

School inspection report

7 to 9 November 2023

K-HQ

Loyalty Hall
Cullompton
EX15 2BY

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

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Summary of inspection findings

1. The proprietors, school leaders and associated care home managers have extensive experience, knowledge and skills in relation to special education and care. They have ensured that high-quality training is implemented for education and care staff. As a result, the school's policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding, are implemented consistently.
2. Senior leaders lack some capacity to develop key leadership roles throughout the school. The proprietor does not have an established system for routinely checking that the school continues to meet the Standards consistently.
3. Leaders ensure that pupils develop secure literacy and numeracy skills, as well as experiencing a suitably broad curriculum. Teaching is well planned and takes account of pupils' individual needs. A suitable framework for assessment is in place. Diagnostic assessment is well developed in literacy, but is less so in mathematics and in other areas of potential need. This means that measures put in place to support pupils are not as well targeted as they could be. Extra-curricular provision is well planned and takes account of pupils' needs and interests.
4. Pupils are supervised well by staff. Pupils have high attendance rates, linked strongly to the encouragement they receive from staff about attending school. The school implements its behaviour policy effectively and supports pupils in taking responsibility for their behaviour and in making appropriate choices.
5. Teachers are highly knowledgeable and skilled in supporting pupils' personal and emotional needs. The school has implemented its personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programmes effectively, taking into account the needs and circumstances of the pupils.
6. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school community. Leaders ensure that safeguarding risks to pupils are identified quickly and evaluated comprehensively. Timely action is taken to protect pupils from these risks, when necessary.
7. A significant strength of the school is the impact of the personal, social and emotional training developed and implemented by the directors. The training underpins a cohesive and holistic approach to care and education. The directors and leaders have successfully developed a very positive culture where care and education staff work closely together, enabling pupils to make appropriate choices and to think with optimism about their future and place in society.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards:

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- strengthen the senior leadership of the school by identifying roles, responsibilities and accountabilities clearly and ensuring there is sufficient leadership capacity to carry these out.
- develop monitoring and self-evaluation further in relation to how well the school meets the Standards and the identification of the next steps required for improvement.
- extend diagnostic assessment to strengthen the identification of specific learning needs, the planning of specific interventions and the evaluation of their impact.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Proprietors and senior staff provide strong, clear leadership drawing successfully upon their extensive experience, knowledge and skills in relation to special needs education and care. Leaders are ambitious for pupils and ensure that they develop autonomy and achieve success, both academically and personally.
9. The directors have made a conscious decision to create a school that is a model of care and education for female pupils who have experienced trauma and extreme challenges in their lives. They have focused with passion and commitment on this high ideal. The directors and the headteacher have ensured that there are suitable and committed staff in place, guided by appropriate policies and well-organised systems that ensure the Standards are met consistently.
10. A high-quality certificated course has been developed by the proprietors and is delivered to all staff. This course integrates theory and practice in relation to trauma therapy and therapeutic parenting. It enables staff to understand, support and guide pupils experiencing many challenges, including lack of self-worth, self-harm and eating disorders.
11. All aspects of the school are underpinned effectively by the school's 'autonomy model', which has been developed by the proprietors. This model focuses on pupils taking responsibility for their actions and making the right choices. Consistent implementation of this model, by both education and care staff, encourages pupils to choose to come to the school, take responsibility for their actions and have high aspirations for their futures.
12. Appropriate training is in place for all aspects of the school, including safeguarding, health and safety. Staff work very closely together so that the care and education aspects of provision are fully integrated. This helps pupils to feel safe and to be successful in their learning. Detailed, shared records and individual education plans ensure that there is consistency of approach at school and in the care homes. Pupils value greatly this level of care and support as it enables them to regulate their own behaviour and make the right choices.
13. Suitable risk assessments are in place, including for safeguarding. The proprietors and school leaders have conducted a comprehensive and detailed evaluation of potential risks. There is deep understanding of the context in terms of pupils' needs, and the measures needed to provide care and education that supports pupils' welfare and safeguarding. For example, the school restricts access to information published on the internet as part of managing risks to pupils.
14. The required information is available to parents, including hard copies of policies and documentation from the school. The school's complaints policy meets requirements and is implemented appropriately. The proprietors, leaders and staff take any concerns raised seriously. They address them without delay, consistently taking into account the safety and wellbeing of pupils.
15. The school has a clear framework for self-evaluation that has identified strengths and areas for development accurately. School development planning is focused on appropriate priorities. For example, directors have recognised the need to strengthen leadership, to develop key roles within the school, and to monitor how well the school meets the independent school standards consistently.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. The proprietor and the school's leaders have developed a positive culture that focuses on pupils taking responsibility for their learning and behaviour and achieving the best possible outcomes. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects. High aspirations for all pupils are reflected in pupils' own ambitions. They successfully strive to achieve academic qualifications, often after long periods of absence from mainstream schooling.
17. The curriculum is well planned, takes account of the needs of individual pupils and does not undermine fundamental British values. All pupils have access to an appropriately broad range of subjects. Literacy and numeracy are particular areas of focus. The school successfully achieves its aim of every pupil attaining English and literacy qualifications at functional skills level or higher. Pupils experience examination success because there is a high degree of flexibility, combined with support and encouragement from teaching and care staff. Pupils successfully combine functional skills, entry level, GCSE and vocational courses in a range of subjects. They re-engage with learning, tackle gaps in their knowledge and achieve well, including attaining the qualifications needed to enter college.
18. Teachers know their pupils well. They enable them to reflect on their work and behaviour during tutor times as well as during lessons. When teaching, they skilfully consider pupils' prior attainment, ability, needs and interests. They know what motivates each pupil and how to support and engage them in their learning so that they make the right choices both in terms of their work and behaviour. Well-planned, sensitive and sympathetic teaching enables pupils to build their confidence, gain new knowledge and make good progress. Teachers share clear plans and targets with pupils, enabling them to take responsibility for their learning and keep on track to achieve those targets. Pupils are proud of their work. They recognise what they have done well and how they could improve. Pupils use marking and feedback from their teachers effectively to evaluate their learning and to help them to plan their next steps.
19. A suitable framework for assessment is in place, based on the needs of individual pupils. All pupils have a detailed and effective individual education plan (IEP). IEPs include assessments from external agencies as well as data from internal tests and teacher assessments. IEPs are used well by teachers to monitor pupils' progress closely and to continually make adjustments, as required. Diagnostic assessment is detailed and used well in literacy as a basis for planning interventions. It is less effective in mathematics and other areas of potential need, relying mostly on teachers' assessments that do not enable reliable comparisons against pupils of a similar age or starting point. This means that planned support and evaluation of their impact are less effective in these areas.
20. There is a sense of calm purposefulness throughout the school because pupils are engaged in their learning. This was observed, for example, during a food technology lesson where pupils created innovative Christmas cakes. In an English lesson, pupils successfully wrote a persuasive letter to *The Twits* about overcoming differences, achieving common goals and being kind to one another.
21. Pupils enjoy the range of activities provided by teachers and care home staff. They enjoy the comfortable recreation rooms, books and games that they have access to, as well as opportunities to enjoy the grounds, care for the school ponies and engage in dog grooming.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

