

Inspection of Spring Hill High School

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

Inspection dates: 10–12 March 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Spring Hill High School's website describes the school as friendly, safe and nurturing. This is an accurate description. Students often arrive at the school having experienced difficulties at their previous school. Many have not liked school, and are therefore reluctant to engage. However, by the time they leave, most have gone through a significant transformation. They enjoy school and are equipped with the skills and qualifications that will help them make the most out of life. Students told us that they did not know what they would do without the school.

Students study a wide range of subjects that are right for them. There are lots of trips and activities, too. Students told us they enjoyed a recent residential trip to Shrewsbury. They feel safe in school. Every student is supervised by at least one adult, all of whom share the same high expectations. Students get on very well with each other. They recognise that everyone is different, and each has their own needs. The high level of staff supervision, and positive relationships, results in a friendly environment where bullying is almost unheard of.

Although many aspects of the school are well led, some of the administration systems are disorganised and need to be improved.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have crafted a high-quality and appropriate curriculum. It has been carefully designed to meet the needs of the diverse range of students that the school serves. Half of the pupils on roll are in the sixth form. All students have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. All experience a range of social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Each student studies a slightly different combination of subjects and qualifications. Leaders make sure that what they study is right for them. The curriculum extends beyond the academic and this is a real strength of the school. Students are being well prepared for life beyond school. The wider curriculum involves students developing social skills, building resilience and learning how to take care of themselves and others. The journey that students make from the moment they arrive at the school to the time they leave is considerable. They leave the school ready to take their place in society and are prepared to make the most of life in modern Britain.

Although students make progress they could do even better. One reason for this is that some teachers have not had the subject-specific training they need. Also, when teachers plan lessons, they do not always give enough attention to how one lesson links to another, or how students will use what they have learned in one lesson in future lessons.

Teachers have clear expectations of students and they ensure that the work they produce is neatly presented. Sometimes, however, teachers do not pick up on basic

spelling or grammatical mistakes and this means that students continue to make them.

Students' behaviour is very good. Every student has their own key worker to support them in lessons and during social times. Students respond well to adults, and to each other. They are respectful and treat each other with dignity. Occasionally, students become unsettled and anxious. This can manifest itself in different ways, and sometimes students become agitated. Staff are well trained to help students to calm themselves down. Leaders also enlist the help of others, including a music therapist. The students benefit from this.

Sometimes students find it difficult to come to school. On other occasions, they are unable to attend because they are receiving medical treatment. When students are absent, leaders follow this up swiftly with daily telephone calls. Attendance, albeit lower than the national average, is improving. When students return from a period of absence they are reintegrated. However, this could be improved by teachers giving them more help to catch up with the work they have missed.

Students are being well prepared for adult life. They receive high-quality careers advice and take part in work experience that is carefully matched to what they want to do after school. Students study personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and citizenship. In these lessons they learn about democracy and human rights. Inspectors noted that they had been debating the pros and cons of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union, as well as the plight of Syrian refugees fleeing persecution.

There are many areas of the school that are well led. The headteacher has ensured the school is meeting the independent school standards and that it complies with schedule 10 of The Equality Act 2010. Leaders have focused on providing a good quality of education for pupils. They have shared their ambitious vision with staff, but the implementation of policies and practices is not always consistent. Furthermore, some of the administration systems that underpin the work of the school are disorganised. For example, the way leaders store information is, at times, clumsy. While this does not pose any safeguarding risk, it prevents the school from operating as efficiently as it could. Moreover, the roles and responsibilities of the newly formed governing body are not clearly defined. This prevents them from holding the headteacher and other leaders to account as effectively as they should.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have made safeguarding their top priority. There is a safeguarding policy in place, and this is available on the school's website. Staff know the students exceptionally well and are aware of the risks that they may face. Leaders ensure that the staff appointed to work in the school are suitable to work with children. They ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills required to support students with social, emotional and mental health needs, and to help keep them safe. Staff

receive appropriate safeguarding training. When staff are concerned about a student they respond quickly. They share their concerns with the school's safeguarding lead, who acts just as quickly to get students the help that they need

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Lessons are not sequenced consistently well in each subject. In a small number of subjects there is some repetition. This prevents students from building their knowledge incrementally. Leaders should ensure that all teachers plan series of lessons in a way that ensures students use what they have learned in one lesson to help them in the next.
- Some staff do not receive the training they need to help them to do their job as effectively as they could. This is the case for teachers who are not given the training they need to develop their own subject knowledge and how to teach content knowledge. It is also the case for administration staff, who are not given the training they need to fulfil their roles effectively. Leaders should ensure that all staff receive the training they need to fulfil their roles effectively.
- Sometimes students make spelling and grammatical mistakes in their work that are not picked up by teachers. As a result, students are unaware that they are spelling words, and using grammar, incorrectly and they therefore continue to do so. Leaders should ensure that teachers are vigilant and identify misconceptions so that students can correct their work and learn from their mistakes.
- When students return to school following a period of absence they are well supported pastorally. However, teachers do not always help them to catch up on the work they have missed. This results in gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Leaders should ensure that teachers help students to catch up when they have been absent from school.
- Some of the school's administration systems are fragile. Leaders record information in various places. While they have all the information they need to run the school and keep pupils safe, the administrative systems are inefficient. This means that leaders do not always have the information they need at their fingertips. Leaders should ensure that the administration systems are more efficient so that all the information they need is readily available.
- Governors are knowledgeable and committed, but they are not well organised. This prevents them from holding the headteacher to account as effectively as they should. Governors should ensure that their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and that there are clear terms of reference in place. Governors should ensure they hold the headteacher to account more effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	134982
DfE registration number	330/6112
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10119217
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	22
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Sheraine Reid-Ferguson
Chair	Barbara Scrivens
Headteacher	Sheraine Reid-Ferguson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£29,000 to £86,707
Telephone number	0121 2400992
Website	www.springhillhighschool.co.uk
Email address	srferguson@springhillhighschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 June 2018

Information about this school

- Spring Hill High School is an independent special school for students with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. All of the students have an EHC plan.
- The school operates from three sites located within close proximity of each other. The sites are located at 141 Wood End Lane, Birmingham, B24 8BD; 113 Orchard Road, Birmingham, B24 9JE and 28 Slade Road, Birmingham, B23 7PG. There is a fourth site located at 36 Hunton Road, Birmingham, B23 6AH. This site is not currently used by the school.

- The school's last full inspection was on 12–14 June 2018. Subsequently, the school received an emergency inspection on 15 November 2018, and a progress monitoring inspection on 22 October 2019.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We met with the headteacher, who is also the proprietor, the deputy headteacher and the school's special educational needs coordinator. We also met with members of the governing body, curriculum leaders, teachers and therapists.
- We focused on English, mathematics, history, and health and social care during the inspection. Inspectors considered the school's curriculum plans, visited lessons and scrutinised students' work.
- We reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies, records of governing body meetings, and the school's attendance and behaviour records.
- When inspecting safeguarding, we looked at the school's procedures for recruiting staff, the quality of staff training, and the procedures that are in place to keep pupils safe. Inspectors also considered the suitability of the school building, and leaders' work to reduce the risks that have been identified.
- We considered the views of parents, pupils and staff by evaluating their responses to questionnaires. Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils and staff about their experiences of attending, and working in, the school.

Inspection team

Niall Gallagher, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alun Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector

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