

The Old Priory School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Mike Thirkell

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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 Old Priory School is a mixed independent day special school in Ramsgate owned by Ethelbert Children's Services. The school was established in 1997 and first registered with the Department for Education in November 2002 to provide places for up to 30 pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years, with the core aim of providing 'an holistic therapeutic approach to schooling and learning'; it currently provides places for 27 boys and two girls. Twenty of the pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The school operates from the Old Priory School building and two additional sites which are a short journey from the school. Pupils all have considerable emotional, behavioural and social difficulties and most have histories of disrupted education, including a number who have had extended periods of not attending school. All pupils are subject to care orders. Twenty- five pupils live in nine of Ethelbert Children's Services children's homes, which are differently located and which are separately registered with Ofsted, or are living with foster parents. The school last had an inspection of its educational provision in November 2008.

Evaluation of the school

The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection in all aspects of its provision. It is successful in meeting its core aims. The quality of education provided is good and effective strategies are used by the school to monitor pupils' academic and personal progress. Teaching is good and teachers work hard to support pupils' development; all staff work effectively as a team. The school has developed thorough systems for safeguarding pupils. The provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. All the requirements for registration as an independent school are met.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school's flexible response to pupils' individual learning and personal needs and previous educational experiences ensures that all pupils, of whom twenty- five have statements of special educational need, are provided with good opportunities to learn and make progress. A full range of suitably detailed policies and schemes of work, including for personal and social education (PSE), are established. The curriculum meets the requirements of all

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

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

statements of special educational needs, which are reviewed regularly. An effective focus on improving pupils' fundamental needs in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy is reflected throughout the curriculum, as well as specifically through lessons in English and PSE and through pupil involvement in assemblies.

The school provides a wide range of academic, practical and creative learning opportunities for pupils. A good range of practical courses provide outstanding opportunities for pupils to develop their interests, for example in bricklaying, plumbing and woodwork and to achieve City and Guilds accreditation. Pupils have suitable opportunities to take GCSE examinations and to achieve qualifications through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Youth Awards Scheme. The range of opportunities has until recently been extended by college taster courses in hairdressing and beauty, although these courses have been temporarily curtailed. In a minority of cases, the school uses home tuition to support pupils with particular learning or personal needs, for example in re-engaging with education. Pupils are provided with good opportunities for physical education within the school's own facilities, for example through ASDAN courses, and through visits to local sports and leisure centres. Provision for careers education is provided through the curriculum, supported by the local Connexions service and through work experience. Through the range of learning opportunities and the development of their social and communication skills, pupils are provided with appropriate opportunities to prepare for the responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers' hard work is effective in supporting pupils' academic and personal development. The good quality of teaching, supported by the good behaviour and classroom management skills demonstrated by teachers throughout the school, provide effective support to the good progress made by pupils. Despite occasional disruptions to lessons caused by individual pupils with specific learning and personal difficulties, teachers demonstrate significant skills in re-engaging pupils in learning. Individual pupils are strong in their praise of their teachers' patience and support. Teaching assistants play a substantial role in supporting learning. Resources to support teaching are plentiful and interactive whiteboards in all classrooms in the main teaching block provide a well-used and effective aid to teaching.

Lessons are well planned. Teachers' lesson plans reflect the good support and guidance provided by schemes of work and their good knowledge of individual pupils learning, as well as their personal difficulties and needs. Systems for providing up-to-date information to teachers so that they can plan their work are supported by frequent staff meetings.

The school has effective strategies in place for assessing pupils' progress. Information derived from assessments is used well to support the pupils, enhanced by the high quality of staff teamwork. Pupils' progress, including their academic achievements, their attendance and behaviour and aspects of developing social and communication skills, are monitored on a daily basis. Tutors provide a cohesive overview of the personal and academic progress of each pupil, as well as providing regular personal support. Records of pupils' achievements across a range of subjects

show that pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points when they arrived at the school. Pupils' improving communication and social skills are strongly demonstrated through assemblies and the ability of older pupils in particular to express their views. Assessments undertaken in each subject are recorded by teachers and contribute to regular reviews of pupils' progress. The school is implementing the use of software to further improve the monitoring of pupils' progress centrally, although this is still in the process of being fully embedded. Use is made of independent specialists such as psychologists to assist with diagnosing pupils' needs as required.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility for decision making with respect to their learning and the life of the school. The development of a school council reflects the school's support for this process. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own progress and to accept responsibility for their actions. They are supported well in increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem. Teachers provide outstanding role models to pupils through their calm approach and the 'emphasis on the positive' in their relationships with pupils. Pupils are supported in developing an understanding of right and wrong, for example through PSE lessons focusing on recent court cases that are in the national and international news.

