

Unsted Park School

Munstead Heath Road, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1UW

Inspection dates 2–4 July 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	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Many students join the school after years of failure in previous schools. They make rapid progress towards fulfilling their academic and social potential.
- Staff have high expectations and, because they address individual learning needs, they support every student in being successful, both in school and, for those who live-in, in the residential provision.
- Although many students arrive with very challenging behaviour, the consistently applied behaviour policy soon enables them to start taking responsibility for their actions and adopting more positive relationships.
- Leadership is effective in promoting achievement and improvement. Leaders make challenging demands on staff but also provide them with good professional development. As a result, the morale of staff, including residential staff, and the quality of teaching are good.
- The residential provision for those who live-in during the week provides a safe and secure environment where the well-being of the individual is paramount. There are good opportunities to join in a wide range of activities on-site or in the local community.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Some teachers are not fully confident in assessing students' work against National Curriculum levels and some residential staff lack confidence in undertaking some school-based tasks.
- Data on students' achievement are not always used well in setting challenging work.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools (if RSS)

- 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.
- The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was undertaken with half a day’s notice. Eight lessons were observed and opportunities taken to observe the residential provision.
- Meetings were held with leaders and staff members of the school and in the residential facilities, and the wider Priory Group, as well as with day and residential students.
- Twenty five responses to the Parent View online questionnaire were taken into account, and three parents/carers were spoken to on-site, while another contacted inspectors by phone.
- Written evidence, including work in students’ books, data on progress, schemes of work and individual behaviour plans, was looked at carefully.
- The Department of Education, in relation to this inspection, asked Ofsted to consider the school’s progress against the action plan put in place following the previous inspections. Also, to investigate the school’s practice in relation to the management of self-harm, and to consider if the appropriate procedure and practice are in place to support staff who may wish to raise concerns under the whistleblowing procedures.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Brian McQuoid

Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Unsted Park is a residential special school, part of the Priory Group, offering full-time education to male and female students between the ages of seven and 19. The school is registered for 65 students.
- It caters for young people with Asperger's Syndrome and high-functioning autistic spectrum disorders. Students have a history of disrupted prior education or non-attendance.
- There are currently 72 students on roll, of whom 16 are resident. All have a statement of special educational needs and a very few are looked after by their local authority.
- Students are taught in small groups and have access to a range of supporting professionals such as therapists, a counsellor and an educational psychologist.
- There is currently a vacancy for the post of headteacher and, pending an appointment being made, responsibilities are being shared between the Principal, who was appointed in January 2012 and has overall control of the site, and the two assistant headteachers.
- The school opened in October 2007. Its last full integrated inspection was in September 2011. The most recent welfare-only inspection was in December 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise the achievement of students by:
 - ensuring teachers make full use of data on students' achievements so they are stretched to reach their potential, including setting challenging yet attainable targets
 - ensuring teachers are confident in assessing work at the right National Curriculum level to ensure consistency across the school
 - providing enough time for teachers with responsibilities for making checks on their areas, including teachers' planning and the quality of teaching and marking.
- Carry out a review of the roles of welfare staff in their deployment during the school day to ensure that:
 - staff are confident in carrying out the specific roles assigned to them
 - the best possible use of staff time is achieved to maximise their effectiveness.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Students' achievement is good overall and the learning needs of students in all key stages are met effectively because of good teaching and a good curriculum. Many remain at school until they have completed sixth form studies and then go on to further or higher education, for which they have been well prepared. When they first arrive, they have histories of broken education and, in some cases, of non-attendance as they failed to thrive in their previous schools as a result of their learning difficulties. Here, they make rapid progress, usually from a low starting point, because of the specialist skills of the staff and the support they receive in both the education and welfare elements of provision. By the time they leave, their attainment is around the national expectation and students are successful in gaining national qualifications such as GCSE and BTEC.

Over the last year, the school has started to become far more analytical in looking at individual students' progress through acquiring a software package that plots progress and helps staff to set challenging targets. This is providing a clearer picture of progress over time measured against National Curriculum levels. A few teachers do not make the most of this data, so occasionally students are not fully challenged in their work by their learning targets. Occasionally, teachers are not confident in assessing their students' work in relation to the National Curriculum levels. This means that a judgement on attainment in one lesson may be different from that being taught by a different teacher, and the school rightly identifies this professional development need for some. Overall, however, the achievement of students reflects a new-found confidence in learning which allows for rapid progress and good achievement.

