

Priory School

Inspection report for residential special school

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Inspector	Martha Nethaway
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Date of last inspection	4 March 2008

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Priory School provides education for children between the ages of nine and 16 years who are subject to a Statement of Special Educational Need. All of the children have been assessed as having a learning difficulty at some level and a number will have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. There are two boarding houses and pupils are accommodated in single bedrooms and dormitory areas in groups of four or less. The boarding provision can cater for up to 24 children, the majority of children access the boarding provision on one, two or three nights each week and a small number board all week. A total of 42 children access boarding in total and five children stay at the school into the early evening before being collected by parents.

Summary

This was an announced inspection that concentrated on the key National Minimum Standards (NMS). The inspection focused on health needs, individual support and pupil's safety. The inspection also concentrated on how the school consults with pupils. Over the course of the inspection, all of the residential accommodation was visited and time was spent with pupils, residential care staff and senior management.

Pupils are being well cared for and their educational achievement is strongly promoted. Pupils are encouraged to be companionable and help each other. There is a strong integrated approach between the educational setting and the residential provision and staff take pride in this achievement. Senior managers have developed strong partnerships between parents and carers, which helps to foster a supportive environment for pupils.

There are no recommendations being set as a result of this inspection visit.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Priory School continues to demonstrate commitment to ensuring the service meets National Minimum Standards.

At the last inspection the school needed to review the visitors policy which now has been completed. The school has reviewed the health plans and now include the behavioural strategies adopted by staff.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Priory School continues to meet the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of pupils well. Staff are provided with a broad range of policies to help educate pupils and have opportunities to develop their personal and social skills to care for their health and wellbeing. Staff understand that good health is important and a strong focus on health promotion reflects the priority given by the school which is clearly apparent. The school's curriculum promotes and addresses personal issues and health and social matters. Pupils are confident about approaching staff for advice and support. One pupil commented, 'I like all the staff because they look after me if I'm not well'. Staff promote healthy lifestyle choices in daily routines, exercise and activities. Priory

School has access to a visiting school nurse who retains an overarching view of all health needs. Key information about pupil's health are recorded in their 'health plan'. Parents and carers are expected to take responsibility for the health of their child. They are encouraged to work in partnership with the school in maintaining good standards of health and wellbeing.

Staff are provided with a clear medication policy and good practice guidance on how to store and administer medication. Staff are handling medications correctly and staff follow the policy for receipt and return of medications and these procedures are sound. Staff ensure all records relating to medication are up-to-date and accurate. In addition, all staff have received medication training to ensure consistency of practice and to maintain staff skill and competency levels.

Pupils enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. The dining room, furnishings, cutlery and crockery are of a good standard and personalised for the boarders. They are very satisfied with the quality of the food provided. The catering team have a sound understanding of what makes up a good balanced diet, have an awareness of nutritional issues and put this in to practice. Menus are now in symbols and words offering pupils of all abilities the opportunity to make informed choices. The school successfully meets the dietary needs of pupils. Pupils have access to drinking water both around the school and within the boarding houses.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Priory School continues to promote pupil's welfare and protection and this helps to keep them safe. Pupils are happy with the excellent care they receive and the positive level of support. Staff supervision and monitoring of pupils is good and well practised. There are sound arrangements in place to safeguard pupils from possible abuse because the school's policy follows the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. The school maintains strong links with the local authority and works successfully with wider safeguarding processes which include multi-agency involvement. This helps to reinforce the safeguarding agenda. All staff have received refresher training in relation to safeguarding. Senior managers have also attended advanced training so that they are given the knowledge and skills needed to perform the function of 'designated person' in their school.

Priory School has an effective policy in place to respond to complaints or concerns. This policy is made available to parents and other significant individuals involved in the care of pupils. The school places a strong value on meeting the needs of pupils, parents and other significant stakeholders. Pupils are confident about approaching staff if they are unhappy about any aspect of boarding life. Ofsted has received no complaints about the school since the last inspection.

Staff are effective with pupil supervision and the monitoring of their whereabouts. Staff take effectual safety precautions and regularly undertake pupil role calls. The security of the building is given a top priority by the care staff. Staff are provided with useful guidance which includes the police protocol in the unlikely event of a child going missing. There are no incidents of pupils having unauthorised absences from the school.

Staff show respect for the privacy of pupils and staff understand when they may share confidential information. Pupils are encouraged to be independent and responsible for their own personal hygiene.

Staff are able to manage health and safety matters. The school has in place a risk management process for pupil's behaviour and activities and the safety of the premises and grounds. Pupils are given fire safety instruction and fire drills are carried out on a regular basis. Priory School has also completed a fire risk assessment.

Staff and pupil relationships are positive. Staff are successful with implementing clear structures, routines and positive praise that help promote acceptable behaviours from pupils. Bullying behaviours from pupils are not accepted and staff work hard to engender an environment that promotes equal regard for all pupils. One pupil commented 'I have lots of friends here, no bullying, always told not to hit or pinch and always have to call people by their right name'. Staff deploy excellent approaches to the complex issue of managing challenging behaviour from pupils. Staff know pupils very well and are confident that the standard of behaviour is clearly known. All staff are trained physical intervention but this is rarely used. Similarly, sanctions are used at a minimal level.