Behaviour is good and most pupils show a growing understanding of the need to behave well in order to make progress. Improvement in pupil behaviour is supported by a consistency of approach to managing behaviour by all staff. Behaviour is particularly good now in the context of the pupils' previous experiences. Pupils make good progress in relation to improving their behaviour, linked to the development in social and communication skills and improving their attendance over time. Teachers monitor and record pupils' behaviour and response on a daily basis. Attendance is good, although it varies considerably according to the circumstances of each pupil.

Pupils are provided with suitable opportunities to develop a broad knowledge of public institutions and services in England through PSE and citizenship. This feature of the provision has been improved since the last inspection. However, the school makes limited use of outside speakers or a broad range of visits linked to further enhance pupils' learning in this aspect of the curriculum. Pupils make use of local libraries and they are made aware of the work of the courts and of English law. Good opportunities are provided for acquiring an appreciation of their own and other peoples' cultures through many aspects of pupils' experience at school, including learning about a range of religions in PSE, the work of black poets in English and celebrating Martin Luther King Day.

Pupils appreciate the attention and support that they receive which results in most of them developing more positive attitudes to learning. Older pupils in particular show increasing awareness of the relevance of the opportunities provided in supporting their future economic well-being.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The quality of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is good. All the required policies are in place and effectively implemented with respect to preventing bullying, behaviour, first aid, child protection and health and safety. Responsible staff are appropriately appointed and trained with respect to child protection and first aid, as well as physical intervention should it be necessary. Matters relating to welfare, health and safety benefit from the guidance and supervision provided by a specialist officer employed by the parent company who is responsible for ensuring that all matters relating to health and fire safety are appropriately undertaken and records maintained. Careful supervision of pupils is maintained throughout the school day and examples of risk assessments prepared for trips out of school are suitable. Appropriate records are maintained relating to sanctions, as are registers relating to admission and daily attendance. A well-prepared policy demonstrates the school's awareness of its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has clearly established procedures for undertaking all the required checks on staff and others. A single central register of the checks undertaken is maintained appropriately.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The school provides well-maintained, clean and suitably decorated accommodation throughout, which ensures that pupils can learn safely. All classrooms are on the ground floor ensuring good access, including access for pupils with physical disabilities, should any attend the school. Classrooms are spacious and well furnished. Display is effectively used throughout the school to celebrate pupils' achievements and to support learning. The school has established good facilities on all three school sites for pupils who are ill.

Provision of information

The school provides all the required information to parents, carers and others or how it may be obtained from the school in the prospectus, including details of the child-protection policy. Regular reports are provided on pupils' personal and academic progress.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school's complaints policy follows the model provided by the parent company. It fully meets the requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all 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:

- embed the use of software systems to provide improvements for recording assessment centrally
- extend the existing opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge of public institutions and services in England with greater use of outside speakers and a broader range of visits.

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	Special day school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties		
Date school opened	1997		
Age range of pupils	11–16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 25	Girls: 2	Total: 27
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 23	Girls: 2	Total: 25
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 25	Girls: 2	Total: 27
Annual fees (day pupils)	£25,009		
Address of school	Priory Road, Ramsgate, CCT11 9PG		
	CT11 9DG		
Telephone number	01843 599322		
Email address	jack.banner@ethelberthomes.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mr Jack Banner		

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 February, 2012

Dear Pupils,



Inspection of the Old Priory School

As you know I visited the school earlier this week to undertake an inspection of the educational provision. This inspection looked at a number of matters which are listed below. In addition, it checks how any weaknesses highlighted by the last inspection have been attended to. Several issues were raised by the last inspection, but I am pleased to be able to say that the school leadership, with the hard work and support of the staff and teachers has been able to deal with them all. Your school now fully meets all the requirements for registration as an independent school. The inspection judged that:

- the curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities
- teaching and assessment are good and teachers plan their lessons well although the systems for recording your progress on an electronic central system are not yet as effective as they could be
- spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good, but the school could improve your experience of public institutions in England through the use of specialist speakers from outside the school. I was particularly pleased to see how well the school supports you in developing your confidence and improving your social and communication skills and behaviour
- provision for your welfare health and safety are good
- all staff are thoroughly checked to ensure that they are the right people to be teaching and caring for you
- the premises and accommodation are well maintained and support a wide range of practical as well as academic subjects
- all the required information is provided for parents, carers and others
- procedures are in place to ensure any complaints that may be made about the school are dealt with appropriately.

I would finally like to say how hard I think your teachers and other staff work to care for you. Some of you who I spoke to said that you thought so too.

Yours sincerely

Mike Thirkell
Lead Inspector