

# Spring Hill High School

C/O 28 Slade Road, Erdington, Birmingham, West Midlands B23 7PG

## Inspection dates

12–14 June 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor has not ensured that all of the independent school standards are met.
- The proprietor has not ensured that the accommodation for the medical treatment of sick and injured pupils meets requirements.
- Unmet welfare standards mean that the sixth-form provision is inadequate.
- The school does not comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Regular checks on fire alarms and equipment have not been routinely carried out.
- Newly appointed school leaders are not fully aware of their responsibilities, particularly in relation to securing pupils' welfare.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders are aspirational for all pupils. In 2017, all pupils who left the school achieved qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum. They are responsive to pupils' individual needs and ensure that pupils have access to a range of academic and vocational qualifications.
- Leaders provide rich opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. As a result, pupils know about and respect different beliefs and cultures. They are well prepared for their next phase of education.
- As a result of good-quality teaching, most pupils make good progress across all areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers use prior information about pupils well. They make sure teaching is based on a thorough assessment of individual needs.
- As a result of effective pastoral support, pupils' behaviour improves over time and is good. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning.
- The majority of pupils are supported well by learning support assistants (LSAs).

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring:
  - that the independent school standards are consistently met
  - compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
  - that appropriate arrangements are made to cater for the treatment of pupils' short-term illnesses
  - that all new leaders are aware of their responsibilities with regard to pupils' welfare.
- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning, including in the sixth form, by ensuring:
  - a consistent and appropriate approach to the development of pupils' writing skills in different subjects
  - that all learning support assistants consistently support the development of pupils' literacy skills
  - that questioning is used to develop and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding, including for the most able.
- The school must meet the independent school standards, as set out in the annex of this report.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Leaders and managers have not ensured that the independent school standards are met in full. In some cases, the unmet standards directly affect the health, safety and welfare of pupils. Systems to ensure fire safety compliance lack consistency across all sites. Newly appointed school leaders are not fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to fire safety. Similarly, the provision to care for pupils should they become poorly at school is not consistent and, in some cases, is insufficient.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of their pupils' learning needs. They take time to get to know pupils and understand their abilities. The curriculum is broad and balanced, comprising both traditional academic subjects and vocational options, including art, business and enterprise, and food technology. Leaders have made useful links with external providers, for example to enable pupils to access equine therapy. As a result, the curriculum meets the academic needs of pupils while also developing them socially and emotionally.
- Leaders are highly aspirational for all pupils. They place a high emphasis on careers education. All pupils access citizenship lessons and preparation-for-working-life sessions. Pupils are also supported by an external careers adviser who helps them to identify clear goals, career choices and associated career paths. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their next phase in education.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The processes for monitoring the quality of teaching are rigorous. Leaders routinely observe lessons and carefully monitor assessment information. They use this information effectively to support the school's development and to provide relevant training for staff. As a result, targets for improvement are precise and actions help to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Together with the proprietor and board of directors, leaders and managers have created a unique vision across all five school sites. The model is focused on nurture and support, with a long-term view to enable pupils to realise their potential. Prior to joining the school, many pupils have experienced multiple placement breakdowns. Leaders and staff work hard to build positive, trusting relationships with their pupils.
- Leaders carefully consider the movement of pupils between the school's five sites. This takes into account factors such as cognitive ability and emotional readiness for next phases and is not always age related. Consequently, leaders identify and meet pupils' needs across the school's five settings.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is highly effective. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school employs a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and an assistant SENCo to support pupils and students across all school sites. They are both fully qualified. They produce detailed plans based on pupils' EHC plans and identify appropriate strategies to support pupils. These strategies are shared with all staff and routinely monitored for effectiveness. Teachers use these strategies well to deliver teaching that is appropriate to the personal needs of pupils. Where pupils fall behind, teachers are quick to intervene and reshape tasks appropriately. Pupils' progress towards their EHC targets is regularly

assessed, recorded and reported. The majority of pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.

