

Unsted Park School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Greg Sorrell
Social care inspector	Wendy Anderson

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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}

The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools, in order to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and the government of the quality and standard of the service provided.^{3, 4}

Information about the school

Unsted Park School is a residential special school owned by Priory Education Services and is set in 44 acres of countryside near Godalming, Surrey. It specifically admits boys and girls, aged between seven and 19 years, who have Asperger's Syndrome and high-functioning autistic spectrum disorders. There are currently 56 pupils on roll, 54 of whom are boys and most are of White British heritage. All have statements of special educational needs. None is looked after by a local authority. The school offers residential, day and extended school care and education for pupils who have a history of disrupted education and non-attendance at maintained and special schools. A quarter of the pupils are in the school's weekly residential provision for 38 weeks per year. These residential pupils may opt to stay at school on alternate weekends. Pupils are taught in small groups and have access to a range of professionals such as therapists, counsellors and an educational psychologist.

Since the beginning of this term, the principal has had limited contact with the school due to commitments at another Priory school. Whilst awaiting the appointment of a new full-time principal, an interim headteacher has been appointed and is supported by an interim management team of experienced managers. The school summarises its aims as 'In this community everyone is valued; all are helped to achieve and everybody matters.'

The school opened in October 2007 and the education provision was last inspected in July 2008. The last inspection of the residential provision was in September 2010. This was an integrated inspection where the education and residential provision are

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents.

⁴ www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools.

inspected at the same time and all of the inspection findings are integrated in this report.

Evaluation of the school

Unsted Park School provides a good quality of education and the overall effectiveness of the residential experience is also good. The educational provision meets the vast majority of regulations and the residential provision meets all national minimum standards except two. The quality of the curriculum, teaching and assessment is good and enables pupils to make good progress academically and in their personal development. The school safeguarding arrangements are rigorous. Residential safety is satisfactory. Provision for residential pupils' health is outstanding. The school has successfully remedied past regulatory failures and has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good and is organised in an age-appropriate way. For example, in Key Stage 2, the majority of lessons are taught by the class teachers. In Key Stages 3 and 4, the timetable reflects a subject-centred approach with a suitable emphasis on course options and accreditation, including ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network), Edexcel, BTEC and GCSE. The curriculum for post-16 pupils is suitably personalised, with greater access to off-site college provision and further accreditation at A level when appropriate.

Schemes of work follow National Curriculum guidance and the requirements of the relevant examination boards. The curriculum covers all of the required areas of learning and there is a strong emphasis on enabling the pupils to achieve academic success at GCSE and Entry Level in a broad range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, geography, history, drama, design and food technology, religious education and French. Pupils in Key Stage 3 follow the Key Steps ASDAN programme. BTEC studies are offered in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education (PE). A level options are determined by pupils' success in these courses. Accredited courses are also available in more practical subjects such as art, photography and PE. Where appropriate, pupils may take GCSE examinations earlier than usual.

An appropriate personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is in place which includes relevant topics on keeping safe, sex education, exploring feelings and establishing positive relationships. The attention to skills for life during and after school is well established in the school curriculum. There are well-planned activities for residential pupils that prepare them effectively for adult life. For example, residential staff are familiar with the accredited course in 'Skills for independence and working life', which offers them a framework for use with residential pupils, and this

has a positive impact upon their residential outcomes. Under staff supervision, the residential pupils are encouraged to prepare snacks for themselves and develop an understanding of budgeting. They also choose which evening activities they wish to do. Access to these activities, which include off-site visits to the community, is offered to day pupils, although transport difficulties can reduce their participation. The 24 hour curriculum provision makes a very positive impact in improving pupils' personal and social skills and understanding of the world at large. A satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including fitness club and table games, is offered at lunchtime. All pupils exercise choice on a Friday afternoon where they follow an interest-led activity during the 'curriculum enrichment workshops'. Pupils also have specific programmes related to their needs. These include a 'sensory diet' which is designed by occupational therapists to help them stay focused in lessons.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and this helps pupils to become confident and engage with learning. In the residential provision, staff provide good role models and enjoy age-appropriate exchanges with the residential pupils. Residential staff make good use of assessment in order to provide age-appropriate experiences and develop the residential pupils' personal and social skills. Teachers have appropriate levels of subject expertise and benefit from training relevant to the pupils' preferred learning styles and special educational needs. The main strategy for meeting the wide range of needs in classrooms is varying levels of adult support. The best lessons have different levels of work for different abilities, although this is not always apparent in all lessons. All staff receive comprehensive and regular training in all matters related to care. However, academic subject specialist training is not so frequent. The lack of appropriate clothing for physical activity worn by some staff and all pupils reduces the impact of the subject on the development of healthy lifestyle, which is compounded by a lack of showering after exercise.

