting the local community enrich pupils' learning experiences.
- One of the school governors completes a termly 'Pupil Voice' survey. Consequently, leaders can make sure that they know about and address pupils' concerns.
- The school is well respected and local authorities from long distances away send pupils to be cared for and educated at Hillcrest Glebedale School. A local authority senior casework officer said: 'The school is both lateral and forward thinking in dealing with more complex cases.' She said that she is extremely impressed with pupils' work as well as the friendly welcome pupils and visitors receive.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum. However, there remain some inconsistencies in the teaching of ICT and science, which limits pupils' progress in these subjects.

Governance

- The combined expertise of highly experienced managers employed by the Hillcrest group to support the school has a positive effect on strategic leadership of the school. The governing body comprises people who have substantial knowledge of managing the pastoral, academic and psychological requirements of pupils with complex social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The chair of governors maintains regular contact with the leadership team. He is, therefore, able to respond to concerns promptly when necessary. He has a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and holds leaders to account well for the school's performance.

Safeguarding

- Leaders have created a strong culture of shared responsibility for protecting pupils. Consequently, pupils are safe and well supported.
- Leaders have ensured that a comprehensive safeguarding and child protection policy is

available on the website. The safeguarding policy and practices meet current government requirements and are detailed and implemented effectively.

- All staff are appropriately trained in all aspects of safeguarding. On induction, new staff have three weeks of training in safeguarding and the management of pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. This enables staff to support pupils effectively and recognise any potential signs of harm to pupils.
- Leaders are tenacious in following up concerns and ensuring that they inform outside agencies when a pupil is at risk or missing from education. Staff keep appropriate records that detail safeguarding concerns and actions. Staff are well trained to recognise signs of extremism and radicalisation.
- The building is well maintained and kept to an appropriately safe standard, with clear access to doors in case of fire. The health and safety officer regularly checks the building for fire risks and other safety hazards. Leaders rigorously maintain risk assessments for all aspects of school life and for individual pupils where necessary. This includes extremely careful risk assessments of the off-site facilities that pupils use.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils feel secure in a calm learning environment. Teachers care deeply about pupils' personal well-being and educational progress. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect. Pupils are engaged in their education and work steadily to make good progress because of this positive climate for learning.
- Teachers assess pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills and abilities as soon as they arrive in school. Teachers identify gaps in pupils' learning, which have developed through prolonged absences from education. They then plan work carefully to meet individual pupils' needs to help them close these gaps.
- Pupils have the vast majority of their lessons in small groups up to a maximum of five pupils. Typically, there are two or three pupils in a group. This enables teachers to provide pupils with highly individualised support and guidance to help them engage positively in learning. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They plan carefully to ensure that pupils are suitably challenged, but also adapt tasks quickly when pupils begin to struggle. This maintains pupils' engagement in their learning and helps them to make good progress. One primary pupil said that he enjoys school very much 'because we do good maths and learning'.
- Teachers understand their pupils well and are therefore able to cater very effectively for their social and emotional needs. They are skilled at managing pupils who have presented high levels of challenge to teachers in other schools. Teachers are usually able to pre-empt and deflect possible outbursts, which limits the levels of disruption to learning. Teachers motivate extremely effectively those pupils who are experiencing difficulties. They use praise and the reward system well to encourage pupils to continue to work positively.
- Teachers expect pupils to complete the work that they have begun in all lessons. If pupils fail to complete work, they are given catch-up time during breaktimes or after school. Homework is well established and frequently links to catch-up time. The reward system motivates learners not only to complete their work but also to improve it. Make A

Difference time (MAD time) is given for pupils to edit and improve work. As a result, pupils know what they need to do to improve, which helps them to make progress. They take pride in their work and present it well.