- All staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire say that they are proud to work at the school. They feel supported by leaders and say that leaders are considerate of their well-being.
- Leaders create a range of opportunities to develop pupils spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. They ensure that all pupils benefit from a range of appropriate educational trips and visits, including churches, galleries and museums. Pupils learn about and appreciate different cultures; for example, through participating in an international food festival where they had the opportunity to make and sample dishes from several countries. This helps to broaden pupils' experiences.
- Leaders have developed positive relationships with parents and carers. Staff make daily contact with parents to identify any factors that may have an impact on learning. They use this information to adapt their planning and delivery to make sure they support pupils' needs fully. When new pupils join the school, transition is thorough and tailored to individual circumstances. As a result, pupils benefit from a high level of nurture that helps them settle quickly into school. Parents who met with inspectors spoke positively about communication from the school.

## **Governance**

- The board of directors and the proprietor have not routinely checked and monitored the work of the school. As a result, a number of independent school standards are not met. These unmet standards relate directly to the welfare, health and safety of pupils.
- The directors are highly supportive of the work of school leaders. They fully support continual professional development and ensure that staff have opportunities to further develop their skills.
- The headteacher produces regular detailed reports on the position of the school. As a result, the board of directors and the proprietor gain an insight into different aspects of the school's work, such as its strengths and plans for improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- The proprietor and leaders have not complied with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Arrangements to look after pupils who are sick at school do not meet requirements. However, safeguarding in relation to child protection is effective and clear systems and processes are in place.
- The safeguarding policy meets requirements and is published on the school's website. Four designated safeguarding leads are trained at an appropriate level. They are fully aware of their responsibilities when it comes to keeping pupils safe.
- The school ensures that staff's suitability to work with children and young people is thoroughly checked before they start working at the school. Leaders record these checks accurately on the single central register, which meets requirements.
- Staff are highly vigilant. They have completed appropriate training in child protection. They know how to identify risks associated with child sexual exploitation, female genital

mutilation, abuse and neglect. As a result, they are quick to spot and report any concerns. Staff understand the processes they should follow and are clear about their responsibilities.

- Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they feel safe at school.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- Teaching is highly personalised to the individual needs of pupils. Teachers take into account information relating to pupils' prior learning and also carry out their own detailed assessments. They use this information effectively to plan and provide lessons that engage and motivate pupils. Often, this involves making adaptations to the way lessons are delivered and also environmental changes to ensure that classrooms meet the sensory needs of pupils. This information is also used to decide which of the school sites will be the most appropriate for pupils. As a result, teaching is well matched to the vast majority of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is consistent across all sites and most lessons are well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils know what to expect and what is expected of them because routines are well established. Consequently, pupils settle quickly into well-structured lessons.
- The vast majority of teachers use good questioning skills to promote pupils' thinking skills and secure deeper understanding. On rare occasions, questioning is not as effective. This limits pupils' ability to extend their responses and does not provide sufficient challenge for the most able.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use this to plan and provide appropriate tasks. On occasions where resources may need to be limited due to individual pupils being unable to fully access them, teachers demonstrate a highly creative approach to teaching. These imaginative strategies help to engage pupils. As a result, pupils remain focused and on task throughout the majority of lessons.
- LSAs are largely effective in supporting the needs of pupils and developing their learning. During the inspection, for example, LSAs sometimes took on the role of peer learners, modelling expected behaviours and ways in which to approach a task. Pupils responded well to this approach and it enabled them to make good progress. Occasionally, LSAs do not develop pupils' literacy skills effectively, particularly writing and spelling. This results in an over-reliance on teacher input and limits pupils' opportunities to practise their skills. In a small number of cases, this leads to repeated mistakes.
- Teachers know their individual pupils well. They understand pupils' backgrounds and what inhibits their learning. Staff have a clear appreciation of pupils' particular needs. Many of the pupils join the school with low self-esteem and poor self-confidence. Relationships are positive and underpin the learning process. Teachers are encouraging and use praise to good effect. They celebrate success regularly. As a result, pupils' emotional resilience develops over time.
- The school has a clear assessment policy. This is applied consistently by the majority of staff and is understood by pupils. Leaders and teachers set aspirational targets based on detailed assessment information. Teachers regularly review pupils' learning and provide them with precise, effective feedback. As a result, pupils know their targets, how well