Staff recruitment procedures ensure all the necessary checks take place to ensure the suitability of persons caring for children prior to employment. The school's records of the recruitment and selection process undertaken are of a sound standard.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Priory School provides a happy and stimulating environment. One pupil commented, 'I have lots of friends and feel very happy'. Pupils benefit from the 24 hour curriculum focus of the school. The school's pastoral support programme provides additional support for the welfare of pupils. They are assisted by the class teacher and residential care staff. Staff encourage pupils to achieve educationally, socially and to reach for their fullest potential. Pupils also have regular access to the school's independent visitor which is valued by the pupils. Priory School actively promote social involvement of pupils. They participate in a variety of sports, clubs and social activities. For example, bowling, sailing, 'West Suffolk Wheelers Kidzone' and 'Tigers athletic club'. Pupils have opportunities to participate in school trips abroad and have enjoyed these experiences. Pupils are well supported to use the school's facilities which are good and maintained to a good standard. One pupil commented, 'school is really good, much better than my old school. I have many friends and people are really kind here'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Pupil's welfare and self-esteem is promoted with positive strategies in place to encourage their development. Staff establish cohesive relationships to promote a happy, positive atmosphere within the school. Staff have a positive attitude to meeting the needs of pupils and staff succeed in providing good quality care to support their needs. Pupils benefit from good placements which meets their assessed needs. Staff ensure that the home's records represent the current needs of pupils and their progress is monitored and reviewed.

Staff regularly consult pupils. There are formal 'Residential Council Meetings' where issues are discussed related to the boarding facilities of the school. These meetings are well attended by pupils. Staff are excellent at facilitating and responding to pupils requests. The school also has an active 'School Council'. Records show a variety of topics are discussed and pupils are influencing how the school is run. For example, pupils participate in the 'Eastern Region Youth

'Parliament' which is an organised local youth movement. One pupil commented 'I like going to the Houses of Parliament'. Pupils also receive support from key workers who are there to provide informal support related to the day-to-day boarding life.

There are clear arrangements for the admission of new pupils and planned, phased introductions. Senior residential staff monitor and help new boarders to settle into boarding life. Effective communication is maintained with the family and carers. Pupils' experiences are very positive.

Older pupils benefit from the 'Independent Living Skills Programme'. This is well developed and organised training to help pupils gain confidence and skills that are required as they approach adulthood. Pupils gradually develop sufficient practical independent living skills and are helped to develop their emotional maturity. One pupil commented, 'It helps you to become independent'.

All pupils are provided with an individualised placement plans which provides good detail about the day-to-day needs. Their progress is monitored and recorded by the daily records that care staff maintain. Staff are confident with using electronic record keeping. This ensures that all important aspects related to young people's welfare is appropriately documented.

Pupils are able to retain contact with their families and carers and have access to a convenient telephone.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Pupils continue to benefit from a boarding environment that is meeting their needs. The residential provision is of a good standard. The dormitory areas are split across three areas. 'Abbey House' accommodates younger pupils and 'The Priory' accommodates older pupils. As pupils progress they move into 'Flat 3' where pupils follow a planned programme of Independent Living Skills. All of the sleeping accommodation is maintained to a good standard and has recently been updated and decorated. Pupils are very pleased with the ambiance and colour schemes. The head teacher has a continued refurbishment programme plan in place to help improve the accommodation further and has already secured school funding to help achieve this aim.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Priory School continues to provide effective leadership which have positive outcomes on the care of pupils. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff are very committed to their work with pupils, parents and carers. The school curriculum provides opportunities for all pupils to experience equality and diversity and to celebrate this. The head teacher has worked hard to establish a culture of support across the staff teams. The school takes a wholehearted approach to the ongoing process of change and improvement for the benefit of pupils. The school has developed a friendly, calm and purposeful atmosphere where pupils can feel relaxed and able to concentrate on their work and enjoy their recreation. The staff are extremely experienced in meeting the needs of pupils and value individual differences in both adults and pupils. One pupil commented, 'school is fun, I like everything and I learn'.

Priory School reviews the schools Statement of Purpose annually. Staff know and understand the stated aims and objectives of the school which is consistent with the Statement of Purpose. The school provides all required information to pupils and their families on the services available. This includes general information about what can be expected from boarding school life.

The head teacher provides strong leadership and has a strong reputation with parents, staff and other professionals. The head teacher knows how the school is managed and has plans for the school's further development. The head of care is qualified, competent and ably manages the boarding provision effectively. Staff are provided with a good training programme that builds on their professional development to meet the demands of boarding education. For example, training on visual impairment, behaviour management, autism awareness, internet safety and drug awareness. Staff show accomplished aptitude and skill that ensures pupils gain a positive experience from their boarding life. The pupils placed are making excellent progress because staffing in the school is well planned and effectively managed. The pupils' welfare is monitored within staff meetings.

The management team are allocated designated roles in relation to overseeing half termly and termly records in relation to the effective running of the school. These records are being monitored in relation to evaluating any trends or patterns that may emerge. The head teacher prepares a termly report to the board of governors.

Priory School has an effective governing body. They are making a valuable contribution to the successful outcomes for the school.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):