- Teachers develop pupils' mathematical skills particularly well. They ensure that pupils secure a strong understanding of basic arithmetic, and then provide a range of opportunities to apply these skills in problem-solving and reasoning activities. This enables pupils to make particularly strong progress in mathematics.
- Teachers encourage pupils to develop their thinking skills. This was observed especially in personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) education, art and English. Teachers ask challenging questions which are carefully matched to pupils' learning needs. This helps teachers to quickly identify what pupils have understood in order to provide further challenge or provide additional support where needed. This further supports the good progress that pupils make.
- Pupils across the school are given many opportunities to develop their writing skills in a range of different styles and in a range of subjects. For example, books show that pupils' writing skills are developed effectively through poetry, reports and story writing in English as well as in subjects such as science and history.
- Teachers go to great lengths to find out what pupils enjoy reading and then plan writing activities that are skilfully linked to the texts. For example, in key stage 2 pupils wrote persuasive letters based on the story 'Billionaire Boy'. This develops pupils' enjoyment of writing considerably, and books show that pupils have progressed from writing simple sentences at the start of the year, to writing extended pieces, including using paragraphs, by the end of the year. However, while pupils engage positively in writing and have made strong progress in developing writing for different purposes, their correct use of grammar and punctuation is less well developed. This reduces pupils' overall progress in writing.
- Currently, there are no specialist teachers for ICT and science for pupils in key stages 3 and 4. Leaders ensure that pupils receive regular teaching in these subjects, and they utilise resources from a local high school to provide pupils with opportunities to carry out practical science investigations. However, teaching in these subjects is less effective, which impedes pupils' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. The school provides for a variety of extremely vulnerable pupils, most of whom have EHC plans.
- The whole staff team demonstrates the school's ethos of care. They have created a communicative and friendly environment based on trust, respect and mutual understanding. Pupils have had poor experiences of education in other schools and often multiple placement breakdowns. After demonstrating extremely difficult and sometimes dangerous behaviour, they learn gradually to self-regulate and settle down to learn.
- On arrival at the school, experts assess pupils' emotional and mental health needs and work with leaders to plan individual programmes for pupils. They provide high-quality

therapeutic intervention sessions for pupils to enable them to make progress with personal, social and mental health issues.

- On arrival, some pupils are still unable to work within school, so they are offered bespoke learning opportunities to work from home or to work in other environments, for example in stables with horses or on a landscaping project. As a result, they begin to take advantage of education.
- The school is a welcoming environment where pupils say that they feel safe. Pupils' confidence grows as they become more accustomed to the fact that adults are striving for their success and well-being. A phased introduction to the school gently builds pupils up to a full timetable. Pupils who have been established in the school for some time act as buddies for new pupils. This emphasis on care and responsibility for the lives of others contributes well to pupils' social development. Pupils who have been in the school the longest have well developed social skills.
- Lunchtimes afford excellent opportunities for discussion and debate between staff and pupils on a variety of subjects and current events. The pastoral leader ensures that activities are provided to make lunchtimes positive for all pupils and that a peaceful and friendly atmosphere is maintained. This relaxed atmosphere contributes strongly to pupils' social development.
- Staff are highly skilled at recognising pupils' emotions and can pre-empt many difficulties that might occur in lessons. Pupils benefit from regular opportunities for counselling before their emotions escalate. This vigilance and support results in a calm learning environment that promotes learning.
- PHSE lessons support pupils to develop a full understanding of themselves. The trusting relationship they have with adults helps them to feel confident to talk about issues that affect their own lives. The curriculum also ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in British society. Regular rewards for being a good citizen are given on Friday celebration assemblies, along with rewards for hard work.
- Pupils study a variety of religions in their religious education (RE) lessons. This learning is supplemented by visits to local places of worship. Staff encourage pupils to share their knowledge of their different cultures within the school. Pupils are considerate and tolerant of different cultures and beliefs. A typical remark of a pupil was: 'You should not be mean to anyone, whoever they are.'
- Pupils are actively engaged in volunteering within the community and support charitable donations. For example, they volunteered to visit a home for adults with learning difficulties. They made cakes and sold them to make money for charity. They also took gifts to the church to be given to disadvantaged children at Christmas. As a result, they begin to understand how they can have a wider influence on the lives of others.
- A well-established school council represents the views of all the pupils, with prospective candidates having to prepare their own manifesto. Pupils create the ballot box and discuss how an election would be carried out. The written manifestos of the pupils showed detailed consideration of several issues. For example, one said, 'I think there is no such thing as a bad idea. It is important that everybody's voice is heard.' This well-developed pupil council ensures that pupils develop a secure knowledge of democracy.
- A rich programme of external visits widens pupils' experiences. For example, they visit museums, theatres, religious buildings and the National Arboretum in Alrewas. They

