

# The Priory Lodge School

Priory Lane, London, SW15 5JJ

**Inspection dates** 29–31 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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

## Summary of key findings

### This school is good because

- It enables many pupils who have experienced severe anxieties and fragmented education to make good progress in returning to full-time education.
- As a result of good teaching, the pupils make good progress and make up lost ground so that they achieve accredited qualifications that prepare them well for life after school.
- There is good provision for the pupils' personal and emotional development. Thus they behave well and grow in confidence and self-esteem.
- The Principal has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and high expectations for the pupils and staff.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- In a minority of lessons the assessment of pupils' prior learning is not accurate enough to ensure they make good progress.
- Not all planned improvements to the curriculum have yet had time to be fully implemented.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with a day's notice.
- Eight lessons were observed including all teaching groups. Additional time was spent observing breaks and other learning activities.
- Meetings were held with senior members of the staff and a representative from the proprietorial body. Interviews were held with staff and pupils. Pupils' work was scrutinised, as were achievement records, policies, safeguarding checks and teachers' planning.
- The inspector considered the views of 31 members of staff and those of 15 parents and carers which were collected via Ofsted's online Parent View service. One parent or carer submitted additional views via email. No views were received from local authorities.

## Inspection team

Greg Sorrell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Priory Lodge School, first registered and opened in 2010, is an independent, co-educational day special school for pupils aged between five and 19 years of age. It is located in Roehampton, South West London.
- It is registered for up to 40 pupils and there are currently 35 on roll, aged between six and 18 years of age. There are 28 boys and seven girls and all have a statement of special educational needs in relation to autism, Asperger's syndrome and other associated complex learning and emotional needs. One is in the care of their local authority. All pupils have histories of interrupted schooling. All except one is funded by their local authority; there are currently 14 referring local authorities from London and the Home Counties.
- The school aims to 'enable pupils to become successful learners, responsible citizens and confident individuals'.
- The school makes use of a range of off-site venues for physical education, vocational studies and further education. The school was last inspected in March 2011.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
  - ensuring that all teacher assessment of prior learning is accurate and used to provide precise learning objectives in lessons and set targets in individual education plans
  - ensuring that marking of pupils' work and feedback are informative to pupils so that they can improve their work even further.
- Fully implement the draft curriculum policy, including the plans to improve the quality of extra-curricular provision, and evaluate its effectiveness.
- Consult with parents and carers about the scope and nature of homework so that they can contribute as fully as possible to their children's education.

## Inspection judgements

### Pupils' achievement

**Good**

The pupils' achievements are good. This is due to good teaching, a relevant curriculum and the school's effectiveness in addressing the pupils' special educational needs which often include acute anxiety and phobias. On entry, pupils' attainment is typically below average. In large part this is due to unsettled educational histories and sometimes prolonged periods out of formal education.

Despite the majority of pupils only being on roll for just over one term, there is evidence that pupils make good progress. The pupils improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills in English, mathematics and other subjects across the curriculum. They also make good progress in speaking and listening which has a positive impact on their communication skills. This improved engagement with learning and teachers' multi-sensory approach ensure that the younger pupils particularly make good progress. When appropriate the older pupils take accredited courses at various ages and levels. In Key Stages 4 and 5, pupils access vocational courses at a local school where they achieve success in a range of courses accredited by BTEC and the National Open College Network at Entry Levels 1 and 2 in motor mechanics, construction and care of farm animals. At school the pupils achieve passes at Entry Level, Functional Skills, and GCSE in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, drama and personal finance. Pupils also achieve awards in personal effectiveness through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). At the end of the last academic year, one pupil who attended the school since its opening achieved the highest grade possible in A-level art.

### Pupils' behaviour and personal development

**Good**

The pupils' behaviour and personal development are good. They enjoy school and show positive attitudes in the majority of lessons. Almost all parents and carers indicated that their children were happy and safe at school and all parents and carers agreed that their child was well looked after. These views were confirmed in discussions with pupils who also reported that they felt free from bullying and were confident to share problems with staff they trust. One said, 'The school has done a lot for me. I've been helped with my learning and I get on much better with people. I experienced a lot of bullying at my other schools, but not here.' Further discussion included a valid request for more choice of activities at lunchtime: school plans to increase extra-curricular provision have yet to be implemented. All pupils have behaviour support plans and comprehensive risk assessments. School records indicate a reduction in incidents, although a very small minority present challenging behaviour that requires additional intervention programmes. Attendance is good overall and for some pupils, this is a major achievement compared to previous placements. This is a result of improved self-esteem and confidence, particularly in the key area of relationships and communication.

