

Priory School

Priory School, Mount Road, BURY ST. EDMUNDS, Suffolk, IP32 7BH

Inspection dates	05/02/2013 to 07/02/2013	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for residential pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of residential provision and care	Outstanding	1
Residential pupils' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of the residential provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The residential provision is outstanding because

- Residential pupils actively enjoy the boarding experience and develop a range of skills as a direct result of the care they receive. The quality of care is excellent and is highly focused on supporting pupils to achieve maximum independence to prepare them for later life.
- Safeguarding is a priority in this school. Staff promote pupil welfare through robust systems and processes, a depth of experience and excellent inter-agency working with external professionals. Residential pupils say they feel safe in the school and residential environment.
- Highly effective managers use a range of monitoring and evaluation processes to continually improve the quality of the residential provision.
- Staff promote equality and diversity through highly individualised care planning, exemplary activity planning and ensuring that pupils are able to express their views and preferences.
- Pupils develop excellent relationships with staff and each other as a result of their residential experience. They show empathy for others, accepting each other's unique characteristics and needs.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

Information about this inspection

The inspection of the residential provision, covering two boarding houses, took place within three hours of notice given to the school. The inspection activities included meetings with; pupils, the residential care staff, the Chair of Governors, parents, buildings architect, the Head Teacher, the Business Manager, the Senior Management Team and the Head of Kitchen. Observations of the premises, activities, meal times and residential routines formed part of the inspection. Information was gathered from documents, policies, records, monitoring reports and Parent View, which represented feedback from 21 parents and carers.

Inspection team

Louisa Bayley

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

Priory School is a residential special academy for male and female pupils with complex moderate learning difficulties. It caters for pupils aged between nine and sixteen years of age throughout Western Suffolk. The school provides a 24-hour curriculum to support cognitive, social and independence skill programmes. The school has 23 residential bed spaces per night with 48 pupils accessing residential provision each week. The residential accommodation is provided in two boarding houses located on the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide training in the administration, recording and storage of medication for all residential staff that have responsibility to manage medication.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for residential pupils

Outstanding

Outcomes for residential pupils in this school are outstanding. Pupils have exceptionally good relationships with staff and with each other. They learn to work co-operatively, developing empathy and understanding of each other's needs, disabilities and strengths. Pupils have enthusiasm for boarding and enjoy the opportunities available to them within the residential provision.

Pupils make excellent progress as a result of highly individualised learning objectives, positive staff interaction and established routines. They develop confidence in their social skills and become significantly more self-managing. Parents consistently say that their children have developed independence skills, such as personal care, cooking, washing up and making their beds. Parents also say that their children have developed friendships with peers outside of the school, as a result of their increasing confidence. Feedback from parents includes: 'His independence has come on immensely and his confidence has grown' and 'Our son cannot wait to get up in the mornings and go to school. He packs his own suitcase and he takes responsibility for himself. He tidies his own room and helps around the house. He wasn't one for going outside but he now goes out to play more because he has more confidence.'

Residential pupils participate well in a wide range of activities and opportunities. Pupils say they have learned new skills, such as how to ride a bicycle and to follow recipes and prepare a meal. They engage in community-based activities such as youth club. This gives them the opportunity to develop friendships with children they would not otherwise have met.

Residential pupils readily take on responsibilities within the school. They contribute to group living by taking on tasks such as washing up, tidying away and serving drinks to others at meal times. They volunteer to represent other children's views through the School Council and Residential Council. Pupils are also involved in the Food Forum and participate in the building review meetings in the school. This enables them to make suggestions and express their views, affecting change within the school and residential provision.

Pupils develop an understanding of their own health needs. For example, some pupils have specialist dietary requirements. They demonstrate good knowledge of foods they need to avoid and the reasons why. Pupils participate in, and are aware of the health benefits of physical activities. They have a strong sense of personal safety; they understand dangers in environments such as the kitchen and the roads. They also understand dangers of internet based activities and how to keep themselves safe.

