

# Priory Hurworth House

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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

Priory Hurworth House is a special day school for students with complex learning difficulties, including behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) and autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). It is located in the village of Hurworth-on-Tees, near Darlington in County Durham. Part of the Priory Group, a national provider of specialist education and care, it is registered to admit up to 40 students aged from seven to 19 years of age. The school opened in September 2011 with one student and numbers of students and staff have increased each term. Currently there are 14 students on roll; 12 have a statement of special educational needs, two are being assessed for statements and six are in the care of their local authority. Almost all students who enrol at this school have experienced disruption in their schooling and have failed to thrive in their previous school placements. At the time of the inspection, three students and four members of staff, including a teacher, had joined the school within the previous two weeks. The students come from four local authorities, which fund their places. This is the school's first inspection since it opened.

The school aims 'to ensure that young people develop a positive outlook on life' and that 'they achieve, thrive and learn to take responsibility by engaging in appropriate and stimulating learning opportunities.'

## Evaluation of the school

Hurworth House School successfully meets its aims and provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education for its students. Since opening the school has made much progress in establishing clear routines which ensure that students are well supervised and engaging in learning. The satisfactory teaching and curriculum focus appropriately on the key skills of English and mathematics which are helping most students to make at least satisfactory progress in their learning. Most students have improved their attitudes and attendance since joining the school. All of the requirements to safeguard students are in place and measures to promote the welfare, health and safety of students are good. Almost all regulations for independent schools are met.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents).

<sup>2</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents).

## Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. The school's curriculum policy and schemes of work clearly outline the planned approach to delivering a curriculum based on the National Curriculum. These provide comprehensive guidance and information for each subject. However, the school has not had a full complement of staff to be able to offer all National Curriculum subjects. For example, although there are plans to offer music and a modern foreign language these have not been routinely taught. As the school roll and the number of staff increase the school capacity for increasing the amount of specialist teaching also increases.

Within Key Stages 2 and 3 there is an appropriate concentration on the key skills of English and mathematics. This is particularly appropriate given the mostly low levels of attainment when students join the school. Although there are clear plans which indicate the content for each key stage it is not clear how these will be implemented where pupils from more than one key stage are taught together. While there continues to be a clear emphasis on key skills in Key Stage 4 there are also opportunities for individual pupils to have their timetables adjusted to meet their particular needs and interests. So, for example, one student pursues a welding course for two days each week. However, although broadly satisfactory, the provision of vocational courses at the school is underdeveloped for the older students. Provision for students with a statement of special educational needs, particularly related to modifying their behaviour, is sound. Although well-chosen interventions and extra help for students are provided, some of these are new and have not helped to improve the key skills of all of the identified students. Links with the Connexions service are being developed so that when students reach the latter part of Key Stage 4 they may, if appropriate, be offered work experience or access to vocational training courses.

The quality and effectiveness of teaching and assessment are satisfactory, with some good features. Teachers and support staff work well together. The relationships between staff and students are positive overall and staff use their knowledge of students to encourage them to make the right choices about their behaviour and engagement in lessons. Although students' behaviour has improved when compared to their behaviour in previous schools attended, the most significant reason why learning is no better than satisfactory is because of the behaviour and attitude to learning of some students. Although the classrooms are often calm and orderly, the school day is punctuated by some extremely poor behaviour. When this happens it not only disturbs the learning of the student concerned it also disrupts the learning of others. The staff generally manage and organise the students well, including the times when the behaviour of one or more individual students becomes extremely disruptive. Good use is made of the available space to manage students' outbursts and allow individuals to calm down in a safe space.

Teachers' planning is generally of a good quality. However, the effectiveness of the delivery of lessons varies. Although the plans often identify suitable activities and tasks, occasionally there is insufficient challenge to extend the learning of all abilities

within the class, or to improve aspects of their behaviour or social skills they need to develop in order to overcome some of their learning difficulties. The best lessons are where students are interested in the subject or where activities are of a practical nature, such as in one food technology lesson where students were very enthusiastic about making ice-cream sundaes and designing a healthy salad.

Although the standards achieved by the students are below or well below those expected for their age, the progress that the majority make during their time at the school is at least satisfactory, and is good for a small minority in some subjects. The most significant achievement for some students is the improvement to their rates of attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning. However, for some students there remains much work to do if they are gain maximum benefit from their attendance at the school.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

The quality and effectiveness of the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. The students' control of their own behaviour, along with their moral and social development, are actively encouraged. Students are encouraged to reflect on and evaluate the quality of their work, effort and behaviour at the end of every lesson. However, there are some inconsistencies with the implementation of this particular policy and it is not always followed. Students know what is expected of them, and the majority respond positively to the calm and encouraging approach that staff use to foster appropriate behaviour, or to encourage them to complete a piece of work. At those times where a student exhibits extremely challenging and disruptive behaviour, the staff work hard to engage the student in purposeful dialogue that will calm the situation. As a result of this strategy, the students' behaviour is satisfactory overall, and better than in their previous schools. Although some students do well to ignore the misbehaviour of others there are some who are easily distracted.