The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In lessons, pupils increasingly demonstrate the ability to work with others and a range of adults. During the inspection, many pupils freely spoke to the inspector to extend greetings and shared views. These social skills reduce their barriers to learning and prepare them well for life outside school and some get an early opportunity through work experience. Off-site horse-riding and swimming in the community sometimes includes young people who have severe learning difficulties. The relationship with this group contributes to the pupils' understanding of diversity. The vast majority of pupils understand right and wrong; they know and understand the school's reward and sanctions systems. Through personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), they develop an age-appropriate sense of British institutions, democracy and personal safety. For example, older pupils are given guidance about extremism, undue peer pressure and dangers posed by gang membership. All pupils have a vote for school council membership and the chosen few make their voices heard on behalf of their peers. The curriculum is free from partisan political

bias and includes studies of other faiths and encourages the pupils to respect their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between diverse sectors of society.

### Quality of teaching

**Good**

The quality of teaching is good and promotes the pupils' good progress. Although most teachers have only been in post for just over a term they work well as a team and serve as effective role models for pupils. The teachers possess suitable subject knowledge to meet the needs of the curriculum as well as relevant experience in the pupils' special educational needs. They are also well supported by knowledgeable teaching assistants, some of whom are studying for higher degrees in education.

The school's senior leaders have recognised the importance of accurate assessment to inform teachers' planning. At the start of this academic year, the new teachers inherited some inaccurate assessments made by staff no longer at the school. The establishment of accurate assessment is well under way and most teachers plan suitable lessons that match the pupils' current needs. The strongest teaching is supported by accurate assessments of pupils' learning that subsequently inform future lesson plans and are also based on teachers' evaluations of their own teaching. For example, in a Key Stage 2 lesson with a clear communication focus, the pupils were very well supported by well-informed staff who used accurate assessments effectively to provide multi-sensory experiences. These included tasks where the pupils had to find matching descriptions of 'people who help us' in a tray of lentils while others used torches in a darkened room to discover the matching pictures. Another strong feature of teaching is the supported use of internet distance learning with pupils who are working towards full-time attendance. When these pupils do attend school they are able to continue these studies under the guidance of skilled teachers. In a minority of lessons, the pupils' achievements were reduced because learning objectives were not sufficiently precise and led to tasks not sufficiently matched to their needs.

The staff use a wide range of effective techniques to manage the pupils' behaviour so that any interruptions to learning are minimised. Good use is made of behavioural targets in pupils' individual education plans although not all academic targets are sufficiently based on assessments of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. There are some good examples of marking that provide useful feedback and encouragement for pupils to do even better, although not all marking is sufficiently helpful. Some teachers make excellent use of video to capture pupils' learning and often use this in feedback to pupils. There is evidence that recent written reports have a much sharper focus on pupils' academic progress and not just their behaviour and engagement.

The large majority of parents and carers agree that their children are taught well and make good progress. Their biggest concern is about homework where less than half felt their children received age-appropriate homework. Discussions with senior leaders confirm that the issuing of homework is inconsistent and improved communication between the school and home about its format and purpose is required.

### Quality of curriculum

**Good**

The quality of the curriculum is good. School leaders are currently implementing a review of the curriculum and supporting policies to establish even clearer pathways for all pupils. Although the proposed improvements are not yet fully implemented, the curriculum has many strengths and has a positive impact on the pupils' achievements and personal development. It also meets the requirements of the pupils' statements of special educational needs. The curriculum is supported by comprehensive schemes of work to ensure that there is an appropriate balance of learning experiences. There is a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and social communication as befits the school's specialism, while maintaining a suitable emphasis on academic achievement and pupils' personal development.

