

# Clay Hill School

Clay Hill, Lyndhurst, Hampshire, SO43 7DE

<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 June 2014	
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good school

- Activities and approaches are tailor-made for each pupil. These are based on the extensive understanding staff have of autism and their careful discussions with, and observations of, individuals.
- Pupils' academic achievements, especially in literacy, communication and mathematics, are given a high priority. Although none of the pupils have been at the school long, they are all achieving well.
- Strong teamwork contributes to effective teaching and care. Staff at all levels frequently share observations and experiences. Ideas from all staff are used to develop sensitive and extensive programmes for all the pupils
- Pupils behave well because they feel listened to and because the anxieties and challenges they face are supported effectively. Systems for safeguarding are fully in place.
- The school is led and managed well. There is a strong emphasis on teaching and achievement. The proprietors have close contact with the school and make sure that all requirements are in place.
- Parents are happy with the school and are positive about all that it offers to their children.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The use of visual communication systems, such as symbols and pictures, specified in pupils' statements of special educational needs, are underdeveloped. This slightly reduces the quality of learning for these pupils as well as their achievement and behaviour.
- Leaders and managers do not always check some minor fine details in written documents carefully enough to make sure that these are fully accurate or easy to understand.

### 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) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with a day's notice.
- The inspector visited five lessons, taught by the teacher or a higher-level teaching assistant. She talked with the pupils in and out of lessons, looked at their work, heard them read and had lunch with them in the dining hall. As there were very few pupils and a very high staff ratio, none of the observations were conducted with senior staff.
- Discussions were held with a senior representative from the proprietors, the Principal, headteacher, and other members of the staff team.
- There were too few responses to the online Parent View questionnaire to generate results. The inspector received the views of parents through telephone discussions. No questionnaire responses were available from local authorities.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' progress, pupils' work, the school's development plan, planning and monitoring documents, as well as documents relating to safeguarding and records relating to behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Jo Curd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Clay Hill is a new independent, co-educational special school owned by the Priory Group. It was registered in 2013 and opened in April 2014. It is registered to provide full-time education for up to 25 pupils, aged from five to 19 years, who have autism and possible associated learning difficulties.
- Up to 14 of the pupils can be accommodated weekly, termly or for 52 weeks a year, in the Priory Group's residential accommodation.
- Some of the pupils have had difficult starts in schools elsewhere and/or extensive periods when they did not attend school at all.
- The school is situated in extensive National Trust grounds in the New Forest. It shares a Principal with neighbouring Coxlease School, for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. This is also owned by the Priory Group.
- As the school is newly opened, there were very few pupils on roll at the time of the inspection. All current pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Eight new students, all of whom also have such statements, have accepted places to start the school in July 2014.
- The school currently has a Principal, headteacher, teacher and higher-level teaching assistant. It shares some staff, including a head of therapeutic support, with Coxlease. Two more teachers and three teaching assistants have been appointed to start in July 2014.
- There are currently no middle leaders in post.
- The school provides off-site provision for a few activities.
- The school's main aim is 'to create a safe and secure environment, in which individuals are enabled to achieve their full potential, by providing them with diverse learning opportunities'.
- This is the school's first full inspection.

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

- Improve pupils' ability to concentrate and their understanding by extending the use of visual forms of communication, as specified in their statements of special educational needs.
- Ensure leaders check the fine details in written documentation even more carefully to make sure that what is written is fully accurate and easy to understand.

## Inspection judgements

### Achievement of pupils

**Good**

- Although it is very early days, all the pupils are achieving well. They are settled in class and keen to work. Observations of lessons and pupils' work show that pupils have made good progress since they arrived at the school. This is because teaching is good and programmes for learning are broad and effective.
- Pupils achieve well in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. This is because these features are given priority and included in the varied and suitable activities undertaken throughout the day. Pupils read confidently and fluently. Staff help them understand vocabulary and the meaning of what they have read.
- Those who are more able progress well. Staff have high expectations for them, explain work clearly and provide a stimulating learning environment. Some pupils, who entered the school with Level 4 mathematics, have already moved on to much higher work which is well suited to their ability.
- Pupils make good progress in physical education because the programme for this subject is varied and fun. Activities such as horse riding and swimming help their physical skills, health and well-being.
- Suitable activities and high expectations are helping all the pupils achieve well. Individuals are valued and supported and so that all have an equal opportunity to do well. The requirements of pupils' statements of special educational needs are met. Achievement very occasionally slows because pupils are not always able to understand verbal explanations or requests.

