

# Chelfham Senior 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.<sup>1, 2</sup>

## Information about the school

Chelfham Senior School opened in 1986. It is registered as an independent residential and day school for up to 63 boys and girls, aged from seven to 22 who have autism with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has dual registration as a children's home. An inspection of the care provision was carried out at the same time as the education provision, which is reported on separately. The previous inspection of the education provision was in February 2008.

Currently on roll there are 57 students, of whom 26 are looked after. Twenty nine students are placed for 52 weeks of the year; 14 attend daily and the remainder are placed for 38 weeks. Most students have additional learning and communication difficulties and an increasing proportion of students exhibit severe emotional and behavioural difficulties having complex autistic impairments. All students have a statement of special educational needs. Nearly all students are of White British heritage. Many have a history of severely disrupted schooling and home lives. Most students attend from local authorities in the South of England and they are encouraged to make home visits wherever possible. Places are funded by students' local education authorities, or in the case of a few, by their local health authority.

The school occupies two rural sites near Tavistock in Devon. The main school site at Bere Alston provides education for students aged seven to 19 years. The continuing education department is at Kilworthy House, approximately 10 miles away, which provides education for students aged from 14 to 22. Students from the Bere Alston site make regular use of the Kilworthy site for their vocational studies.

The school's aim is to give young people with complex difficulties a better chance in life by helping them to reappraise themselves and develop feelings of self-worth through providing a:

- positive ethos which celebrates and rewards success and progress
- culture in which students feel safe, secure and listened to
- framework where students learn to take responsibility for the control of their own behaviour.

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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).

## Evaluation of the school

Chelfham Senior School meets its aims and provides an outstanding quality of education. The school has acted well on the recommendations of the last report. The curriculum, quality of assessment, and provision for students' welfare, health and safety are outstanding. These, along with good teaching, with significant elements that are exemplary, enable students to make outstanding progress. As a result of good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and good relationships between staff and students, behaviour is good. The school complies with all of the regulations for an independent school, including safeguarding arrangements that are secure.

### Quality of education

The overall quality of the curriculum and other activities is outstanding in meeting the range of needs and interests of students. This is because it is highly tailored to each student. All required areas of learning are covered, with clearly defined levels of progression and a rich and varied programme of themed days and visits. However, the school is not complacent and is continuously looking at ways to inspire and motivate learning. A popular innovation this term has been the introduction of a twice-weekly 'Pillow Club' that is encouraging students to enjoy listening to a night-time story and has improved the after-school provision for literacy.

Since the previous inspection, the school has increased its age range and currently there is a small number of students in Key Stage 2. During their first weeks in school, along with other students new to the school, they are thoroughly assessed to ensure that nurture, therapy and booster learning sessions can be targeted to address their individual needs and to begin to reduce gaps in their attainment compared with national expectations.

At the Bere Alston site, Key Stage 3 and 4 students successfully complete programmes of study from the National Curriculum alongside optional choices such as media, catering and outdoor education. Since the previous inspection, the school has increased the range of GCSEs, BTECs and other courses and now offers 60 different vocational levels from within nine main subject areas on the Kiltworthy site alone. Consequently, students can choose from a wide range of subjects and levels of accreditation and, if a student shows an interest in an area that the school does not currently offer, then every effort is made to ensure that the student is able to follow a suitably accredited course, either by introducing a new one in school or by working in conjunction with local colleges. Examples of this are a new engineering course being written and a new fisheries BTEC module being introduced.

Other innovations include the Kilworthy Kitchen Garden and Tors Café that provide work-based learning opportunities, alongside the school's Tavistock market stall, linked with hospitality and catering courses. The improved information and communication technology (ICT) provision has also meant that information technology, music and media courses are now being followed, with students having

access to modern technological equipment. The school rightly has plans to increase the ICT provision still further.

The careers advice and assistance given in helping students with planning for their future lives promotes students' personal enterprise and raises ambitions. As a result, all of the students leave Chelfham to enter further or higher education, training or employment.

Overall, teaching and assessment are outstandingly effective in meeting the full range of pupils' needs so that students make outstanding progress in their learning. Teaching is good with significant elements that are exemplary. These are the consistency of lesson planning with the use of assessment and target data to ensure that tasks are suitably challenging while meeting individual needs in every lesson and the quality and impact of targeted one-to-one support in booster sessions. These significantly reduce gaps in attainment compared with national expectations in relation to starting points and age. Other significant elements in teaching that are exemplary are the use of students' self-assessment in relation to their targets in lessons and students' knowledge and understanding of their achievements in relation to their National Curriculum Level or course requirements in lessons. Teaching is not consistently outstanding because too often staff talk too long or fail to give enough time for students to assimilate information, puzzle through their challenging problem without adult interjection, and/or compose their response. On these occasions, the student's ability to work either on their own or with a classmate is hampered, reducing resilience and the quality of the learning experience for the student. Also, some teachers do not make maximum use of good-quality resources.

Assessment and the use of data to raise expectations of student progress and attainment are outstanding. Comprehensive tracking and robust monitoring are being used highly successfully to drive improvements year-on-year throughout the school. High expectations and levels of accountability ensure any relative weaknesses in learning are swiftly resolved. As a result, students are able to achieve external examination accreditation that well reflects their outstanding progress. One example is the first student to leave Chelfham in 2012 to start a university degree course.