benefit from visits from outside speakers, for example the fire service and the police. They take part in workshops to develop their knowledge of extremism and radicalisation. These experiences ensure that pupils gain a good knowledge of British institutions and of the wider world.

- Well-structured, anti-bullying teaching ensures that pupils know about bullying. They say that there is seldom any bullying in school, but if it happens, staff deal with it effectively.
- The PSHE curriculum helps pupils to learn about the 'world of work'. In addition to this, pupils receive support to help them make GCSE option choices, which meet their individual learning needs. The pastoral lead provides careers information to help pupils continue their education or training, or to secure employment. A range of agencies involved with pupils' care also contribute to the guidance and support that pupils receive. However, leaders recognise that there is room for further improvement in this area and are currently seeking further impartial careers information, advice and guidance.

Behaviour

- The improvement in the behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Staff analyse in great detail pupils' social and emotional needs. They then develop highly personalised support plans to help pupils manage and improve their behaviour and their confidence in school. Leaders identify rapidly any changes in need and refine the support as required. As a result, pupils' behaviour improves significantly as they settle and adjust to school life. Those who have spent some time in the school are courteous, friendly and are very keen to meet and talk to visitors.
- Staff are well trained to deal with any emotional outbursts and work very effectively as a whole-staff team. They set firm boundaries and are skilled at encouraging pupils to calm down. Pupils can use the 'meditation room' to help calm themselves when needed. Pupils accept that if their behaviour is poor, they must think about what they have done and make up for it.
- Leaders track pupils' attendance very carefully. They respond quickly and seek out any further support which could help a pupil engage in school more positively where issues with attendance arise. When pupils have prolonged periods of absence, leaders offer them home tuition to help prevent a significant decline in their progress. Leaders take all possible steps to support pupils to attend school regularly. As a result, attendance for individual pupils has improved significantly.
- Parents are most appreciative of the school. They are extremely grateful for the marked improvement in their child's behaviour since starting at the school. A typical remark from a parent was, 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds.'

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Teachers' high expectations of what pupils in key stage 2 can achieve, along with their skilful challenge and support, enables pupils to make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including, history, geography, physical education, science and art. Pupils' work shows that teachers develop their skills and knowledge in these subjects very well.
- Key stage 2 pupils make particularly strong progress in mathematics because of effective teaching. In many cases, pupils make rapid progress which helps them achieve broadly in

line with the standards expected for their ages.

- Teachers promote reading throughout all subjects. For example, pupils in the primary phase read confidently from a historical report. Pupils master quickly the basics of reading, including developing their phonics skills if they arrive in school with weak literacy skills. This helps pupils to make good progress in reading.
- Year 11 pupils are entered for functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT examinations as well as GCSEs in a variety of subjects. They are entered for BTEC Jamie Oliver Home Cooking Skills. They have a wide range of vocational opportunities to gain certificates, for example in catering, construction, equine studies, hair and beauty and motor vehicle studies. Leaders provide effective support to help pupils choose courses which are closely matched to their needs and interests. This helps pupils to engage in their learning, achieve some qualifications and continue their learning after leaving the school.
- All pupils in Year 11 in July 2017 found places in further education colleges or apprenticeships. Pupils who are currently in Year 11 all have either confirmed or conditional places in further education colleges to study courses such as computer education, animal care, construction or landscaping. However, the lack of comprehensive impartial careers guidance does not enable pupils to appreciate fully the wide range of potential options they could consider when leaving the school.
- The vast majority of pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 have made good progress from their starting points in most subjects. This includes pupils who are looked after by local authorities. Teachers make accurate assessments when pupils arrive in the school and use them to plan effective individualised learning programmes. These programmes also identify pupils' gaps in their learning and provide support to help pupils catch up. However, secondary phase pupils make less progress in science and ICT due to less effective teaching in these subjects.
- Pupils in key stage 2 make good progress in some elements of their writing, especially writing in a range of different styles. Work in pupils' books shows that teachers build carefully on pupils' prior learning. However, pupils' progress in developing their grammar and punctuation skills is less strong, which limits their progress in writing overall.