22. Teachers are highly knowledgeable about personal, social and emotional development. They are skilled in supporting and encouraging pupils. This deep knowledge and understanding enables teachers to plan individually for pupils and to respond appropriately to their needs. Teachers, in liaison with care home staff, are committed to ensuring that every pupil feels that they are part of a caring 'family' during their time at school.
23. Relationships and sex education and the teaching of PSHE are a prominent part of the curriculum. This supports pupils' personal development, particularly their confidence and self-esteem. Key topics are included in the PSHE curriculum to support pupils' physical and mental health, and their emotional wellbeing. Learning about topics such as domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation and coercive control helps pupils to develop a mature understanding of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Physical and outdoor education, combined with opportunities to enjoy the woods and fields that surround the school buildings, support pupils' physical, emotional and spiritual development well.
24. As a result of the common training provided by directors, education and care staff develop a deep understanding of key issues including adolescent development, principles of behaviour management, mental health and physical, social and emotional wellbeing. The effective sharing of records supports consistency of approach across the school community, particularly when managing behaviour and in supporting pupils emotionally.
25. Pupils are well supervised at all times. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are built and maintained across the school. Pupils support one another, socialise well together and know when to give their friends time and space. Bullying and unkindness are not tolerated.
26. Staff routinely engage pupils in discussions and show genuine interest in them as individuals. The quality of discussions encourages pupils to be open and respectful towards each other and staff. Pupils are polite to staff whilst, at the same time, being honest and forthright. This enables pupils to express how they are feeling and for staff to give them appropriate and timely support.
27. Daily routines and high expectations support pupils' behaviour by providing structure and security. Pupils rapidly develop their understanding of right and wrong, and how they are responsible for the choices they make. Pupils receive regular feedback about their choices in respect of learning and behaviour through the use of an incentivising, lesson-by-lesson 'score card'. Pupils use the score cards effectively to evaluate their learning, behaviour and choices. They appreciate the rewards they earn.
28. The school is well maintained. Careful consideration has been given to the colours and materials used to create a friendly and welcoming environment. Appropriate health and safety checks are undertaken, and suitable records are maintained. Suitable facilities for first aid are in place, including a dedicated medical room. Detailed records are kept of any first aid provided or medication administered.
29. The school keeps detailed records in relation to admissions. Most pupils have not been able to attend school in the past and a careful record is kept of their attendance. At K-HQ, pupils rarely miss a day of school. The pupils and staff are rightly proud of this.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