Assessment information is displayed in most classrooms, although not all rooms display significant amounts of pupils' work to inform and motivate learning. Resources for learning are at least adequate in all subjects, although teachers' use of interactive computer whiteboards is inconsistent and too few opportunities are presented for pupils to use this equipment. In some classrooms, pupils' access to the computer screen is obstructed by furniture. The school library is little used, has too few books and lacks organisation.

The pupils make good progress given their starting points. There is no evidence of significant difference between residential pupils, day pupils or any others. Teachers assess progress using a range of measures, including online assessment in core subjects. Some pupils say that they are not clear about just how well they are doing or their expected grades in forthcoming examinations. One pupil remarked, 'I may not know, but I'm sure the school will have told my parents, so I can always ask them.' Additional tests in literacy, numeracy and science indicate that the pupils maintain their progress and achieve good passes at GCSE and A level.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good in school and in boarding. Provision successfully meets the school aim of enabling the pupils to feel valued. All staff provide good role models and offer pupils a consistent approach to the management of their behaviour. Pupils are aware of the systems in place for rewards and sanctions and most respond well for most of the time. Consequently, pupils develop a good attitude to learning; they work purposefully and enjoy attending school regularly.

The pupils' behaviour is good. There are evident friendships in classes and during breaks in the school grounds. The atmosphere in the residential areas is relaxed and harmonious. Occasionally, some pupils experience difficulty in behaving well, particularly when there is a change to routine or class membership. In this event, staff intervene appropriately and minimise disruption to learning. All pupils, including those who board, say that they feel safe and are able to speak to trusted adults. There are strong messages in the school and residential areas that bullying is not tolerated. Any rare occurrences are promptly investigated and resolved, ensuring the whole school is a harmonious community.

Residential pupils are extremely well supported in developing independence and the ability to work alongside each other by the excellent arrangements for individual planning. Each pupil has an individual plan with specific targets that are set, reviewed and updated, with the pupils' involvement, on a regular basis. These plans are also linked to the school's merit system which reinforces positive behaviours. Individual plans are effectively implemented by a very dedicated and child-centred residential team. Residential pupils are encouraged to personalise their own bedrooms but not all choose to do so. However, they are expected to contribute to their own community by keeping their own rooms and communal spaces tidy. In discussions with day and residential pupils, they feel that their views are taken seriously and that their council is a genuine way for their collective voice to be heard.

The programmes for PSHE, life skills and careers, as well as the very effective links between residential and day staff support the pupils' personal development well. Assemblies consider moral and social issues with an eye on world events, including natural disasters and those less fortunate. Fundraising is a regular occurrence and pupil-led initiatives have resulted in support for a range of charities, including a children's hospice and the MacMillan Trust. Their knowledge of public services is good. The recent arrival of chickens is a focus of great interest and several pupils are seeking responsibility for egg collection and animal care duties. A camping experience in France, the celebration of other cultures' festivals, themed cultural events and the introduction of religious education at GCSE level promote the pupils' cultural development, tolerance and harmony effectively. This increased emphasis on other cultures is a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Provision for all pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. Checks to ensure the safer recruitment of staff are in place and health and safety policies pay due regard to national guidance. There are significant strengths in the overall provision although staff do not always ensure that they fill in the log book after the regular checks and fire drills in the residential provision have taken place. This means that the national minimum standard for fire safety is not fully met. In other respects, the attention to fire safety is adequate. For example, all staff have received appropriate fire training and extinguishers are tested as required.

There is excellent communication between the residential and education teams. There are good hand-over arrangements at the start and end of each day. The school and residential staff undertake routine risk assessments to ensure that pupils are kept safe at all times. There are relevant policies and procedures that are suitably implemented to promote good behaviour, prevent bullying and keep pupils secure.

School and residential staff responsible for safeguarding and child protection have appropriate levels of training, and arrangements are secure. All staff receive a comprehensive induction programme, including training on safe restraint, first aid and behaviour management techniques. Consequently, procedures are implemented consistently. The planned programmes for PSHE and physical activities help to ensure that all the pupils are encouraged to stay healthy and safe. All pupils enjoy freshly cooked meals of good quality and are encouraged to take regular exercise, although not always in suitable clothing.

The high staffing ratios, including the effective daytime deployment of residential staff, ensure that pupils are properly supervised at all times. Residential keyworkers know pupils well and meet on a regular basis. However, these meetings are not always recorded in sufficient detail to track what has been agreed. The provision for caring for residential pupils' health is outstanding. In the residential areas, there is excellent information on health issues as well as an awareness board which provides information on various conditions such as Asperger's Syndrome, cerebral palsy and dyspraxia. Pupils have access to anger management sessions and a counsellor. The school works closely with mental health services run by the local health authority and the Priory group. Where required by statements of special educational needs, pupils receive occupational therapy and speech and language therapy. All staff are trained in issuing medication when appropriate and are vigilant in observing the residential pupils' health and well-being. The school fulfils the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The school's admission register lacks sufficient information on each pupil and does not meet requirements.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school makes comprehensive checks to ensure the suitability of all staff, supply staff and proprietors. Senior staff have undertaken suitable training to ensure rigorous recruitment procedures are adopted when employing all staff. All of the required information is held in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The premises and accommodation are suitable to ensure safe and effective learning. All areas of the school are adequately maintained and classrooms are of a suitable size for the numbers of pupils in each class. Most classrooms on the main site adequately support specific subject areas and are suitably equipped, including specialist rooms for science, design and technology, and art. Indoor facilities for physical activity include a small gymnasium and a well-proportioned swimming pool. The school grounds are extensive and provide extensive opportunities for safe play and support for outdoor learning. The grounds enable the school to host visiting schools for competitive team games. Effective use is made of the grounds in support of horticultural studies and competitive team games with visiting schools.

