

# The Priory School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	Paul Clark
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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	3 March 2009

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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 is a local authority provision for boys who are subject to a statement of special educational needs, within the category of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is located on the outskirts of Taunton within a housing development. The boarding house is attached to the school and operates as a separate provision. The boarding provision is used flexibly to meet individual needs, which includes after school activities for a small number of pupils. Pupils can stay for up to four weekday nights each week.

The boarding facility at the school has sufficient single bedrooms, living space and toilet and shower facilities to accommodate up to 10 boys. At the time of inspection the school had 47 boys on roll of whom nine were using the boarding facility. Ages of the boys attending the school range from 11 to 16 years.

There is a new headteacher who has been appointed by an external educational agency who have a five year contract with Somerset County Council which is aimed at making necessary improvements to the educational provision.

### Summary

This announced key inspection found that the school has policies and procedures in place which are intended to ensure that children are kept safe and that their health is promoted. Staff are appropriately trained to implement these policies. Staff are well managed and supervised. The boarding arrangements at the school are well organised. The head of care and staff are currently undertaking professional training to further enhance their existing skills and expertise. The staff and management are committed and dedicated to the care of the young people accommodated. The young people enjoy a good standard of care and their emotional and social development needs are well met.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

All first aid boxes now contain a list of their content and are kept fully stocked.

The Statement of Purpose is now dated and periodically reviewed by the head of care and the headteacher.

The head of care is now a registered candidate on the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 4 qualification in Care Management and members of the care staff are registered as NVQ at level 3 candidates in Childcare.

A record of staff training undertaken is now contained on their personnel file.

All staff employed by the school, whether care or teaching staff, have a Criminal Records Bureau check which is updated every three years. However, the major building works planned for 2008 have not commenced.

## Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The school takes measures which try to ensure that children will maintain a healthy lifestyle. All children placed at the school have a statement of special educational needs. The school completes a record of each boarder's health background and their current health needs on admission based on a consultation with parents. This records the child's health history and any current medical conditions as well as recording contact details of their home General Practitioner (GP) and of any other health professional involved. Parents remain responsible for registering children with their local GP, dentist and optician and for ensuring that routine health checks are carried out.

There is no qualified nurse who attends the school on a regular basis. No formal medical examination of children is taken on admission. Since all children have their own bedroom there is no sick room specifically set aside for the care of ailing pupils. Children will be checked regularly throughout the day and by waking night staff if they are ill. There is no physical system in place in the bedrooms where sick children can summon assistance.

Medication, including controlled drugs, prescribed and household medication is correctly stored and administered. The head of care enrolls the services of a trained nurse to train all staff in the administration of medication and a dated record of this training is kept.

The school will refer any children in need of psychiatric or psychologist assessment to the local child and adolescent mental health services team. A sufficient number of care and teaching staff have been trained in first aid to ensure that there is always a member of staff on duty with these skills.

The school has an electronic system in place for the recording of all accidents occurring in the school which is appropriately monitored.

Staff are trained to support, in a discreet and sympathetic manner, those children who may bed wet or soil. Risk assessments are in place for such children. Bed linen is changed weekly or more often if required. The school has an in-house laundry service. Staff are appropriately trained and the health and safety of staff is supported by the provision of the correct equipment to assist with the replacement of soiled laundry.

The school has a well-equipped kitchen which is managed by a catering manager who oversees the catering staff. An environmental health officer inspection had taken place within the previous 12 months of this inspection date, which stated that the kitchen and food preparation areas were kept in a proper and hygienic manner and which found it to be of a high standard according to their rating system. Menu plans indicate that a balanced and nutritious diet is provided. Several children and parents commented that there might be greater food choices available at evening mealtimes. There are currently no children placed who require vegetarian or special diets although the cook stated that their needs would be met on an individual basis. The catering manager occasionally arranges for the children to experience foods from international cuisines. This is attached to an 'appreciation of other cultures' project theme that is poster displayed within the unit and which is discussed at the daily meetings with the boarders. Young people are consulted about their food choices at the daily boarders' meetings. On occasions, young people can prepare their own food with the support of staff. They have access

to a well-fitted kitchen within the boarding house which will enable them to do this. A number of staff have been trained in basic food hygiene.

The school has taken positive steps to ensure the health and safety of young people. There is a no smoking policy for pupils and staff. The head of care acts as the member of the school staff with responsibility for health and safety issues affecting the boarding provision. All parts of the premises and external areas with the potential for harm have been appropriately risk assessed. Gas and electrical systems in the boarding house have been safety checked within the past 12 months

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The school takes robust measures to ensure children's safety and well-being. The head of pastoral care is a trained social worker who is also the appointed designated child protection officer (DCPO) to whom staff will refer any safeguarding concern. There are also two deputy DCPO's. They have all been trained to the appropriate level by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Safeguarding concerns have been referred to the appropriate local authorities within the past 12 months and appropriate actions appear to have been taken.