School details

Unique reference number	136220
DfE registration number	861/6004
Inspection number	10038842

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Number of part-time pupils	7
Proprietor	Graham Baker
Chair	Jarrold Elcock
Headteacher	Karen Caswell
Annual fees (day pupils)	£68,900
Telephone number	01782 320 773
Website	www.hillcrestchildrensservices.co.uk
Email address	karen.caswell@hillcrest-cs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 December 2014

Information about this school

- Hillcrest Glebedale School is an independent day school for pupils aged between 7 and 19 years experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties. It is located in the residential area of Heron Cross, Stoke-on-Trent.
- The school is registered to take sixth-form pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were no sixth-form pupils on roll.
- Previously, this school was known as Young Options Pathway College, Stoke. It was last inspected in December 2014. Following this inspection, the school applied to the Department for Education to extend its age range to include primary pupils and to move

its site. The school relocated to this building in April 2017 and changed its name.

- The school offers places for children who are looked after by local authorities. They also offer places to day pupils from the local community.
- Most pupils arrive at the school having experienced significant trauma and difficulties, which have impacted on previous placements and frequently led to multiple placement breakdowns. As a result, pupils often arrive with significant gaps in their learning and attainment. On entry, many pupils are operating at lower levels than those typical for their age.
- The majority of pupils have EHC plans. All pupils have experienced some form of disruption to their education. Some pupils have not received formal education for extended periods of time prior to joining the school. In order to support access to the curriculum, education staff work alongside clinicians to understand and respond therapeutically to pupils.
- On admission to the school, pupils take part in an induction programme. During this time, their educational and personal needs are assessed as the provision gradually increases to full-time attendance. The school provides part-time placements for some pupils at Stoke-on-Trent College for individual vocational courses. Additional vocational courses are available at the Pathways College site as well as at Horses for Courses, Stoke on Trent.
- The majority of pupils come from Stoke-on-Trent, but several children who are looked after by local authorities come from further afield.

Information about this inspection

- After the initial two days of inspection, Ofsted decided that it was necessary to return to the school to gather further evidence to complete the inspection. This additional inspection day was undertaken by one of Her Majesty’s Inspectors.
- Inspectors undertook joint observations of several lessons along with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors made observations of pupils as they moved around the school and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the chair of governors and the governor responsible for pupil voice. Inspectors met with the consultant clinical psychologist who leads Hillcrest’s clinical team for the East and West Midlands. They also held meetings with the pastoral leader, the English teacher for the secondary phase and the assistant headteacher who leads the primary department.
- Inspectors held discussions with several pupils as well as talking to pupils more informally during the school day.
- The inspectors toured the school premises.
- Inspectors scrutinised schemes of work and lesson plans as well as a variety of documents about pupils and safeguarding. They scrutinised risk assessments about the school building, individual pupils and external visits.
- An inspector spoke to several parents on the telephone and considered 10 staff questionnaire responses to the Ofsted survey. She also spoke on the telephone to one of the pupils’ carers. She also considered a survey of parent opinion taken previously by the school. There were not enough responses to Ofsted’s Parent View online questionnaire for them to be considered.
- Inspectors took into account several case studies about individual pupils.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone to the senior casework officer for the local authority, who places most pupils in the school.

Inspection team

Ann Pritchard Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Mary Maybank

Ofsted Inspector

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