There is a good range of interventions for pupils that are designed to meet their diverse special educational needs. These include therapy programmes, social stories and specific support to develop sustainable relationships with family, peers and staff. This holistic approach is also embraced within PSHCE.

The curriculum offers good careers education and preparation for life beyond school. For example, for secondary aged and post-16 pupils the timetable includes lessons in employability, enterprise and personal finance. Other activities include work experience and access to a range of accredited courses at a local vocational centre, including motor vehicle engineering, animal care and construction skills. There are few opportunities for the pupils to engage in extra-curricular activities and the pupils have indicated that they would like more interesting things to do at lunchtime.

### **Pupils' welfare, health and safety**

**Good**

The provision for the pupils' welfare, health and safety is good and meets the requirements for independent schools. The school's effective practice is supported by an appropriate range of policies, including safeguarding and child protection. The staff work hard to maximise pupils' attendance and have a wide range of successful strategies for those who exhibit acute anxiety in social situations generally and schools specifically. These include 'graduated provision plans' which are phased attendance programmes and personalised learning plans. The pupils' therapeutic needs are served well by the therapy team which provides access to speech and language therapy, educational psychology, psychiatry and occupational therapy. This multi-disciplinary team offers highly-valued guidance to school staff which promotes a holistic approach.

The PSHCE and science curriculum offers pupils guidance about keeping themselves safe in respect of drugs, alcohol, social media and relationships. Clear policy guidance and staff vigilance ensure an effective awareness of bullying in all its forms. There are effective arrangements to ensure the suitability of all staff to work with children, including agency staff. All required checks are made and are recorded appropriately on a single central register. The designated child protection officer is very experienced and all staff have undergone child protection training at the appropriate level and intervals. Suitable training is also provided in safe restraint, fire safety, first aid, health and safety, and risk assessments. Regular fire drills and health and safety checks are implemented rigorously. Recent attention to admission and attendance registers ensures they are properly maintained.

Almost all parents and carers indicated that their children were happy and safe at school and all parents and carers agreed felt that their child was well looked after. These views were confirmed in discussions with pupils who also reported that they felt free from bullying and were confident to share problems with staff they trust.

### **Leadership and management**

**Good**

The quality of the leadership and management is good. The school has changed significantly since the last inspection, notably in senior leadership, staffing and the number of pupils on roll which has risen five-fold. In post for less than two years, the Principal has demonstrated a strong and successful commitment to school improvement. These high expectations are reflected by the comprehensive programme of classroom observations and school development planning with a clear focus on the curriculum, particularly literacy, numeracy and opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation. The strong focus on the pupils' academic achievement is underpinned by a highly appropriate emphasis on the pupils' communication skills and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The pace of implementation of all developments slowed but did not stall due to unavoidable absence last term. Although most teachers have been in post for just over a term, there is good evidence that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection. There are regular minuted daily and weekly meetings with senior leaders and all staff that focus on key issues, including safeguarding, achievement and the quality of teaching and

learning. Self-evaluation is accurate and provides solid evidence of sustained improvement and continued compliance with all independent school regulations.

The staff survey showed unanimous pride in working at the school and similarly strong support for the school's leadership and management. A few staff felt that there was insufficient provision for their professional development, which in large part is due to being new to the school and not yet accessing much training other than that related to safeguarding. The large majority of parents and carers feel that the school is well led and managed, their concerns are addressed and they would be happy to recommend the school to other parents and carers. The premises and accommodation are good and meet the standards required to provide safe and effective learning. The proprietor provides good support through regular monitoring, support, challenge and guidance in all aspects of education, pastoral care, therapy, premises and safeguarding. The proprietor also ensures that parents, carers, placing authorities and others receive accurate and up-to-date information. Formal complaints are few and are managed in accordance with a policy which meets the standard required of independent schools.

## 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 the quality of education has serious weaknesses.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136110
<b>Inspection number</b>	440225
<b>DfE registration number</b>	212/6041
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School status</b>	Independent
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	35
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Priory Education Services
<b>Chair</b>	Helen Sharpe
<b>Principal</b>	Mrs Lucy Wood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	March 2011
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£45,000 – £65,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8392 4410
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8392 4415
<b>Email address</b>	thepriorylodeschool@priorygroup.com

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