All pupils develop skills to prepare them for moving on from the school. They enjoy equality of access to services and facilities and benefit from independence programmes that consider their individual needs, disabilities and characteristics.

Quality of residential provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of residential provision and care is outstanding. The 24-hour curriculum provides a seamless link between academic and pastoral care. Some of the staff from the day school also work in the residential provision, strengthening the links further. There are effective systems in place to support excellent communication between the academic and care provision, enhancing individual's potential for progress in all aspects of their development. Parents and placing authorities are all extremely positive about the care provided. They say: 'I will be heartbroken when my child leaves, it is amazing how well she has done' and 'It has been fantastic for my son, I can't rate it highly enough.'

The induction process is sensitive to individual's needs. Parents and children visit the residential accommodation prior to commencement of boarding. Parents are able to meet with the Head of Kitchen to discuss their child's specific dietary needs and they meet with the residential staff, to discuss their child's abilities, skills and areas for development. There is a robust system in place to review the settling-in period for pupils, ensuring they are happy and are benefiting from the residential experience.

Staff offer a wide range of activities, such as youth club, cycling, physical activities in the on-site gymnasium, team games, social skills development games, cookery, independence building, art and craft and information technology. The activity plans are exemplary. They are well structured, have individual learning objectives and are reviewed following each activity. Consequently, individual's enjoyment, participation, achievement and progress are formally recorded and evaluated.

Staff support pupils to develop team-working skills that help broaden their sense of community living and co-operation. Pupils take on responsibilities such as helping staff to sort materials for recycling and showing visitors around the school. They learn negotiating skills, such as deciding fairly which programme to watch on television through discussing options with the group. The role modelling by staff helps to reinforce positive messages to the pupils. As a result, they work well together and accept each other's limitations.

Staff celebrate pupil's achievements, constantly reinforcing positive actions. Pupils enjoy sticker systems with reward charts and merits. Pupils have a memory book, which is accessible to them without reference to staff, whenever they are in residence. The books contain their reward charts and certificates they have earned. Staff update the books daily, so that pupils can see how well they have done. Staff consistently use positive language, so that actions are instantly acknowledged; this helps to build individual's self-esteem and confidence.

Care plans are comprehensive and provide information that focuses on individual needs. There is good communication between parents and carers and the residential staff. This helps to ensure that care plans are accurate and reflect parent's knowledge of their child. Pupils are encouraged and supported to read their care plans and to contribute to residential reviews. They are able to express their wishes and make requests. This has resulted in the number of boarding nights being increased or decreased according to individual's preferences.

The arrangements for medication administration are safe and effective. Records accurately reflect medication stored and administered. However, not all residential staff have received updated training. Although this does not impact on pupil's safety, some staff do not have an up-to-date understanding of best practice in this area.

The quality of food is excellent. The meals provided are nutritious and offer pupils a choice, with healthy options always available. A parent said: 'My greatest concern was whether the school would be able to cater for my child's dietary needs, but they have been fantastic.' Pupils are able to make suggestions about the food, through the Food Forum, and this has led to changes. A request for a full English breakfast has been incorporated into the menu at the request of a pupil, and is due to start next term. The Head of Kitchen will ensure that this option is offered on a rotation of days, so that all residential pupils will have the opportunity to enjoy it.

Residential pupils' safety

Outstanding

The residential pupils' safety is outstanding. Safeguarding is an absolute priority. Robust systems to report concerns, supported by regular staff training and auditing of safeguarding arrangements ensure that pupil's safety is promoted. The Independent Visitor focuses and comprehensively

reports on safeguarding processes and referrals. Social workers say that child protection concerns are managed safely and effectively by the school. The number of child protection referrals has decreased, as a result of the engagement by the school in working within the Common Assessment Framework. Representatives from the school attend meetings with external professionals, contributing to developing ways to support children and families.

