

The Priory Lodge School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

The Priory Lodge School is a specialist day school in South London for boys and girls aged from seven to nineteen years of age with high functioning autism, Asperger's syndrome and associated learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. This is the school's first inspection since it was registered in May 2010; in the summer of 2010, two pupils made induction visits and, in September 2010, four pupils started to attend full time. There are now seven pupils on roll, two in the primary phase and five in the secondary phase with none over the age of sixteen years. Pupils' places are funded by their local authorities. The school's aims are, 'to deliver the highest level of education and care according to individual need in a safe, positive and structured environment in which every student is encouraged to achieve the best possible academic, social and vocational outcomes'.

Evaluation of the school

This new school is developing rapidly and well. It provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education. Aims are being met to a large extent because staff have worked successfully to establish a climate and environment for learning in which pupils feel secure and want to learn. The curriculum, teaching and pupils' progress are satisfactory overall. Statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding pupils, are fully met and the school meets all the regulations.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. It has strengths in the provision for pupils' personal and social development. The curriculum covers the National Curriculum and, in Key Stages 3 and 4, all pupils study the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) course which focuses on the development of pupils' independence and social skills, including preparation for the world of work. The personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) covers topics appropriate to the needs of the pupils such as relationships, physical contact and dealing with emotions, especially anger. Pupils, especially the younger ones, benefit from the use of pictures, charts and symbols to set out the daily timetable;

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

they know clearly what to expect each day. Class size in the secondary phase allows for pupils to interact and work alongside each other; this is less so in the primary phase where numbers are low at the moment.

Primary-aged pupils cover the subjects of the curriculum separately. Themed studies are not routinely pursued at depth. Skills in English and mathematics are covered adequately, although not generally in the context of relevant real-life contexts. Secondary-aged pupils generally learn together as a group and pursue the same courses of study. The range of subjects is satisfactory but, for a few more-able pupils in particular, the level of challenge in the activities provided is sometimes not high enough. Pupils clearly enjoy practical work and speak with pride about what they are making in design and technology and cookery, for example. Provision for physical education is currently satisfactory and plans exist to develop this subject through links with neighbouring organisations. Good provision exists for developing pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT). Enrichment activities, such as the 'Zoolab' animal workshop that included work with snakes, enhance learning and enjoyment. Resources for learning have some positive features, mainly in the accommodation.

Individual education plans (IEPs) match the contents of pupils' statements of special educational needs and are used satisfactorily. Actions to develop pupils' communication, personal and social skills are generally given with good detail but actions to secure pupils' academic development, especially in literacy and numeracy, sometimes lack information. Some IEPs lack information about review dates. Speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and assessment and advice from the educational psychologist occur as required and are a positive feature of the provision.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory overall. Teaching is sometimes good. Teachers work in good partnership with teaching assistants, especially in relation to managing pupils' behaviour and helping them to maintain their concentration. Staff work with sensitivity to meet the individual needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum, enhancing self-esteem and reducing fear of failure. Lessons are planned carefully, with clear learning objectives that generally take account of what pupils can already do. On occasions, however, expectations are not high enough and work is not matched closely to a pupil's needs so that progress slows, especially in the secondary phase.

The use of short-term targets sheets for literacy and numeracy, stuck into pupils' exercise books, is helpful in that small steps in progress can be noted. The setting of longer-term targets, clearly linked to the requirements of IEPs and designed to secure pupils' progress, is not yet a well-established practice. There is a strong focus on developing speaking and listening skills as staff often encourage pupils to talk and explain their thinking and ideas. Pupils' work does not include much writing at length. Worksheets are used rather frequently, particularly in the secondary phase, and this limits the development of pupils' writing skills because responses are often

very brief. In some lessons in the secondary phase, for example where ICT is used, pupils each work at levels that build well on their existing knowledge, skills and understanding. Good teaching in design and technology has resulted in some good outcomes showing pupils' determination and perseverance as well as skill.

Arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are satisfactory and in the process of being further developed to include enhanced use of ICT, so that an analysis of pupils' progress can be done more thoroughly, frequently and speedily. At this early stage in the school's existence, records of pupils' academic attainment, maintained in a spreadsheet, cover barely half a year's work; they are nevertheless informative and being built up. Assessments of pupils' progress in their personal development exist in notes of review meetings and elsewhere and, while these are satisfactory, the school has yet to set up a more formal system for tracking this progress. When pupils' progress in relation to actions on their IEPs is reviewed, rather more attention is currently being paid to the pupils' personal development than to their academic development. Teachers use a range of methods, including some good questioning skills to elicit what pupils have gained in a lesson. Pupils are not often required to engage in self- and peer-assessment. Records of achievement are being compiled for each pupil; these are still at an early stage of development.

