

# Unsted Park School

Inspection report for residential special school

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<b>Inspector</b>	John Chivers
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

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<b>Address</b>	Munstead Heath Road Godalming Surrey GU7 1UW
<b>Telephone number</b>	
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Priory Education Services Ltd
<b>Head of care</b>	Rick Tracy
<b>Head / Principal</b>	Helen Sharpe
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	17 December 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**

Unsted Park is a residential special school that provides day and residential provision to children and young people with Asperger's syndrome. The school premises are a Grade II listed building in a country setting with large grounds. A sports court and a swimming pool are available. The school provides 11 residential placements in two boarding units; four bedrooms are available in one unit and seven bedrooms are available in the second unit. The residential units are located on the first floor. Access to the boarding areas is separate from the school via a pedestrian walkway, away from vehicles accessing the grounds. A controlled access lift is available, and access to the boarding areas is managed by a key card entry system. All bedrooms are single occupancy; twelve bedrooms are en suite with a bath or shower and WC, five bedrooms have access to a dedicated bathroom or shower room next to the room. A range of communal areas are available and include lounges, quiet rooms and therapy rooms. Parking is available away from the main building. A residential sixth form boarding unit was recently opened. The school provides a caring and supportive service to children with special needs.

### **Summary**

The inspection was announced. All of the 'key' standards in the national minimum standards for residential special schools were assessed at this inspection. There were no recommendations made as a result of the last inspection and only one recommendation is made as a result of this inspection. The boarding section of the school is organised and managed to a high professional standard and affords an equally high standard of care and support to the resident students, having full regard for equal opportunities and equality and diversity issues throughout its operation.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

There were no recommendations made as a result of the last inspection.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

The school has full regard for health and medical matters concerning the students and ensures these are closely monitored and reviewed. Students are encouraged to live healthy and active lifestyles, benefit from a healthy, balanced and varied diet where the school chef and catering staff present meals of exceptionally high quality. The school has a comprehensive range of health and medical related policies and procedures which are available and accessible to staff. Students retain the services of their own general practitioner; a local doctor is available to the school in emergencies. All visits to health and medical care professionals are clearly recorded. Students have detailed health and medical histories in their individual files and signed parental consent for medical and emergency treatment is held. Students' health care is closely monitored and recorded in their individual health profiles and care plans. The school's surgery is well organised and medication is securely held in locked cabinets with separate secure provision for the storage of controlled drugs. Medication administered is clearly recorded and dispensed in a caring and sensitive way. Old or discarded medication is returned to parents for disposal. Staff are trained in first aid and medication administration. Students are taught about aspects

of healthy living and healthy lifestyles via the school's curriculum and these areas are reinforced during boarding time where students are encouraged to participate in a range of activities and pursuits which help keep them fit and improve their coordination, mobility and confidence. Accidents are clearly recorded however the dates of accidents are not entered in all cases.

Students benefit from a balanced, varied and nutritious diet. The meals provided are of excellent quality, well presented and plentiful and enjoyed by students and staff. Students said the meals provided are 'fantastic'. Special diets are catered for and the catering section has full regard for the provision of theme and ethnic meals as part of the school's commitment to equality and cultural diversity. Mealtimes are a well ordered social occasions. Students shop for provisions and prepare their own meals as part of their transition and independence training programmes and are observed to undertake such tasks in a well organised and safe manner. The school's kitchen is spacious and well equipped and provisions are safely and correctly stored. Staff are trained in food hygiene and a food hygiene.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Staff treat students with dignity and respect their privacy and there is adequate space where students can receive appropriate visitors in private. The school has a policy and procedure regarding privacy and confidentiality of which all staff are aware. Confidential records are securely held in locked cabinets and drawers within locked offices. Staff sign a confidentiality agreement upon their appointment to the school. A telephone is available for students' use without reference to staff and students have lockable facilities in their rooms where they can keep valued and treasured possessions. Toilet and bathing facilities afford good privacy. The supervision of students is managed without being intrusive.