Individualised teaching allows the specific needs of all students to be addressed and, as a result, they are able to demonstrate strong progress, not only in the key areas of English and mathematics, but also across the wider curriculum. Wider social and educational learning also encourages the development of skills in a wider context, such as developing life skills, which for some is difficult as a result of their autism.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

One of the strengths of the school is the way in which it encourages students to develop their confidence and independence. The residential provision makes a very strong contribution to this process for those students who live-in. Students develop mutually respectful relations with staff and with each other in both the residential and the school settings. Residential and educational staff work effectively together to support students as they learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and make a positive contribution to their school community. This is reflected in the effective way the school council and, for residential students, the weekly meeting in which staff and students come together to discuss residential issues, enables students to raise issues of concern.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is promoted effectively. For example, in English, the study of works such as George Orwell's *Animal Farm* leads to discussions about the nature of society. In the wider curriculum and beyond the school day, students demonstrate increasing confidence and maturity in their skills in art and in making music.

Many students enter the school displaying challenging behaviour but, over time, the carefully devised and very well implemented behaviour policy supports students in modifying the way they behave and in accepting personal responsibility for their actions. Individual behaviour plans support students in coming to terms with their own specific difficulties. As they learn a greater social awareness and develop social skills, students find it easier to focus on learning, and this underpins their wider academic learning, helping them to achieve their full potential, often for the

first time.

Students learn to accept the views of others, and to develop a respect for their own and other cultures. This is supported, for example, by visits to places of worship belonging to different faiths. They learn to distinguish right from wrong and respect for the law, which has been reinforced in personal, social and health education lessons and, for example, by local community police officers coming into an assembly to talk to students. Leaders ensure that when controversial and political issues are considered, steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views.

Attendance is good, although punctuality is a greater problem. However, the issue is mainly one of transport, in bringing students, sometimes a considerable distance, on heavily congested roads so that any delay results in late arrival.

Quality of teaching

Good

Teaching is at least good, and some is outstanding, and as a result, the students enjoy learning and experience academic success. Even though virtually all students arrive with a history of academic underachievement, they are able to make good progress from the outset, going on to gain success in national examinations, sometimes with the highest grades.

In many lessons, teachers show skill in asking questions that make students think hard for themselves. Students are encouraged to express their views and to develop their understanding, so that they are fully engaged in the process of learning. Lessons are so successful because they are well planned and take into account the differing needs and abilities of students, making it possible to individualise much of the learning because groups are very small.

Teachers are well supported by teaching assistants and throughout the day the care staff also contribute to the support for students in school. Sometimes, however, they are not fully at ease with this role. For example, it might mean that a member of staff with dyslexia is asked to act as a reader for a student during an examination, or to take day students, who they do not know well, to an event out of school. As a result, some staff do not always feel suitably equipped or confident to undertake some of the tasks they are given.

Students' work is marked regularly and usually contains good advice on how it could be improved. Teachers record the progress their students make and feed this into the school's wider tracking systems for every student on a termly basis so that the school has a clear picture of the progress of each student over time.

Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and, for the youngest students in Key Stage 2, they use a primary school model in which they teach their own classes very effectively. Similarly, teachers in Key Stages 3 and 4 use their individual subject expertise to ensure students receive effective guidance in working towards external accreditation. Classrooms are well equipped, including the provision of interactive whiteboards, which teachers often use very effectively. Other forms of technology are also used well, including the use of computers as aids to learning, supporting opportunities for students to engage in individual research for example.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The school's curriculum is based firmly on the National Curriculum and successfully provides a broad and balanced education that enables students to make good progress and gain academic success across the required different areas of learning. In addition to the purely academic work, students also develop a range of skills in the arts, music and sport. This breadth of learning encourages the full engagement of students and, for those who are resident, this is sustained out of school hours by the residential staff. They provide access to a wide range of activities both on and off site, including supporting students who want to join local groups such as the cadets.

The curriculum is well planned, and in the last 12 months has been reinforced by the creation of a team of three faculty leaders. This has promoted the work on making checks on teaching, and teachers' planning and marking, and has helped to raise academic standards. However, in recent months, following the resignation of the previous headteacher, the vacancy in senior leadership has increased their workload and reduced the time available for them to carry out these tasks. This has, to a limited extent, reduced their current effectiveness. Teachers take care to ensure that lesson planning enables them to meet the needs of every student. Schemes of work enable teachers to cover National Curriculum requirements but care is also taken to ensure that this is done while still addressing the specific special educational needs of the students in a way that meets their individual needs.