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

The quality of provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. Previous failures, disappointments and criticisms mean that many students are reluctant learners who have low self-esteem and some resentment towards authority when they join the school. During their time at Chelfham, students grow considerably in their self-confidence and self-esteem, and are excellently prepared for the next stage of their lives. Students are given good opportunities to express their views and the school has worked hard to facilitate and implement their requests. Excellent opportunities are provided for students to experience local and national services and institutions. Students and staff contribute willingly to charitable fundraising activities. Students benefit from strong and nurturing relationships with staff and, as a result, their moral understanding and behaviour improves and, due to

high levels of supervision, bullying rarely occurs. The behaviour of students is good. Students increasingly develop tolerance, accept difference and learn to live within a group, learning how to behave acceptably and acquiring new social and recreational skills. Although they clearly understand right from wrong and what behaviour is acceptable, some students find it hard to remember what they have learned, particularly when not in school.

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

Provision for the overall welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. All the required policies relating to health and safety are in place and implemented effectively. Risk assessments are carried out for fire dangers, premises checks and for trips and visits. External contractors regularly check the fire systems, food hygiene requirements and electrical appliances. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding.

On admission to school, students are rigorously assessed, including for their own well-being, and this is used outstandingly well to provide appropriate support, guidance and, where necessary, intervention. An exceptional aspect of the school is the high level of expertise used throughout the school delivered by its own Specialist Support Service and the high quality and impact of the training it provides. A prime example is the use of a 'sensory diet', such as head massage, that is tailored to individual students' needs. It was seen during the inspection to have a considerable impact on helping students to be ready to learn. The school is rightly exploring ways of increasing the impact of its therapy work throughout the school day and evening by increasing the opportunities for students to engage in play on large outdoor exercise apparatus.

The Kilworthy Kitchen Garden, Tors Café and Jamie Oliver Home Cooking Skills BTEC are particularly successful in helping students eat healthily, stay safe and prepare for life beyond school by planning and making nutritional meals. Here, students work to a set budget, grow their own and/or purchase ingredients locally, learning how to prepare and cook food safely while gaining a useful qualification. In one lesson seen, mathematical and literacy skills were also being very successfully reinforced through meaningful activities such as measuring and weighing ingredients and comparing proportions to adjust the recipe. Discussions between the students helped them learn from each other, improving their ability to work without direct adult assistance.

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

The school has robust procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and others. All of the required checks on the suitability of staff have been appropriately undertaken. The single central register of these checks is complete and meets requirements.

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

The school premises are appropriately organised to promote a very good range of learning opportunities and to ensure the safety and security of pupils. Teaching rooms are well maintained and provide a suitable environment for the small teaching

groups across all the age ranges. Good use is made of outside space with a hard-surfaced football pitch and garden area for recreation and a sports hall for games, with climbing walls. There are specialist rooms and areas to support the subjects and courses followed. There are sufficient toilets and washrooms, and appropriate arrangements are made for any pupil who may become ill.

### **Provision of information**

The school provides all the required information about the aims and organisation of the school for parents, carers and others. Reports are provided to parents, carers and placing local authorities about the academic performance, progress and personal development of their children. The annual reviews of pupils' statements of special educational needs give highly detailed information to parents, carers and local authorities. Communication between the school and the external agencies that support pupils is highly effective. An annual account of income received and expenditure incurred is provided to local authorities.

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

The complaints policy meets all of the regulations.

### **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:

- ensure staff give students more time to think through problems and shape their answers before interjecting
- ensure teachers maximise the use of good-quality resources in lessons
- provide the large outdoor exercise apparatus as planned
- increase the provision for ICT at the earliest opportunity.

## 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		
<b>Date school opened</b>	1 January 1986		
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–22		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed		
<b>Number on roll (full-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 54	Girls: 2	Total: 56
<b>Number on roll (part-time pupils)</b>	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 1
<b>Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs</b>	Boys: 55	Girls: 2	Total: 57
<b>Number of pupils who are looked after</b>	Boys: 25	Girls: 1	Total: 26
<b>Address of school</b>	Priory Central Office Priory House Randalls Way Leatherhead Surrey KT22 7TP		
<b>Telephone number</b>	01822 840 379		
<b>Email address</b>	johnsteward@priorygroup.com helensharpe@priorygroup.com		
<b>Principal</b>	Dr J Steward		
<b>Proprietor</b>	Priory Education Services		

**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.**



3 October 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Chelfham Senior School, KT22 7TP**

I came to your school in October, to see how well you were learning and how well your school is supporting you. I visited some of your lessons and talked with some of you about your learning. I would like to say a huge thank you to all of you and your teachers for making me feel so very welcome. This letter is to tell you what I found out.

I judged that your school provides you with an outstanding quality of education. The curriculum, quality of assessment, and provision for students' welfare, health and safety are outstanding. These, along with good teaching, enable you to make outstanding progress. You are outstanding at assessing your own work and know how well you are doing against your individual targets. I thought that behaviour was good overall, but that some of you need to remember what you have learned about how to behave socially and safely, particularly when not in school.

You work with exceptionally considerate, attentive adults who are always looking for ways to make your school an even better place. In order to help the school improve further, I have suggested that the school should implement its plans to increase the provision of ICT and provide large outdoor exercise apparatus. I have also suggested that teachers should maximise the use of good-quality resources in lessons and that staff sometimes need to give you more time to think through problems and shape your answers before offering their help.

I wish you all the best for the future and trust that your plans and hopes will be fulfilled.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny  
Her Majesty's Inspector