### Quality of teaching

**Good**

- Effective teaching helps the pupils achieve well. They settle quickly and gain confidence and motivation to do well.
- Pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning. They come to school smiling, ready and prepared to learn. Daily routines, such as sensory tasks each morning, help to develop their powers of concentration and reduce any anxiety.
- The school day is structured effectively and includes a suitable range of learning activities. English and mathematics are given priority. Other subjects are covered well through, for example, visits out and project-based learning, such as a topic on Mexico in which pupils are learning music, art and geography.
- Pupils develop their skills in reading, writing, communicating and using mathematics well, because there are many opportunities to do so in the different activities provided. For example, pupils were reading mathematical problems in class, communicating with different adults and then using money on a trip to a café.
- Reading is promoted effectively through a well-established scheme. Staff readily adapt and supplement this when necessary to help all pupils achieve well.
- Staff give pupils appropriate homework each school day. This helps to promote their academic achievement and personal development. Teamwork between staff is strong. Teaching assistants work effectively with teachers to help pupils overcome any individual barriers to learning. For example, pupils who are highly sensitive to noise are given individual support in quiet classrooms. Those with very short attention spans are able to take breaks or change tasks as needed.
- Very occasionally, largely due to their specific disabilities, pupils lose concentration on what is being said verbally; this slightly slows their progress. Although statements of special educational needs specify that visual communication, such as symbols and pictures, would be helpful to pupils, opportunities to use these are currently fairly limited. Where they are used, for example in the cloakroom and dining hall, they are beneficial.

**Behaviour and safety of pupils****Good**

- Pupils behave well. There is minimal inappropriate behaviour or low-level disruption in class or around the school. This is because the school is organised well to meet pupils' needs and help prepare pupils for life in the wider community. Routines are clear, consistent and adjusted for individual pupils. Staff are knowledgeable, skilled and sensitive in their approach to the pupils.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes towards, and confidence in, their learning. Some pupils who have been out of school for many months, initially said they would not go into class for several weeks after they entered the school. However, because of good support, they actually joined lessons within two days.
- Pupils learn to take on responsibilities. They contribute to the school and local community. They helped to interview new staff, showed prospective parents and pupils around the school and helped host a visit from the local mayor.
- Attendance is currently 100%. This is because pupils are keen to come to school, relationships are positive and communication with parents and residential support staff is good.
- Systems to safeguard pupils are all in place and fully implemented. Communication between staff within the school and with residential care staff is frequent and detailed. Links focus well on pupils' academic achievement as well as their personal and social development. All staff are aware of any challenges pupils are experiencing and adjust their expectations and support accordingly. Any activities off site are carefully assessed for risks.
- The environment is peaceful, well kept and inspiring. Resources are attractive and of good quality. These, along with teaching about different cultures and visits out, all help to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils say they feel safe and are confident in talking to staff about any anxieties or worries. They quickly build relationships with staff because they know that they are valued and respected. They are beginning to form relationships with each other and are at the very early stages of working and relaxing together.
- Pupils have an appropriate understanding of different types of bullying and are confident that it would not be tolerated at the school.

**Leadership and management****Good**

- The Principal and headteacher provide positive role models to all the staff and the whole school community. They are friendly, sensitive and respectful. They successfully help staff and pupils to develop and enable everyone to express their views and contribute to improving the school.
- Leaders have a strong focus on academic achievement and the overall personal development of all pupils. The Principal's innovative style has introduced an effective approach to reviewing and improving the quality of teaching. This includes planning, gathering pupils' views and looking at pupils' work.
- Learning is well managed. Leaders ensure staff have suitable subject knowledge and that there is an appropriate classroom environment. They monitor teaching well and evaluate it in terms of its impact on pupils' achievement. A clear system of performance management is helping all staff focus on constantly improving their work.
- Leaders, managers and all staff are vigilant about safety. All teaching staff discuss pupils' welfare at the beginning and end of each day. These discussions have a clear well-focused agenda which makes sure that safety is paramount.
- Proprietors gain a detailed understanding of the school through frequent visits and telephone conversations. As the school opened only very recently the proprietors are still developing their understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They are evaluating how staff are to be rewarded for successful practice.
- The school's partnership with Coxlease has positive effects. Staff share relevant training and seek each other's advice when needed. For example, the school's teacher received helpful

guidance from a specialist mathematics teacher at Coxlease in designing more advanced work for a new pupil.

- Leaders are developing strong links with the local community. The mayor opened the school and pupils visit local cafés and the library. The Principal and headteacher are involved in local schools' forums and host training sessions on autism for staff in local maintained schools.
- Leaders and managers have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, which they are using to drive improvements. However, they do not always rigorously check that written information and records are fully accurate, contain no minor flaws and that they are easy to understand. However, they rectify any errors as soon as these are identified.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate
<p>Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the <i>Non-association independent school inspection handbook</i> which is published on the Ofsted website: <a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053">www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053</a>.</p>	

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140046
<b>Inspection number</b>	443029
<b>DfE registration number</b>	850/6090

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–19 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	2
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Priory Group
<b>Chair</b>	Not applicable
<b>Headteacher</b>	Karen Gaster (Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not applicable
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£45,000 – £95,000
<b>Telephone number</b>	02380 283633
<b>Fax number</b>	Not applicable
<b>Email address</b>	karengaster@priorygroup.com



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