

# Unsted Park School

Munstead Heath Road, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1UW

## Inspection dates

14–15 January 2014

## Reason for inspection

This unannounced inspection was conducted by Ofsted at the request of the Department for Education. The purpose was to judge whether the school has sustained improvement since its last inspection in July 2013, particularly in relation to the school's leadership and management, and the implementation of safeguarding, self-harm and whistleblowing policies.

## Conclusions

Her Majesty's Inspector toured the school during lessons to observe staffing levels and the general climate for learning. He also visited the residential provision in the evening. The social care inspector visited the residential accommodation and held discussions with care managers and staff. Inspectors met with senior leaders for education and for residential care, and groups of staff which included teachers, therapists, care workers and support staff. The views of students were gained through informal discussions and through meetings with groups of students, including both day and residential students. Telephone conversations were held with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for safeguarding, a small number of parents and the Operations Director (Education) at the Priority Group. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's recruitment procedures, students' files, child protection and incident records, and policies for safeguarding, health and safety, behaviour, complaints and whistleblowing.

Since the last full inspection in July 2013, there have been several staff changes, especially in senior positions. An acting headteacher led the school during the autumn term 2013. She left at the end of November, and the assistant headteacher left at the end of December. An experienced headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school in January 2014. In a relatively short time, the new leaders have set a clear direction for the school. They are highly visible around the school, and staff, and parents who have met them, report that they are approachable and have a good understanding of the needs of the students. Senior leaders have already clarified the roles and responsibilities of staff and strengthened several procedures, including those for the induction and supervision of staff. However, they are aware that some procedures lack rigour and have not always been followed consistently in the past.

The school's policies and procedures provide staff with appropriate guidance for the day-to-day care and safeguarding of students. Staff are clear about how they would take appropriate action to manage any incidents of self-harm. Procedures for the recruitment of staff and checks on their suitability to work with children meet requirements. Training for child protection is up to date for staff and for the current designated child protection officers.

The school provides an orderly environment where students feel they learn well. During the inspection, harmonious relationships were observed between staff and students, and

between students themselves, both in the residential house and around the school. Students are encouraged to take responsibility and to do things for themselves, for example when they organise games or cook their own meals. A small minority of students display anxious and challenging behaviour linked to their special educational needs. Approximately two incidents occur on average each week. Students report that generally they feel safe and that staff manage the rare incidents requiring physical intervention in 'an autistic-friendly way'. However, some would like more information and reassurance at an early stage following disturbing incidents.

There are weaknesses in the recording of incidents requiring sanctions and physical intervention, and in the risk assessments of individual students. Taken together, these weaknesses limit the ability of staff to analyse recent information and to respond accordingly. While incidents are recorded, there is sometimes a delay in completing written records and they are not collated centrally to give a clear overview. Senior leaders recognise that, in the past term, a few incidents requiring sanctions were not recorded as required. A few placement plans and risk assessments are not updated sufficiently and do not indicate clearly how the school plans to manage changes in a robust manner. There is good communication between staff in the school, although there is an over-reliance on verbal communication and, as a result, written records are not always detailed.

An appropriate personal, social and health education programme covers such topics as e-safety and sex and relationships education. There have been incidents of inappropriate use of the internet, but staff have worked closely with parents and carers to agree positive action. Staff are currently involving students in updating policies to ensure that they are better understood, for example on behaviour and anti-bullying.

The school has a complaints policy which sets out the arrangements for handling complaints. However, there is evidence to suggest that in the past it has not been implemented consistently to record complaints made to the school. The school has a clear whistleblowing policy. Staff hold positive views about the school and morale has been lifted following the appointment of a permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher. They report that senior leaders listen to them and that they could raise any issues or concerns.

### **Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools**

#### **The school requires improvement and must take action to meet The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010 ('the Regulations'), and associated requirements**

Provide for written records to be kept of all complaints, indicating whether they were resolved at the preliminary stage or whether they proceeded to a panel hearing. Paragraph 25(j)

#### **The school must meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools**

A written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention (records may include the information in Appendix 2). The record is made within 24 hours of the sanction being applied and is legible. Children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records. The school regularly reviews any instances of the use of physical intervention NMS 12.6

restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice.

The school has, and follows, an appropriate policy on responding to complaints that is compliant with the relevant regulatory requirements. NMS 18

The school produces a written placement plan, agreed as far as is practicable with the child, the child's parents/carers and any placing authority for the child, unless the information is held elsewhere such as in the child's statement of special educational needs. The placement plan identifies the needs of that child that the school should meet and specifies how the school will care for the child and promote their welfare on a day-to-day basis. Where significant changes are made to the placement plan, there is appropriate consultation. Where applicable, the plan is consistent with the care plan of the placing authority for any child placed by a local authority. The placement plan is regularly reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect significant changes in the child's needs or progress in his or her development. Where feasible, children in the school are aware of the content of their placement plans, and confirm that the school is providing care for them that is consistent with the plans. NMS 21.1

## Inspection team

Andrew Redpath HMI, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tola Akinde-Hummel

Social Care Inspector

## 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 at school.
- There are currently 67 students on roll, of whom 18 are resident and four are girls. 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.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school in January 2014. A Principal has overall responsibility for the education and residential provision.
- The school opened in October 2007. Its last full integrated inspection was in July 2013.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135419
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC363144
<b>Inspection number</b>	434478
<b>DfE registration number</b>	936/6592
<p>This inspection was conducted at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. It was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005.</p> <p>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.</p>	
<b>Type of school</b>	Independent
<b>School status</b>	Independent residential special school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	67
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	1
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	18
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Priory Group
<b>Chair</b>	Helen Sharpe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steven Dempsey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 July 2013
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£72,000
<b>Annual fees (boarders)</b>	£112,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	01483 892061
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