Staff are subject to appropriate vetting and checks prior to working with children in the school. Precautions are taken to ensure that pupils are not at risk from visitors to the school and contractors. The school is secure, with gates on the driveway and doors that are only accessible to visitors when staff authorise entry. Closed circuit television provides additional security in the grounds of the school, but does not encroach on pupil's privacy. Managers ensure that health and safety checks are in place. Regular fire evacuation practice, and a good induction process ensures that pupils understand the procedure to follow in the event of a fire.

Staff use positive behaviour management techniques, which result in very rare incidents of negative behaviour. There has been one incident of physical restraint within residential time during the last year. Staff do not need to use sanctions as a consequence for behaviour, as they are able to manage behaviour effectively through clear expectations, low key intervention and positive role modelling.

Residential Pupils say that bullying is not an issue for them. One pupil said: 'Staff here take bullying very seriously, they will not tolerate it.' There have been incidents of bullying during the school day, however these are clearly recorded, responded to and managed as a matter of priority. A parent said: 'We became aware of an issue of bullying quite some time ago, we spoke to the staff and it was dealt with straight away. There has not been another issue since.' All incidents are monitored, so that trends, patterns and triggers can be identified. However, there have been no incidents in the residential provision. Excellent activities take place in school to raise pupil's awareness of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and how this impacts on the victims.

Staff regularly review and update the comprehensive risk assessments for pupils. The risk assessments consider all aspects of individual's needs, behaviours and disabilities, with actions raised to mitigate risks. Pupils are encouraged to take reasonable risks, proportionate to their age and stage of development, however, their safety is paramount. A parent said: 'The staff keep our child safe. I do not worry about trips into the town for example, because the staff are always safety minded.'

Leadership and management of the residential provision Outstanding

The leadership and management of the school is outstanding. The dedicated staff team have high expectations of pupils, helping them to reach their full potential and develop their own aspirations. Every day practice is underpinned by the aims set out in the statement of intent. There is exceptionally strong promotion of equality and diversity, valuing individuals and ensuring they are not disadvantaged because of their disabilities. Staff advocate for pupils and encourage them to become confident in advocating for themselves.

The well-established and experienced staff team provide routines and boundaries that help pupils to feel safe. Staff receive good levels of training and supervision to support their professional development, which enhances their effectiveness in working with children. Excellent planning and recording ensures consistency in the delivery of care, even when staff are absent.

The monitoring of the quality of care is excellent. This was raised as a recommendation at the last inspection and has been fully addressed. Independent Visitor reports are comprehensive, evaluative and raise any areas for improvement. The senior management address all actions raised immediately. The in-depth monitoring of pupil progress makes useful comparisons

between progress within the school environment and progress made residentially. Staff use a specific evaluation model to create visual imagery of pupil's progress over time. All records and incidents are monitored and evaluated. Consequently, the school continues to drive forward improvement in all areas.

All required policies are in place and effectively implemented. They are reviewed regularly and changes are shared with the staff team. Residential pupil's records are comprehensive and provide a clear and helpful picture of individual's achievements.

Effective systems are in place to seek residential pupil's views of the quality of care. The Chair of Governors spends time individually with pupils to complete boarding questionnaires with them, giving them the opportunity to raise any issues. The complaints process is familiar to all of the pupils, however there have been no complaints. Additionally, a system called 'I want you to know' has been introduced. Pupils are able to raise concerns, make suggestions and requests or let staff know of something they are particularly proud of. Pupils use the system well; responses are recorded by the staff, with detail of the action taken where needed. This makes pupils feel valued and listened to.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	137433
Social care unique reference number	SC024610
DfE registration number	935/7000

This inspection 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.

Type of school	Maintained residential special school
Number of boarders on roll	48
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	9 to 16
Headteacher	Mr Roger Mackenzie
Date of previous boarding inspection	10/06/2011
Telephone number	01284 761934
Email address	office@priory.suffolk.sch.uk

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