Pupils make satisfactory progress overall. They make good progress in developing their social skills, especially in managing their behaviour. Progress in English and mathematics is currently satisfactory. Pupils' academic progress varies with the extent to which individual learning programmes are matched to each one's needs; the school is rightly seeking to refine the match through further staff training in the use of assessment information.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. The well-structured day makes pupils feel secure and adds to their enjoyment of school, as seen in generally good attendance. Improved attendance is one of the school's clear successes. The school is effective in promoting pupils' confidence and self-esteem in lessons and also at lunchtime when all pupils eat together in the pleasant and well-ordered dining room. Pupils understand the school's system of rewards and sanctions and seek to abide by the school's high expectations of conduct. Although daily incidents of inappropriate behaviour still occur, usually following some upset or misunderstanding, behaviour is generally good. Incident logs show that the occurrences of inappropriate behaviour have been reduced over the half year from September 2010 to March 2011. The school's work to help pupils manage any anxiety is bearing fruit; teaching assistants play a vital and successful part in this work. Pupils are aware that 'time out' of a lesson, even for a short while, may be necessary and generally signal this need sensibly.

The curriculum supports well pupils' personal development. Trips to local places of interest, such as shops and parks, are part of the provision. Pupils take part in

charity fundraising activities and in events such as the Solar Boat Challenge and the London Boat Show. Assemblies cover national and international news and also afford opportunities for pupils to celebrate personal successes. Work in humanities supports pupils' learning about different faiths and cultural traditions. Pupils are making sound gains in their preparation for the next stages in education and life.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. Positive relationships with staff and a secure site and building result in a caring and safe environment for pupils. Parents and carers comment about the school's warm welcome for them and their children. Pupils are closely supervised and staff respond very quickly in the event of an upset. Records of incidents such as unacceptable behaviour are properly kept; incidents are followed up thoroughly. A clear child protection policy is in place and staff have received the necessary training. All statutory requirements in relation to keeping pupils safe, conducting risk assessments, fire safety, first aid and the provision of a medical room are met fully. The school meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended.

The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring pupils' emotional and physical well-being, including the adoption of healthy lifestyles, although there is scope to increase some pupils' participation in regular exercise. Good work is done to ensure pupils eat a healthy diet and develop a good understanding of how to keep safe.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

Procedures for the safe recruitment and appointment of staff are fully in place. A single central register is completed as required to record the necessary checks, for example, on staff identity and qualifications, and on the suitability of all adults that come into contact with children. Checks cover the proprietor and other members of the Priory Group associated with the school.

Premises and accommodation at the school

Much has been achieved in the short time of this school's existence to create an attractive, safe learning environment. A new building has been created and resourced. It includes general teaching spaces and specialist rooms for science, design and technology, food technology, art and music, as well as two sensory zones and a therapy studio. The outdoor space is attractive but limited in size, although there is a hard surface area where pupils enjoy games such as football and basketball. It also includes some pleasant woodland and a grassed area with seating. The building has been carefully designed and decorated to promote calmness.

Provision of information

All the necessary information is provided as required to parents and others. The prospectus is clear and attractive and the website also gives useful information.

Parents and carers have received a report on their child's work and progress. As the school has been open for less than a year, annual reviews against the statements of special educational needs have not yet been undertaken for all pupils. Good communication exists with parents and carers via newsletters, phone calls, emails and through personal contact when possible.

Parents' and carers' views about the school are generally positive. A few feel that the curriculum could be more finely tailored to meet their child's needs, in the range of courses offered or in the opportunity to meet with a wider range of children.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints policy meets all regulations. It sets out for parents, carers and pupils how complaints may be made and how they are dealt with. To date, there has been one complaint from a pupil and this was handled appropriately and properly recorded.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations').

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Improve the pace at which pupils make progress by developing teachers' effectiveness in planning good lessons that build on pupils' prior attainment, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4 and for English and mathematics.
- Develop further the procedures for constructing and reviewing the contents of pupils' individual education plans to ensure coverage of academic and personal development targets.
- Strengthen assessment arrangements so that:
 - staff consistently set clear targets for pupils that build on their existing knowledge, skills and understanding
 - progress in pupils' personal and academic development can be easily evaluated
 - pupils develop and apply, where appropriate, skills in self- and peer-assessment.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education			✓	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			✓	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning			✓	

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils		✓		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Independent Special School		
Date school opened	May 2010		
Age range of pupils	7–19		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 6	Girls: 1	Total: 7
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 6	Girls: 1	Total: 7
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65,000		
Address of school	The Priory Lodge School, Priory Lane Roehampton, London, SW15 5JJ		
Telephone number	020 8392 4410		
Email address	thepriorylodeschool@priorygroup.com		
Headteacher	David Curry		
Proprietor	Helen Sharpe, The Priory Education Services, The Priory Group		