



# Ofsted Report

## Hill Top Farm



THE OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION,  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND SKILLS

# Horton House School

Hill Top Farm, Sutton Road, Wawne, Hull HU7 5YY

## Inspection dates

22–24 November 2016

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not maintained the good quality of teaching and learning identified in the last inspection.
- Senior leaders have been too slow to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report. An effective plan to move the school forward has only recently been put in place.
- Most-able pupils do not make consistently good progress, particularly in mathematics. This is because not all staff have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Systems in place to check pupils' progress do not accurately measure the progress of the most able pupils.
- The curriculum meets the independent school standards; however, the percentage of time pupils spend studying academic subjects is too low.
- The general manager, trustees and proprietor do not offer sufficient support and challenge to the headteacher in bringing about changes needed to improve the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress in developing the skills required to manage their behaviour.
- Pupils often make very good progress in science and information technology from their starting points.
- The school curriculum offers pupils a very wide variety of experiences. New experiences gained on residential trips develop pupils' self-esteem and self-reliance.
- The effective and well organised personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship curriculum delivered by the school enables pupils to gain a strong understanding of the how to keep safe and healthy and of fundamental British values.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their often much improved attendance.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
  - ensuring that planned work set in lessons meets the needs of all pupils
  - ensuring that staff more consistently use information about pupils' previous achievement to plan work that enables the most able pupils to make the best progress they can
  - increasing the subject knowledge and improving the questioning skills of some staff
  - increasing opportunities for staff to observe best practice both inside and outside school.
- Accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics, by:
  - developing the curriculum so that pupils have more opportunities to apply the skills they have learned to think through and solve problems
  - increasing opportunities for the most able pupils to study for higher level qualifications and accreditations.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
  - accelerating the speed at which areas for improvement identified in the school development plan are addressed
  - increasing the amount of time that pupils spend on studying academic subjects so that they accelerate their progress, particularly in science
  - increasing the levels of understanding of senior managers, and those in governance, of current educational practice so that they may more effectively and consistently support and challenge the headteacher and deputy headteacher in bringing about improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good. Although the school meets the independent school standards, overall school leaders have been slow to implement changes requested in the last inspection report and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has dipped.
- The school has recently appointed a new headteacher who has quickly and accurately identified the strengths and areas for improvement within the school. A school development plan is in place which clearly identifies the key areas for improvement. However, too little progress has been made towards some of the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. This includes, for example, ensuring that the quality of teaching in lessons provides sufficient challenge for the most able pupils.
- The curriculum offers pupils the opportunity to study in all areas required in the independent school standards. However, currently pupils, particularly the most able older pupils, do not spend sufficient time studying academic subjects. For example, a recent science assessment taken by Year 9 and 10 pupils showed that they are on course to gain passes at GCSE level. However, currently they only access science for one 45 minute lesson per week. This may not give them sufficient time to finish the course.
- Pupils' progress is checked and monitored on a termly basis. However, the current system does not yet set targets for pupils to achieve and does not measure pupils' progress against national expectations, an area for improvement in the previous inspection. An effective system has recently been designed by the headteacher which measures outcomes and sets future targets for pupils. However, it has yet to be fully implemented and its impact cannot be effectively measured.
- The headteacher has recently introduced regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms. Useful feedback is given to staff, which is beginning to help them to improve their classroom practice.
- Many of the staff who teach pupils do not yet have qualified teacher status. However, they have recently been encouraged to gain this through further study and training. This demonstrates leaders' commitment to developing and managing their staff.
- Through their work in citizenship and PSHE, pupils learn how to become citizens in modern Britain. Work undertaken in lessons delivered in the modern foreign culture unit of the curriculum enables pupils to start to learn a modern foreign language and also to study the similarities and differences between other cultures. This work is innovative and contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

## Governance

- The school currently does not have a governing body. Governance is provided by the proprietor and two directors. An executive manager offers leadership to the headteacher.
- Those responsible for governance and management recognise that further work is needed in order to bring about improvement to the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and outcomes for pupils. They do not offer the headteacher sufficient support or challenge to

bring about the changes required at a fast enough pace.

- The work that the proprietor and the director undertake sometimes lacks consistency. For example, in some areas they appear to lack a clear understanding of the requirements of the current independent school standards. In other areas, the provision they have made has been awarded gold standard accreditation. At times, this lack of consistency and focus slows school improvement overall.
- The proprietor and director are very clear about the importance of care and guidance for all pupils who attend the school. They recognise the high level of need and vulnerability of pupils and work hard to provide opportunities for them to gain meaningful experiences away from the classroom. For example, recently, pupils, the proprietor and the deputy headteacher participated in the Tall Ships Race, which pupils described as an amazing experience.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' high levels of need and vulnerability are clearly recognised by staff and leaders. A strong culture of safeguarding has been established within the school.
- Staff clearly recognise that safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone and systems in place ensure that staff record all concerns.
- Staff undertake regular and up-to-date training. All are aware of who the designated safeguarding lead is within school and say they understand what to do should a referral be necessary.
- Training required in line with the Department for Education's guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2016) has been carried out by all staff.
- Recruitment processes match those set out in government guidance. This ensures that all staff are suitably vetted and checked before starting work.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent.
- Class sizes are small. Despite this, staff are not always successful at planning learning which matches the needs of individual pupils. This is often because they do not use information about pupils' previous learning to plan work and work set is too easy for them. This slows learning, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Staff sometimes lack in-depth knowledge of the subject they teach. This limits their ability to ask effective questions, which could deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding, and slows their progress.
- Pupils who attend the school are known to have recognised social, emotional and mental health needs. A smaller number have additional needs including autistic spectrum disorder. School staff know pupils well and are good at supporting their needs in the classroom. As a result, pupils show good attitudes to learning and are usually keen to learn.
- Pupils are encouraged to read. The school has a small and comfortable library where