30. All members of the school community support the school's 'promise', which includes listening to what pupils say, not being judgemental, being on pupils' side, challenging them when they do not behave appropriately and supporting them when they find things difficult. Pupils refer positively to 'the promise', which is displayed prominently around the school. They say that it helps them to keep in mind what is important in life and to keep focused on their targets and aspirations. They respect the need for rules and boundaries and recognise how these help them to develop a mature understanding of right and wrong, promoting their understanding of how to make meaningful contributions to society.
31. The absence of mobile phones and access to the internet during the school day encourages social interaction and the development of social skills. Pupils share a great sense of what they term 'sisterhood', which they say means accepting and supporting everyone in the school. As part of the school's admissions procedures, prospective pupils are asked to make an informed choice to become part of the school before they are admitted. As a result, pupils engage with all the school has to offer, including becoming part of the school and the wider community.
32. Careers and economic understanding are an important element of the school's aim to enable pupils to be independent and successful. Pupils are well supported in considering career options. The school's continual message that each pupil can achieve enables pupils to envisage a positive future beyond the school. Pupils are enthusiastic about their work-related experiences, which include a hair and beauty vocational course using the school's high-quality purpose-built salon.
33. Teaching staff listen and respond positively to pupils' interests. They are imaginative and tenacious in identifying and securing satisfying work experience placements and opportunities for pupils to be involved in the community. Examples of this enriched learning include dog grooming, where pupils learn the value of money that they earn, and the annual summer fete, which is a community event that celebrates pupils' achievements. There are also many other celebratory events, such as school plays and Christmas dinners, when care and education staff come together to celebrate pupils' many achievements.
34. Through the curriculum, including carefully developed PSHE and RSE schemes of work, pupils gain insight into society beyond the school setting. For example, when studying the prison service in psychology, pupils appreciate the complexities of the justice system, including where an individual's circumstances may influence judgements made and penalties issued. These carefully planned learning opportunities enable pupils to better understand their community, society, the wider world, their responsibilities and their place in British society. Pupils develop empathy and respect for others and learn not to judge people based on, for example, their race, religion or sexuality.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

35. The school carries out an annual review of its safeguarding policy and procedures, particularly considering the context of the school.
36. Comprehensive and detailed safeguarding training is provided regularly, for both education and care staff, and records of training are maintained diligently. This cohesive approach to training ensures staff are confident in following the school's safeguarding procedures. Staff receive regular safeguarding updates on issues such as early help assessment, the management of child-on-child abuse and bullying.
37. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSLs are suitably qualified and experienced. The DSL has detailed knowledge of all pupils in the school, including their personal, social, emotional and behavioural challenges and associated risks. There is continual assessment of pupils' welfare and safeguarding by school and care home staff. Immediate intervention and support are put in place, when required.
38. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school community. Pupils, rightly, feel safe at school. There are always members of staff that they can turn to if they have any worries or concerns. Prompt action is taken to help pupils, when necessary.
39. Pupils learn how to keep safe through their PSHE life-skills lessons. They are confident and knowledgeable about issues such as how to keep safe online. Pupils understand why their access to phones and the internet is restricted as part of keeping them safe.
40. Those responsible for recruitment and conducting pre-employment checks understand the reasons for the checks. They are diligent in ensuring that they are carried out robustly and in a timely fashion. Checks are recorded fully and accurately on the single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	K-HQ
Department for Education number	878/6076
Address	Loyalty Hall Dulford Cullompton Devon EX15 2BY
Website	The school does not have a website.
Email address	rswiggs@willows21.co.uk
Proprietor	Generation 21 Ltd
Chair	Mr Stephen Brunskill
Headteacher	Mr Ryan Swiggs
Age range	11 to 16
Number of pupils	7
Date of previous inspection	21 to 23 May 2019

Information about the school

41. K-HQ is an independent special school that is registered to provide education for female pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The school opened in November 2018 and is registered for up to 10 pupils aged between 11 and 16. The proprietor is Generation 21 and there are currently two directors. Pupils join the school throughout the year, many having previously been out of full-time education. The school does not use alternative providers. It focuses on the individual needs of each pupil and the curriculum is modified for them on a personalised basis.
42. The school has identified seven pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
43. English is an additional language for no pupils.
44. The school states that its aims are:
 - To provide a core curriculum which is relevant, aspirational, inspirational and personalised; which is differentiated in delivery with personalised feedback to support success; which the pupils themselves have partly co-authored and which provides a range of qualification potentials from in-house school leavers' certificates to externally accredited courses.
 - To resolve behavioural issues enabling pupils to build relationships and to control their own behaviour.
 - To re-engage pupils in their education through establishing an educational context which is safe, secure and stable and which supports pupils' self-esteem and raises their aspirations.
 - To create opportunities and compensatory experiences for often previously disadvantaged children.

Inspection details

45. A team of two inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

46. Inspection activities included:

- discussions with the proprietor, senior leaders and a range of staff
- lesson observations and joint lesson walks with staff leaders
- discussions with pupils
- observation of breaktimes and a sample of extra-curricular activities
- observation of registration and tutor sessions
- examination of curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

47. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

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