The school has clearly written policies on child protection, dealing with complaints, bullying, the use of physical restraint and action to be taken in the event of a child being missing without permission. Staff acquaint themselves with these policies as part of their induction and sign to confirm that they have read and understand these policies. All staff have received training in child protection and this training is updated at appropriate frequencies. The school carries out effective staff vetting and recruitment practices according to Local Safeguarding Children's Board recommendations. All staff have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check, two references are taken, of which one must be the last employer, all of which are followed up verbally, and a self declaration of health is taken and followed up by the authority's occupational health department as may be necessary. The school ensures that taxi companies and their drivers who transport children from the school are regulated to comply with Criminal Records Bureau checks. All contractors employed by the school must be appropriately vetted by their employers and they are not allowed any unsupervised access to young people.

The school has written information documents available to all stakeholders about the school's complaints procedure. The record of complaints received and actions taken indicate that the school's response to complaints received is appropriate.

Very little evidence of bullying was drawn from children's questionnaire returns or from conversations with them. Children spoken to felt that bullying would be dealt with effectively if brought to the attention of staff.

The school has identified written sanctions which are known to young people and a behavioural management system is in place based on the acquisition of reward points. The children spoken to felt that the system was fair and equitable. All care staff are trained in the use of physical restraint. A record is kept of any incidences where physical restraint has been applied. This record and the record of sanctions applied is monitored by the head of care and the headteacher.

The school carries out and effectively records its fire safety measures including evacuation drills and alarm and equipment checks. Staff are trained in basic fire safety measures. The

school has appointed the head of care as the designated officer responsible for coordinating fire safety within the school. This person has received appropriate training from the local fire authority thus helping to ensure that young people are kept safe from any inherent dangers in the living environment.

The school has both a 17 seater and a 14 seater mini-bus. These are routinely serviced and basic safety points are checked each time they are driven. Approved drivers have to be appropriately trained by the local authority. The head of care checks the status of staff driving licences annually, thus helping to ensure that young people are kept safe from the possibility of motoring accidents.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Boarders live in a supportive and encouraging environment where their group and individual needs are met. Communication between teaching and care staff about individual children is largely verbal and occurs on a daily basis. Teaching staff are not actively involved in the evening residential and out-of-school activities. Care staff support young people with their educational needs and will go into classrooms during the school day to support young people with their learning. Parents are kept informed about their children's behavioural progress by letter but there is currently no email system.

Each child has a statement of special educational needs and individual education plans and care plans are in place for each child which clearly identify their individual needs.

The school employs a qualified counsellor two half days each week who will provide consultation for staff and will do one-to-one work with individual children to help them with their social and educational progress. Children are referred to the counsellor by school staff. An anger management therapist calls to the school one half day each week and conducts one-to-one sessions with young people who are assessed to be in need of such a service. Occasional art therapy sessions have been organised by the school to aid young people with their communication needs. The school has a parental and family support advisor who liaises with families to make them aware of the work that the school are undertaking with children. As previously stated, the school will refer children to the local child and adolescent mental health services team if they feel a child needs a psychiatric or psychological assessment. Each child has an appointed member of staff who acts as their key worker and who will have a unique knowledge of a particular child.

Each child's bedroom has a desk and study area. There are a number of educational books in the boarding house which the children can access. There are appropriately safeguarded IT systems in place which the young people can access under staff supervision. The children enjoy a vast range of evening activities both within and outside of the campus which the children can engage in. Examples of this include swimming and approach golf. Children in the boarding house had a activity week in the Isle of Wight last year which they particularly enjoyed. None of the current group of children attend any local social or recreational group, for example, sporting clubs or scout and cub groups.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

A daily community meeting with all boarders takes place to discuss issues of the day and where young people can express their views about life in the boarding house, including food choices and activity preferences. Formal School Council meetings have not been held since last September 2009 so hence there is no regular forum currently in place where young people can be consulted on larger issues concerning their school life.

As previously stated, an identified member of the care staff acts as a child's key worker and will ascertain their feelings about their life at the school. Day pupils attending the school who are identified as being in need of boarding provision are gradually introduced to the unit by a meeting with the head of care with their parent present. If thought appropriate and the child and their family are in agreement, a trial night takes place after which their place will be reviewed. Overnight stays will build up gradually until the full week provision is reached. The boarding placement will be reviewed annually.

Connexions personal advisors visit the school and assist young people in preparing for post-school career training and elements of independent living. Children leaving the school are given a leaving portfolio which contains photographs of events they have attended and their records of achievements. Additionally, an independence programme is followed by each young person nearing the end of their time at the school to try to achieve a gradual competence in independent living. This programme includes elements of citizenship such as opposing racist behaviour. Each child has a clearly written and up-to-date case file which identifies their assessed needs and the way that these will be met. These plans are appropriately reviewed.

