

Primrose Cottage

Inspection dates

18–19 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Students' welfare, health and safety are outstanding due to robust policies and procedures and the exceptional care and support they receive from the staff.
- Students achieve well and make good progress from their starting points. Their behaviour, attitudes and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.
- Teaching is good as teachers creatively involve students in the lesson which ensures their improved concentration and good progress.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for students to gain relevant qualifications to prepare them for their next stage of their lives. Through the use of an effective life-skills curriculum, students are able to learn the basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Leaders and managers ensure that the school is consistently improving. The quality of teaching is improving through the use of training opportunities and the management of staff performance and this leads to good achievement.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Occasionally, too few resources are available to meet the needs of all students.
- Students have limited opportunities, with practical experiences, to promote their social and cultural development.
- The school's self-review process does not evaluate students' progress over time.

Compliance with regulatory requirement

The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector visited five lessons taught by two members of staff. Meetings were held with the headteacher, a school adviser, staff and students.
- A range of documents were scrutinised including students' work, policies and procedures, schemes of work, teachers' planning and assessment records.
- No parent or carer used Parent View, Ofsted's on-line questionnaire. One response was received from the placing authority. Additional information was collected through staff questionnaires and discussions with the students.

Inspection team

Lubna Aziz, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Primrose Cottage School is a small independent special school with residential accommodation for students with complex needs, including learning needs.
- The school is registered to take up to six boys from 11 to 17 years of age. There are currently five students on roll, including one part-time. Some students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Since the last inspection in April 2010, there has been a change to the gender and age range of the students admitted and the type of special educational needs catered for. Previously, the school catered for girls with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties.
- The headteacher was appointed in May 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate students' progress by extending the range of resources available to meet the needs of all students.
- Further enrich students' social and cultural development by:
 - improving links with the local community
 - creating practical opportunities for them to increase their understanding of different faiths and cultures.
- Improve further the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that the school's self-review process includes an evaluation of the progress of individual students which indicates if they are making good or better progress and how well they are achieving over time from their starting points.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Students' achievement is good. The school's evidence shows that all students, including those with a statement of special educational needs, make good progress. Most students enter the school with low starting points for their age. As a result of strong support, the gap is narrowing in the standards they achieve compared with their peers in other schools. They make good progress due to the good teaching they receive and the good curriculum provided by the school. Students make good progress in both English and mathematics, ICT, history and work in religions and values education. Students can read accurately and are able, for example, to explain the context of the books they are reading. Good curriculum planning reinforces the development of their key skills.

Over time, they achieve well due to the good support and encouragement provided by the staff and this is reflected in students' work in their books. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. Students have opportunities to develop their personal qualities, such as taking on the responsibility for their daily reading. Consequently, they gain useful skills that help them to be able to work by themselves. Students have successfully completed qualifications such as functional skills in ICT at Level 3 and Entry Level Certificates in history.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students' behaviour and personal developments are good. Their behaviour and attitudes in class and the outside areas are good. They feel safe and well cared for. They have a good awareness of keeping themselves safe when using the internet. There are virtually no incidents of misbehaviour and no sanctions have been applied since the change to becoming a boys' school. Students report there are no incidents of bullying. All students get on well with each other and the adults around them. The good relationships between teachers and students help to raise students' self-confidence and self-esteem. Their attendance is good and shows that they are keen to learn and enjoy coming to the school. They take a pride in keeping their classrooms tidy. Students learn about ideas of right and wrong through the teaching of the school's planned curriculum. Students are taught about political views in a balanced way through debates, discussions and curriculum subjects.

Although overall, the school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, the provision is not outstanding as there are limited opportunities for them to develop their understanding of different faiths and cultures. Students have a strong appreciation of their own culture and learn about some other cultures. They take part in raising funds for charities in the wider world but links with the local community are not well developed. They have a good knowledge of public services and institutions such as the role of the United Kingdom Border Agency and the work of immigration officers. Students' behaviour has improved over time as a result of using positive and effective behaviour management strategies. As part of their personal, social and health education programme students receive visits from health professionals so that they have a better understanding of safe practices and how to look after their own health.

Quality of teaching

Good

Teaching is good and supports students well in their learning and good achievement. Teachers ensure all are included in the process of learning in lessons which provide a good range of activities to keep students fully engaged and which match their interests. A good use of resources such as an interactive whiteboard further enhances students' knowledge and enables them to make faster progress. For example, in a mathematics lesson the teacher used music along with the interactive whiteboard which helped to improve students' powers of concentration.