pupils sometimes come to calm down by reading a book. The school has recently introduced extra reading and comprehension lessons for younger pupils. As this is a new initiative, it is not yet possible to measure its impact on reading levels across the school.

- When learning is most effective, staff capture pupils' interest by ensuring that the tasks they set match their needs and challenge their thinking skills. For example, in physics older pupils were given the challenge of calculating the speed of cars racing on a track, a task they completed successfully. However, later, the same group were observed practising their times tables in mathematics, a task which offered very little challenge or learning for these pupils.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils often arrive at school with low levels of self-esteem. Most have gaps in their learning due to time spent away from school. Some exhibit very difficult behaviour.
- Once pupils gain access to the school's nurturing environment they often settle and begin to learn how to enjoy school again. This enables them to improve their social, emotional and learning skills.
- Parents feel that the school has helped their children. A typical comment sums up the views of others: 'The staff at the school are excellent and create a safe, well-structured environment which has enabled my child to become a happy engaged learning child once again.'
- Pupils spoken to said they feel staff understand them and help them to make progress in lessons as well as in learning how to keep safe. They recognise what bullying is and the forms it takes. They are clear that very little bullying happens in school. If it were to happen, they know they need to speak to staff who they are confident will sort out any issues.
- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to undertake different sporting activities including football and horse riding. This, coupled with the guidance on healthy food choices they receive in cookery lessons, has increased their understanding of healthy lifestyles.
- Older pupils receive careers guidance, often provided by their local authority. However, this is currently under review because the school recognises that this system does not always offer pupils equal access to impartial advice.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Despite their high level of need, pupils respond well to the consistent approach taken by staff in implementing the school's behaviour management system.
- Twice-daily behaviour reviews are carried out during registration time and pupils' successes are celebrated by the whole school. This clearly motivates others to improve.
- Once pupils settle into school, learning is not often interrupted by incidents of poor

behaviour. When an incident does occur, staff very quickly take effective action and learning continues.

- Nearly all pupils' attendance increases when they join the school. Last year, overall attendance was higher than this year; however, the dip is currently due to a small number of pupils who remain on the school roll at the request of placing authorities but no longer attend the school.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **Requires improvement**

- While pupils often make good and better gains socially and emotionally when they join the school, their academic gains are less good, often due to the lower expectations of staff.
- Pupils make better progress in English than in mathematics overall. This is because pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to deepen their knowledge in mathematics by applying their thinking skills to solving problems.
- Pupils' starting points are varied. Many are lower than those seen nationally because of the gaps in pupils' education due to their behavioural or additional needs. While school systems are currently in place to measure pupils' levels of achievement on entry to the school, they do not always take into account pupils' previous achievement, for example in national tests. This does not always give an accurate view of pupils' potential for learning.
- Older pupils leave with a range of accreditations at the end of Year 11. However, as the school has not previously been registered as an examination centre, accreditation has been at a lower level. This has been resolved by the headteacher and the school is currently going through the process of becoming an examination centre. This will enable the most able pupils to take GCSE examinations.
- Pupils with additional needs such as autistic spectrum disorder often make better progress than others because they follow an alternative curriculum which includes such things as art therapy. This helps them to build on their skills and make progress over time.

## School details

Unique reference number	133640
DfE registration number	810/6004
Inspection number	10020903

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 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Harriet Appleby
Chair	Harriet Appleby
Headteacher	Lisa Taylor
Annual fees (day pupils)	£40,500
Telephone number	01482 820112
Website	<a href="http://www.hortongroup.co.uk">www.hortongroup.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@hortongroup.co.uk">enquiries@hortongroup.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	2–4 October 2013

## Information about this school

- Horton House School meets the needs of 19 pupils, all of whom have social, emotional and mental health needs. Some have additional needs such as autistic spectrum disorder.
- A very small number of pupils are in the care of the local authority.
- Since the last inspection, the company has opened a second school in Beverley. This has reduced the numbers of pupils attending Horton House School.
- Pupils are grouped according to age and ability.



- Pupils visit off-site provision. However, this is always with the direct support of staff from the school, except for a small number of pupils who attend art therapy and cooking skills at Ashwell Academy.
- Pupils sometimes undertake work experience, but only for short periods of time.

## Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's Inspector observed eight lessons and parts of lessons across all classes. A visit was made to an off-site farm used by the school to develop pupils' skills in outdoor education.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, staff and the executive manager. A telephone conversation was held with the school's proprietor.
- One response was received on Parent View. The views of parents who filled in a similar form for the school were also taken into account as part of the inspection.
- School documentation reviewed included the school's evaluation of its effectiveness, its plan for future development, safeguarding documentation, and the school's own records of pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour.

## Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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