Children are able to communicate with their parents via a private telephone booth, or cordless phones which they can take into their bedrooms. The school maintains regular contact with parents by daily or weekly telephone, or written weekly reports. Some parents said that they would be happy to receive these weekly reports by email.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Children acquire an amount of pocket money each week calculated by a points system attached to the boarding house behaviour management system. From this they can accrue up to as much as £3 per week. This is unrelated to a separate behaviour management system operated by the school, within which they can also acquire financial reward for good behaviour. Children may also bring to the school monies given to them by their parents. The boarding house will hold this money for them if they so wish. This boarding house pocket money is administered and cash transactions are recorded in an effective and appropriate manner. Each young person is given a bedroom door key and they have a locker where they may keep their personal possessions.

Children who board are encouraged to wear school uniform during the school day but can change into their 'civvies' at the end of the school day. All children's clothing is laundered by the school and children were seen to be wearing appropriate clothing suitable for their age range.

All of the sleeping and living areas throughout the residential provision are of a reasonable standard of cleanliness, décor and furnishing. Although the general standard of the premises is reasonable, the boarding house building is quite old and requires regular updating. Proposed building works to improve the space and facilities in the boarding area have been postponed



pending financial considerations. Children are able to personalise their bedrooms with their personal effects. All children have their own bedroom but share showers, bathrooms and toilets, of which there are an appropriate number. Children are given privacy when changing and bathing.

Good relationships between children and staff were observed which seemed to convey a mutual respect. Care staff always knock before entering bedrooms. The school provides children with toiletries although parents may furnish their children with toiletries according to their own personal tastes. There is an abundance of toys, books, games and recreational and educational facilities available to the children. There is a pool table room. There are tv/dvd facilities available in comfortable lounges.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity within the school is good. This is evidenced by the council's clearly written equal opportunities, racial awareness and disability awareness policies; the school's practice in addressing issues of special need amongst the young people it cares for; the boarding house has regular themed projects which promote children's respect of other cultures and nationalities; and the menu plan actively promotes international cuisine.

The school has a clearly written Statement of Purpose which spells out the aims and objectives of the boarding provision. This statement is reviewed annually by the head of care and the headteacher. There is a 'Welcome Pack for Boarders' which stands as the young person's guide; this gives each child a good range of information about the school. There is also an information pack about boarding available for parents. These documents inform the reader of the contact details of Ofsted to whom they may make direct complaint. The school's policies and procedures are comprehensive and clearly written and are available to all staff and stakeholders. At the time of the inspection there were a large number of information posters displayed around the school and the boarding house which spelt out the school's underpinning principles and ethos for both children and staff. This is good practice. There are clearly written and up-to-date records of individual children's needs and their developmental progress reviews are contained within their case files.

Staff personnel files and the single central record of vetting and recruitment checks show that the school undertake and follow up verbally all references; that proof of identification has been seen; that 'self declaration of health' forms completed by the applicant have been followed up by the council's occupational health department; and that enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are in place before an appointee commences work. Although the council state that it is their policy to follow up these checks every three years, the single central record showed this not to be the case and in one instance a member of the teaching staff had not been CRB checked since 2002. None of the care staff have the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in childcare although they are currently all registered as candidates. The head of care has many years experience in caring for children and is currently undertaking the NVQ at level 4 qualification in the management of care. Recent recruitments have meant that there is now a sufficient number of staff to ensure that the needs of young people are met. All care staff receive one-to-one supervision at least every half term. A staff induction checklist is in place for all newly appointed staff. All staff undergo a discussion with the head of care about areas for their professional development that looks at their training and development needs.

These details are contained in a staff development file held by the head of care. Individual members of the care staff do not have a formal personal development plan in place. However, staff have access to a range of training opportunities that ensure that they have the key skills needed to look after the needs of the children that they care for.

The school is subject to regular monitoring visits from a member of the governing body and written reports are made. However, these reports are sparse and incomplete.

## 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):

- ensure that the major building works planned to begin for the whole school site in January 2008 which was to include a complete refurbishment and upgrade of the boarding provision, and which has been postponed by the education authority pending financial considerations, now takes place. (NMS 23)
- ensure that at least 80% of care staff have the NVQ at level 3 in childcare and that the head of care obtains the NVQ at level 4 in care management (NMS 31)
- ensure that care staff have a formal personal development plan in place (NMS 29.5)
- ensure that the written reports arising from the monitoring visits carried out by the governing body are full and complete (NMS 33)
- ensure that the provision of medical care is improved by increasing the attendance of a qualified nurse, that formal medical examinations of children are taken on admission and that a physical system is put in place in the bedrooms to enable sick children to summon assistance when necessary (NMS 14)
- ensure that greater food choices are available at evening mealtimes (NMS 15)
- ensure that there is a regular forum in place where young people can be consulted on larger issues concerning their school life. (NMS 2)