they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. Although there are many positive aspects, leaders have not complied with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The arrangements to look after pupils who are sick at school are not adequate and do not meet requirements.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep safe. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and different types of bullying. They know about the risks of extremism and radicalisation. Pupils know about online dangers and how to report any concerns. For example, a local theatre group has delivered workshops on the dangers of exploitation. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said they felt safe at school.
- The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is effective. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and relationships and the dangers of substance misuse. They also learn about budgeting and careers. Teaching takes into account the background experiences of pupils; the content is relevant and well matched to individual needs.
- A high proportion of pupils are taught individually in order to meet their specific needs. Teachers use effective strategies to support these pupils and also consider their social needs. At breaktimes and lunchtimes, these pupils socialise with one another. Staff carefully support positive interactions and encourage healthy friendships and peer groups.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils have experienced social, emotional and mental health difficulties in previous settings. In some cases, this has led to permanent exclusion and long periods of missed education. Leaders are quick to identify patterns of poor attendance and take necessary action. They engage effectively with parents and the local authority to access appropriate support. Although attendance for a small number of pupils remains low, most pupils' attendance improves considerably while at the school.
- When pupils arrive at the school, the majority are disengaged and some display negative behaviour. Staff understand their pupils well. Through developing positive, trusting relationships, they help pupils to settle quickly. Over time, because of high expectations and an effective rewards system, behavioural incidents decrease.
- Leaders have created a comprehensive behaviour policy. This is understood by pupils and applied consistently by all staff. Pupils know what is expected of them. Their good conduct in lessons and during unstructured times of the day reflects the high expectations of the school. The school is an orderly environment.
- Parents and carers speak positively about pupils' behaviour. They have no concerns about bullying and those who spoke with inspectors said that the school has helped their children to improve their behaviour.
- The school has appropriate procedures in place for dealing with incidents of bullying.

Leaders keep clear records of incidents and their follow-up actions. Pupils say that bullying is rare and they are confident that staff will resolve problems quickly.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Leaders are aspirational for all pupils and, consequently, almost all pupils make good progress from their often low starting points. All pupils who left school during the last academic year achieved formal qualifications in English and mathematics. As a result, they all progressed successfully into further education at local colleges.
- Starting points for the majority of pupils are lower than pupils of a similar age due to disruptions in their schooling prior to joining Spring Hill High. Leaders use standardised packages to identify pupils' starting points and any gaps in their knowledge and skills. They use this to inform planning and set targets. The targets set for pupils are challenging and ambitious. Pupils know their targets and what they need to do to improve. Progress for the vast majority is good.
- Leaders have recently developed an assessment recording system to meet the needs of the school across all five sites. Although in its infancy, leaders use the system to good effect to monitor pupils' progress routinely across all areas of the curriculum. Leaders are quick to identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind and ensure that appropriate support is put into place. As a result, the majority of pupils are making good progress across the curriculum from their starting points.
- In mathematics, the level of challenge increases over time and most pupils apply themselves and make good progress. Consequently, they develop resilience in solving problems. In science, pupils learn how to draw conclusions and consider the impact of variables. Over time, the majority develop an improved grasp of scientific concepts. A few of the most able pupils do not receive a consistently high level of challenge and therefore they do not make as much progress as they could.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. They are assessed on entry to the school and work through a standardised assessment leading to formalised qualifications. Teachers promote reading aloud in all subjects. The school's information shows that all pupils who enter the school with low starting points quickly make progress in reading. This results in increased confidence and allows them to access a wider curriculum.
- In English, over time, pupils' work shows an increase in skills and grammatical knowledge. However, pupils have few opportunities to write in different areas of the curriculum, which limits the development of their writing skills.
- Leaders have developed a system to track and record pupils' social and emotional progress. They carefully plan activities that help to build self-confidence and increase social interaction, where appropriate. Pupils benefit from this holistic approach. They make significant progress over time, resulting in them being able to access wider opportunities, which in turn prepare them well for their next phase in education.

### Sixth form provision

**Inadequate**

- Although there are many positive aspects to the sixth form provision, leaders have not ensured compliance with all the independent school standards. The sixth form is housed in a building where insufficient checks have been carried out to ensure fire safety.

Arrangements for students who become sick while at the premises are not adequate. Aspects of safety in relation to these areas of students' welfare are insufficient and, therefore, ineffective. Safeguarding arrangements in relation to matters of child protection are effective.