The school takes any complaint seriously, although students are clear that they have no complaints or concerns about the school or the way staff treat them. Students are very complementary about the school and their living experience within the boarding provision. The homely, caring and supportive service is appreciated by the students and helps to ensure complaints are unlikely to arise. There is a comprehensive complaints procedure and a simplified pictorial version of the procedure is available for the students. The complaints procedure is reinforced to staff periodically at team meetings. The school's complaints book shows that no complaints have been received regarding the boarding section of the school and no complaints have been received about the school by Ofsted.

The school is committed to the protection and safety of students. Staff are well trained and alert in this area having full regard for student's safety and welfare. The school has two child protection liaison officers who are responsible for school's safeguarding arrangements. There are clear and comprehensive child protection policies and procedures and staff have access to the county council multi agency safeguarding procedures. Students learn about aspects of their personal safety through the school's curriculum and these areas are reinforced by staff during boarding time. Staff are trained in child protection and such training is updated periodically. The education and care coordinator said there are no current or ongoing child protection issues regarding the boarding provision at the school. Students said they feel safe in school and that staff take an active interest in their personal safety and wellbeing.

Students live and develop in a caring and supportive atmosphere where they are protected from all aspects of bullying and intimidation by a vigilant staff team who implement the school's

policies rigorously. A range of anti-bullying information is displayed around the school. Students and staff are clear that bullying is quickly identified and dealt with. Students said bullying is not an issue in the school and no bullying or intimidating behaviour among the students is evident.

The school has a missing persons policy and procedure, although there have been no unauthorised absences regarding the boarding provision at the school. The homely and accepting provision experienced by the students helps reduce the risk of unauthorised absences occurring.

Students' behaviour is very well managed and they respond to staff inputs, interaction and engagement in a positive manner. Staff requests and instructions are followed with cheerful obedience and sound professional working relationships between staff and students are evident throughout the school day and boarding time. Students are clear about what is expected of them and of the school's behavioural boundaries. Staff are knowledgeable regarding individual student's conditions and behavioural triggers and work with them in this area in a sensitive, reassuring and confident way. Students' behaviour is closely monitored and reviewed and progress or issues are clearly recorded. Students confirm the fairness, consistency and realistic expectations regarding their behaviour management. The school has a detailed behaviour management policy and follows a recognised behaviour management system in which all staff receive training. The school discontinued the use and implementation of sanctions in 2008 and relies on sound working and professional relationships to maintain good order and control, using diffusion, disapproval and constructive reprimands and discussion when dealing with unacceptable behaviour. The school's restraint book is available which shows the need for physical interventions and restraint to be minimal in boarding time.

The school takes positive steps to keep students, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risks of fire and other potential safety hazards. The school's health and safety policy is available and the health and safety poster is prominently displayed. Health and safety meetings occur periodically and reports on the meetings are held. There is a current fire risk assessment and fire evacuation drills and fire alarm tests occur on a regular basis. Fire fighting equipment is serviced annually. Staff receive fire awareness training and a substantial number of staff are trained as fire marshals. There are current utility safety test certificates held and generic risk assessments are reviewed annually. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the school and no potential safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed.

The school's recruitment and vetting procedures help to ensure that only suitable staff are appointed to look after the students. The school has a staff recruitment policy which has full regard for equal opportunities and equality and diversity in its recruitment process. The school's recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and sound and staff personnel files hold all required information including two written references and checks via the Criminal Records Bureau at enhanced level.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The school has full regard for students' education and learning and both care and education staff work closely to enable students to achieve and enjoy what they do, promoting their self esteem, confidence and knowledge in a range of areas. Students benefit from a high level of individual support from a range of internal and external professionals.

Care staff support students' education and learning in boarding time and also have involvement in classroom time. Teaching staff also work along care staff in the boarding houses and together the combination of disciplines helps promote students' holistic education and learning experiences to a high standard. There is close liaison between the two disciplines which has enhanced further over recent months. There is adequate space for students to complete homework and engage in a range of pursuits.

Students are afforded a high level of individual support and an effective key worker system promotes individual relationships between staff and students. Key workers meet with students on a regular basis and weekly key worker reports are held which detail students' progress and issues. Students are appreciative of their key workers' inputs and speak favourably of the close support they provide. In addition there are a range of internal and external specialists which have a significant input into students' care and education programmes. There are also two school counsellors available to the students.