Help is given to students in 'learning how to learn' and for some the development of study skills is a challenge as a result of their wider learning difficulties. However, teachers are well supported through training to understand the nature of the challenges that face many autistic students and, as a result, students are given excellent support which underpins their academic success. Since every student has a statement of special educational needs, care is taken to ensure that the provision specified in their plans is delivered for each student. Residential staff also play a key role in supporting the wider learning of students who live-in, helping with a homework club for example.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Good

Provision for the welfare, health and safety of students is good and all of the independent school regulations to promote students' well-being are met. Senior staff have undertaken the required higher-level child protection training and all other staff have been trained effectively. The Priory Group has clear policies covering, for example, individual risk assessments and guidelines for the interaction between adults and young people. All necessary checks are undertaken on staff who are appointed in any capacity, including those in the residential provision and those who teach on a supply basis. Similarly, the necessary checks on those who work for the central Priory Group have been undertaken. Checks are recorded, as required, on a single central register. Senior staff in both the residential and education sides have undertaken training to ensure the safer recruitment of staff and nobody is allowed to start work until all the necessary enhanced safeguarding checks have been completed. The school works effectively with other agencies that have roles in child protection.

Protecting and promoting the well-being of students is a central aspect of how the school operates. Good-quality plans support the delivery of personalised care in both the residential and educational elements of provision. This includes provision for first aid and for students who are ill, although since residential students only stay from Monday to Thursday, they remain registered with their local medical practices throughout their time at Unsted Park.

Both the school and residential facilities provide a safe and secure environment. There is good provision for the management of risk and for addressing all aspects of safety associated with the premises and activities undertaken by students. Bullying is not a major issue, with effective procedures to eliminate bullying. Students are aware of bullying in its different forms, including cyber-bullying and the dangers of the misuse of social networking sites. Good behaviour is promoted through a clear policy based on the principle of sanctions and rewards that is enforced effectively by both residential and education staff.

Inspectors considered the current policies, procedures and practices in place regarding self-harm and found them to be appropriate. Staff and managers spoken to understood their duties and responsibilities, and would respond appropriately to any incidents of self-harming behaviour.

Leadership and management

Good

The quality of leadership is good, and has improved since the last inspection, and enables students to learn and achieve well, despite the current temporary lack of a headteacher. The Principal, who has overall responsibility for both the residential and education sides of the provision, has brought a clear vision, and has already introduced changes that have raised the quality of the provision, such as establishing the clearer separation of responsibilities so that staff work mainly in either the residential or the educational contexts. Staff questionnaires show morale is high, and in conversations with staff it is evident that they feel valued and involved. The adequacy, qualifications, training and professional development of boarding staff are good.

The school undertakes an annual self-evaluation which enables it to know itself well and to prioritise actions to sustain improvement through development planning. It is about to start on the revamping of the residential area of the buildings. This will improve facilities further, although in discussion with students who live-in, it is clear that they are happy with the current facilities. The leadership of the residential provision is both effective and efficient, with well-established systems ensuring things run smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Provision for the training of residential staff is good, although sometimes they do not feel fully confident in supporting students in some educational activities during the school day. The premises and accommodation, both the residential accommodation and those for education, are suitable. In classrooms, there are good facilities and equipment that effectively support learning.

Developments in the leadership of the education provision have focused around the creation of middle-leader roles. This has raised the effectiveness of monitoring in classrooms and of teachers' professional practice, for example through undertaking lesson observations, learning walks and scrutinies of students' work. In turn, this has freed-up senior leaders to operate more strategically, which is seen, for example, in the enhanced systems that have recently been developed for tracking students' progress and for target setting.

Parents, carers and local authorities receive all the required information and the complaints procedure meets requirements. The proprietors and leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards and the national minimum standards are met.

Whistle-blowing procedures are in place and staff spoken to were confident that, if concerned, they could raise a concern about practice at the school.

Outcomes for residential pupils

Good

Quality of residential provision and care

Good

Residential pupils' safety

Good

Leadership and management of the residential provision

Good

What inspection judgements mean

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

School details

Unique reference number	135419
Social care unique reference number	SC363144
Inspection number	423546
DfE registration number	936/6592

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. The inspection of residential provision 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	Independent
School status	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	7–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Number of part time pupils	1
Number of boarders on roll	16
Proprietor	The Priory Group
Chair	Helen Sharpe
Headteacher	Steven Dempsey
Date of previous school inspection	September 2011
Annual fees (day pupils)	£72,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£112,000
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