- The 16 to 19 study programme meets the range of students' needs. The curriculum is carefully planned and consists of relevant academic and vocational routes. The programmes of study build on students' prior knowledge and take into account their future plans. Leaders have established links with local colleges and they support students through application processes. Students also have wide opportunities to access work experience. As a result, the curriculum is good and appropriate to the individual needs of pupils. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment and training.
- Teaching in the sixth form is highly personalised. Teachers know students well. They use prior information to plan and provide learning to meet students' individual needs and future aspirations. As a result, teaching is well matched to students' abilities and interests. As a result, the vast majority of students make good progress across the curriculum.
- Leaders have high expectations for all students. Although the focus on nurture is consistent throughout the school, there is a high emphasis on preparing post-16 students to be independent. Students regularly work in small groups, which helps to develop their teamwork skills. They debate skilfully and show respect for the views and opinions of others. Consequently, they develop appropriate social skills alongside their academic and vocational achievements.
- Students receive high-quality, impartial careers guidance. Staff work with students to develop their employability skills and prepare them for their next steps. All students who left the sixth form during the 2016/17 academic year moved on to positive destinations at local colleges.

## School details

Unique reference number	134982
DfE registration number	330/6112
Inspection number	10026237

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	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	12
Number of part-time pupils	4
Proprietor	Mr J F Sullivan
Chair	Mr J F Sullivan
Headteacher	Sheraine Reid-Ferguson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,000 to £86,000
Telephone number	0121 448 3001
Website	<a href="http://www.springhillhighschool.co.uk">www.springhillhighschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:sferguson@springhillhighschool.co.uk">sferguson@springhillhighschool.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	10 February 2015

## Information about this school

- Spring Hill High School is an independent special school for male and female students between the ages of 11 and 19 years. All have varying degrees of social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Prior to joining Spring Hill High, many of the pupils have not attended school for long periods of time.
- In addition, many pupils have associated complex learning and medical needs, including

autism spectrum disorder, Tourette's syndrome and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

- The school is registered for up to 50 pupils. Currently 44 pupils attend the school, four of whom attend on a part-time basis. All pupils have EHC plans. All are placed in the school by their local authority. The school is currently working with eight separate local authorities.
- In total, the school operates over five sites so that it is able to keep numbers low at each centre. This allows leaders to provide bespoke provision to support pupils' needs. The school is led by the headteacher and each school site is overseen by a deputy or assistant headteacher. A former headteacher of the school provides support in an advisory capacity.
- A high proportion of pupils are in the care of their local authority.
- The school was first registered in 2005. It was previously inspected in February 2015 when it was judged good in all areas.
- The aim of the school is to provide a caring, safe and secure environment that values education and enables students to realise their full potential. The school makes use of an alternative provider for equine therapy. It has a contract with an independent careers adviser for the delivery of advice and support for students about careers education, transition arrangements for leaving school and for arranging work experience opportunities.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Meetings were held with a number of key staff, including the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and representatives of the board of directors, including the proprietor.
- The inspectors toured the premises of all five sites accompanied by members of the senior management team.
- Discussions were held with pupils. The views of a small number of parents who spoke to inspectors were also considered, along with other sources collated by the school. The inspector also took account of the 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed teaching across all sites, in all year groups and in a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, creative crafts, business and enterprise, photography, art, Spanish and personal, social, health and economic education.
- The inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils during unstructured times of the school day, including at lunchtime and breaktimes.
- The inspectors reviewed the work in pupils' books across a range of subjects. The lead inspector scrutinised the school's assessment information.
- A number of key policies were examined, including safeguarding, behaviour, admissions, attendance, anti-bullying, and the curriculum. The school's checks made on staff's suitability to work with children were examined.

## Inspection team

Melanie Callaghan-Lewis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Catherine Crooks

Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements**

### **The school must meet the following independent school standards**

#### **Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 7 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that:
  - 7(a) arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and
  - 7(b) such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.
- 12 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

#### **Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 24(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including:
  - 24(1)(a) accommodation for the medical examination and treatment of pupils;
  - 24(1)(b) accommodation for the short-term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility.
- 24(2) The accommodation provided under sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b) may be used for other purposes (apart from teaching) provided it is always readily available to be used for the purposes set out in sub-paragraphs (1)(a) and (b).
- 25 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the school premises and the accommodation and facilities provided therein are maintained to a standard such that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of pupils are ensured.

#### **Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
  - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
  - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
  - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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