The residential accommodation is good and enables pupils to experience supported community living with adequate privacy. Many of the bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms and there are pleasantly decorated communal areas for relaxation and preparation of snacks.

Provision of information

The provision of information for parents, carers and others is clear, accurate and up to date. The information meets most, but not all, regulatory requirements. The areas of non-compliance are noted below. The vast majority of parents and carers report that they are very happy with the work of the school and also appreciate the support provided by the parents' forum.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The complaints procedures meet requirements and are followed rigorously.

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Leadership and management of the residential provision are good. The headteacher, supported by the head of residential care and the interim management team, gives clear leadership, good organisation and direction to the work of the school. They ensure that pupils are well cared for, achieve well and outcomes for them are good. Leaders ensure that all staff are suitably vetted, effectively deployed and that education and residential routines run smoothly. The education and residential staff work closely together and this relationship is strengthened by the fortnightly

deployment of residential staff to act as teaching assistants in secondary classrooms. Good links are made with outside agencies to ensure pupils' needs are met effectively. There is a robust training and development programme for staff but this is not always supported by a consistent supervision and appraisal system as required.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.⁵

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for welfare, health and safety of pupils (standards in part 3) and must:

- ensure that the admission register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (paragraph 17)

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- ensure that the proprietor publishes its new address on its website and on all other documentation (paragraph 24(1)(a))
- provide parents, and prospective parents on request, with a copy of its safeguarding policy (paragraph 24(1)(c))
- submit an annual account to local authorities, and on request to the Secretary of State, of income received and expenditure incurred in respect of pupils funded by those local authorities (paragraph 24(1)(h)).

National minimum standards

In order to meet the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated regulations, the school should:

- ensure that all fire drills, emergency lighting and fire alarm checks are formally recorded in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (NMS 7)
- ensure that all residential staff receive regular formal recorded supervision and annual appraisal of their performance (NMS 19)

⁵ www.legislation.gov.uk/uk/si/2010/1997/contents/made.

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 sharing of achievement information with pupils so they have a clearer understanding of how well they are doing
- improve teachers' and pupils' use of interactive whiteboards in lessons
- improve the quality and range of resources in the school library
- improve the recording of keyworker sessions in the residential provision.

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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Overall effectiveness of the residential experience

Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		✓		
Outcomes for residential pupils	✓			
Quality of residential provision and care	✓			
Residential pupils' safety			✓	
Leadership and management of the residential provision		✓		

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special		
Date school opened	October 2007		
Age range of pupils	7–19 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 54	Girls: 2	Total: 56
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of residential pupils	Boys: 14	Girls: 0	Total: 14
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 54	Girls: 2	Total: 56
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£80,000		
Annual fees (residential pupils)	£125,000		
Address of school	Munstead Heath Road, Godalming, GU7 1UW		
Telephone number	01483 892061		
Email address	ricktracey@priorygroup.com		
Principal	Rick Tracey		
Proprietor	The Priory Group		

4 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Unsted Park School, Godalming GU7 1UW

You may remember me and my colleague who came to see you at the end of September. Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us. It is clear that you enjoy school, get on well with adults and make good progress with your studies. You get a good education at Unsted Park and a good residential experience too.

Teachers provide you with good lessons that are right for your age and ability. The work they ask you to do helps you to pass examinations. The visits you go on, including college, help you to become more confident as you get older. You also told us that if you have a problem, you can easily speak with the staff.

About a quarter of you are residential pupils and we can see that you are given lots of activities to do in the evenings and these also help you to become more independent and prepared for life after school.

We are asking the school to do a few things to make it even better for you. These are: making sure ensure that all fire safety checks in residential areas are formally recorded and all residential staff get the feedback and supervision they need in order to do their job effectively. Keyworkers also need to keep better notes of their meetings with you. The school needs to make sure that it provides all of the required information for parents and others. The admission register must also contain all of the right information. Your teachers could tell you more about how well you are performing. You and your teachers could use the interactive computer whiteboards more in lessons. Finally, we are asking the school to improve the library so that it is much more useful to you.

Yours sincerely

Greg Sorrell
Lead inspector