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

The provision is outstanding.

The school encourages and enables students to express their views and opinions in both informal and formal ways which promote their ability and judgement in decision making and exercising choice.

There is a range of forums where students can communicate their views, opinions and exercise choice. The forums include one to one discussion with key workers and other staff, group meetings and the school council. Students take minutes of such meetings which are well facilitated and lead by staff. A suggestions box is also available to the students. Students confirm staff are attentive to their suggestions and requests are acted upon. Parents' questionnaires are used to obtain their views regarding the service provided.

The school has a clear admissions criteria and process which includes a referral, full assessment, initial visits and a trial stay. The admission arrangements help to ensure that only suitable students are accepted and are able to achieve and benefit from their period of residence. There are detailed transition plans in place and independence training programmes where appropriate. Students confirm their satisfaction with their independence training programmes which cover a range of areas, which will assist them in any future placement and adult life. Students also attend work experience. Some students attend local colleges outside the school, although the school recently opened its own sixth form for older students.

Students have statements of special needs, individual education plans and care plans on their individual files. Care plans are detailed and cover all key areas. Care plans are monitored and reviewed by key workers on a regular basis as are students individual risk assessments. Care plans are prepared to a very good standard. Annual reviews are held where students and their parents attend and make a contribution to the review process. Students are aware of their care plans and are in agreement with them. Students also confirm staff consult with them on changes to care plans.

Contact that students have with their families and significant others is clearly recorded.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is good.

Parents supply students with personal requisites, clothing and pocket money. Students are well presented in age and fashion appropriate clothes and staff keep accurate records of students' pocket money.

There are clear and detailed transition plans and independence training programmes in place for older students.

Students live in a purpose built, homely and safe environment. Students confirm their satisfaction with the accommodation and facilities provided. The boarding areas provide good communal space for the students which are decorated and furnished to a good standard and are well maintained, although some areas are now showing signs of wear. Communal areas are well equipped with domestic appliances and a range of pictures and posters and books and games. Students' bedrooms are also decorated and furnished to a good standard and are personalised to varying degrees by their occupants. Bedding and linen is of good quality. Toilet and bathing facilities are of a good standard and afford privacy. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the boarding areas and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding; staff have full regard and awareness in these areas. The boarding provision is organised and managed to a high standard which ensure an equally high standard of care and support is afforded to the students and enables the school to achieve its aims and objectives.

The school has a detailed prospectus, statement of purpose and boarding handbook which are available to parents and students. These documents accurately describe the service and facilities provided. Such information is reviewed annually.

The school has recently reorganised its boarding management arrangements and is now lead by the education and care link officer. The boarding section is well staffed throughout the day and night and has a good balance in terms of gender. The school's staff duty roster is available and gives a clear account of staff on duty and duty times worked. The education and care link officer holds the National Vocational Qualification at level 4 and also the Registered Managers Award and has substantial experience of working with and managing services for students with special needs. Most of the care staff team have substantial experience and those with less experience are closely supervised by their more experienced colleagues. There is excellent communication between the staff team with staff handovers being held daily and full staff team meetings held weekly. There is an excellent staff training programme and staff confirm their attendance on a wide range of relevant training course. There is a comprehensive staff induction programme and inset training days. A number of staff hold the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 and others are currently attending such training or are scheduled to commence training in the near future. Staff receive regular individual supervision and written notes of supervision sessions are held. Staff are appreciative of the school's supervision arrangements and are avidly supportive of the school's management and ethos.

The staff team are committed, competent and professional in their work with the students who clearly benefit from their knowledge, skills and experience in caring for students with special needs. Staff are clear that the school has full regard for equal opportunities and equality and



diversity issues and that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the service. Senior staff monitor the conduct of the school and sign key records as part of the school's internal quality assurance system. Half termly inspections occur as part of this process, with written reports available that show sound scrutiny of the boarding provision. In addition there are two full welfare audits held each year which also confirms the high level of monitoring and scrutiny of the boarding provision. The school has an annual development plan for the period 2009-10. A current insurance liability certificate is held.

## **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 dates are entered on accident reports on all occasions. (NMS 14)