All lessons are related to the planned schemes of work. There is a good emphasis on the teaching of basic skills. As a result, students make good progress in mathematics and in developing their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge that they impart to students effectively. Students enjoy lessons such as the creative art activities undertaken during a life-skills lesson.

Although the school's learning resources are sufficient for the number of students, including books and computers, the provision of further visual and practical resources, especially in English, would enhance the learning of all students, including that of the less able students.

Assessment procedures are mostly good. Students' work is marked regularly and thoroughly. Teachers correct it and provide helpful feedback to ensure that students understand the next step they need to take in their learning. Workbooks are well cared for, which encourages students to be proud of their work.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The good curriculum provides opportunities for all students to learn and make progress. There are suitable schemes of work for all the required areas of learning and these are implemented well as seen in teachers' detailed lesson plans. The school's checks on students' progress show they are making good progress in all the subjects they are taught and this view is supported by the inspection findings. The school places an important emphasis on the teaching of life skills. Students are suitably prepared for the next stage of their life as is evident, for example, in their good progress in mathematics and English.

The school has suitably tailored its curriculum to meet the needs of those with a statement of special educational needs such as students with dyslexia. Students with particular needs receive extra support outside the classroom. The school uses a variety of sources, including the National Curriculum and syllabuses of awarding bodies where appropriate in planning the curriculum. Students report that they consider that the curriculum meets their needs. The school prepares its students well for Entry Level Certificates in all subjects, including English, mathematics, ICT and history.

Through the use of the life-skills curriculum, the school prepares its students to learn about various practical aspects of daily life such as the use of money. In the religions and values education (RAVE) programme, students study some different religions such as Christianity and Islam. They are also taught about politics ensuring they develop balanced political views. There are good extra-curricular opportunities available that are well-integrated into the daily teaching, such as visits to museums and seaside resorts.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

The welfare, health and safety of students are outstanding and the school meets all the independent school regulations for this standard. There are excellent levels of supervision and care provided for all students. All the required policies and procedures are fully implemented. These include those for behaviour management, anti-bullying and all aspects of health and safety. All the required checks on health and safety are recorded in an exemplary manner, including risk assessments on the premises, curriculum and to prevent fire. These checks are carried out thoroughly and recorded accurately. Fire drills are carried out regularly and thoroughly. All electrical equipment is subject to inspection by a competent person.

All staff members receive the required training in safeguarding and first aid at the required levels, including the designated officer for child protection. All recruitment and vetting procedures are implemented robustly. The required checks on the suitability of all staff are carried out thoroughly

and recorded as required in a single central register. There are comprehensive procedures for managing students' behaviour and no incidents of bullying have been recorded. Excellent recording systems are in place, for example, for behaviour, bullying and other incidents. The school environment is safe and secure. Attendance and admission registers are maintained systematically.

Leadership and management

Good

The quality of leadership and management is good. The school meets all the independent school regulations. Since her appointment, the headteacher has established good relationships with the staff and students and has high expectations of them. Leaders and the proprietor have ensured teachers are well equipped with the right level of training and skills to support them in their professional responsibilities. For example, they have appropriate training in cognitive and behaviour management which is related to the particular needs of the students. The quality of teaching is regularly checked by the headteacher and targets for improvement are set through staff reviews. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good and students make good progress and achieve well.

The school's improvement plan indicates that the proprietor, headteacher and other managers have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have accurately identified priorities for improvement. Although the school's self-review process is mostly good it does not include a specific evaluation of the longer-term progress of individual students and so provides too little information about how well they are achieving over time from their starting points.

The analysis of staff and placing authority questionnaires indicates that they are highly supportive of the school. The premises and accommodation are well maintained and all students take pride in keeping them tidy. The school has a good sized outside area for play. The school provides all the required information to parents, carers and others and has good procedures for the management of any complaints.

What inspection judgements mean

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

School details

Unique reference number	131379
Social care unique reference number	SC065096
Inspection number	420237
DfE registration number	351/6013

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Special School
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	11–17 years
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	4
Number of part time pupils	1
Proprietor	Northern Care
Headteacher	Miranda Rathmell
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2010
Telephone number	01253 316160
Fax number	01253 316511
Email address	primrose.education@northern-care.co.uk

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