Students' spiritual and cultural development is appropriately supported through the work on personal, social and health education. For example, recent work related to the theme of 'show racism the red card' helped some students consider the impact of racism. Although the schemes of work include clear plans for students to be taught about their own and other cultures this important area of work is underdeveloped and some students use racist language. Similarly, the school has not translated into reality its plans to teach students about English institutions in a systematic way. The attendance of the majority of students is at least satisfactory or better, and is certainly significantly much improved when compared to their attendance at their mainstream schools. This improved attendance is helping most students to develop their enjoyment of the many different activities provided for them at school. However, the persistent absence of a small minority is a cause for concern and adversely impacts on their academic progress.

## **Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

Procedures to promote students' welfare, health and safety, including child protection, are good overall. Staff are sensitive to the often complex needs of students, especially in encouraging them to improve those aspects of their emotional and social behaviour that have previously presented significant barriers to their achievement and personal development. Staff are deployed well so that supervision is effective both in lessons and around the school. The procedures for safeguarding the students are well known and adhered to consistently by all staff, and are based on very thorough risk assessments and appropriate training in child protection. The range of policies relating to fire safety, health and safety, bullying, discipline and first aid meet the needs of the students well. There are clear procedures for dealing with inappropriate behaviour and all incidents are recorded in detail and in line with requirements. Students have regular access to the gymnasium, which allows them to take regular exercise. Throughout the day, for example at breakfast club and lunchtime, students are encouraged to eat healthy meals. The school fulfils its duties with regard to the Equalities Act 2010.

## **Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors**

The school has good procedures for ensuring that all adults who work in the school are suitably checked for their ability to work the students. The single central register meets all requirements.

## **Premises and accommodation at the school**

The premises and accommodation fully comply with all of the regulations. The school comprises part of the site of a former preparatory school. The area used by the school is separated from the rest of the grounds by a secure perimeter fence. The original main school building, the junior block and some other outbuildings are outside the fenced area and are not currently in use.

The school is on two floors, with a lift. The building provides spacious and good quality accommodation. It consists of five appropriately-sized classrooms for formal teaching, which have appropriate furniture and are fitted with computers; most have interactive whiteboards. Specialist teaching areas include an art room, design and technology workshop, a fully equipped kitchen for food technology, a science room and a large gymnasium. Further teaching space is available for practical vocational subjects but is not yet furnished to accommodate this provision. There are changing rooms and a well-equipped first aid room along with a kitchen and dining room where meals are served. There are suitable outdoor play areas within the perimeter fence.

## **Provision of information**

The school provides parents, carers and others with all of the required information through the prospectus and the school's website. The school's statement of purpose

includes much useful information including a clear statement of the aims and curriculum of the school and the arrangements for discipline. The school provides parents and carers with termly written reports on the progress of their child.

## **Manner in which complaints are to be handled**

The school's procedures for handling complaints are clear and concise and meet all requirements for independent schools.

## **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.<sup>3</sup>

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (standards in part 2) and must:

- give pupils a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 5(d))
- help pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions (paragraph 5(e)).

## **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 quality of teaching so that:
  - behaviour management strategies, including the review of behaviour at the end of every lesson, are more consistently applied
  - teaching activities more effectively challenge and extend students of all abilities
- improve the curriculum further to extend vocational provision at Key Stage 4 and to clarify how the curriculum will be delivered where pupils from two key stages are taught together.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made).

## 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

<b>School status</b>	Independent		
<b>Type of school</b>	Special day for pupils with complex learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders		
<b>Date school opened</b>	September 2011		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 19 years		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 8	Girls: 4	Total: 12
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 2	Girls: 0	Total: 2
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 10	Girls: 2	Total: 12
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 4	Girls: 2	Total: 6
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£45,000 – £73,500		
<b>Address of school</b>	Westfield Drive Hurworth-on-Tees Darlington DL2 2AD		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 729080		
<b>Email address</b>	johnanderson@priorygroup.com		
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Anderson		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Priory Education Services Ltd		

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 April 2012

Dear students

### **Inspection of Hurworth House School, County Durham DL2 2AD**

Thank you all for the welcome you gave to me when I inspected your school recently. I found talking to you, looking at your work and observing you in lessons and around the school very helpful. It was also helpful to listen to your views about the school and see what you had to say in the survey we asked you to complete. I judged that your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. Staff work well to take care of you and help to keep you safe. The subjects, courses and experiences that are provided for you are sound. Satisfactory teaching helps you to make satisfactory progress. Although your attendance at school has improved and is much better than when you attended other schools, for some of you it is still low and this restricts how much progress you are able to make in your key skills.

Your school does almost all of the things that it has to do in order to continue to operate as a school. All the staff want the school to be even better so I have agreed three areas with the school that they should try to improve. First, to improve how staff support you with your behaviour in classrooms and how they help you to review your behaviour and attitude to learning at the end of each lesson. Second, for teachers to make sure that you are all challenged within your lessons. Third, for the staff to review the curriculum and improve the type of activities that they teach the oldest students so that they learn more work-based skills and look again at how they plan and deliver the curriculum where several age groups are in the same class.

I hope that you want to 'do your bit' too. You can help by making sure that you attend school regularly and if you are asked to complete work that you try to do so.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali  
Her Majesty's Inspector