

# Unsted Park School

Munstead Heath Road, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1UW

## Inspection dates

30 April 2014 – 1 May 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 is appropriately addressing the failings identified at the previous emergency inspection of January 2014 as well as to consider current safeguarding arrangements..

## Conclusions

Her Majesty's Inspectors (schools and social care) met with the Principal, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the head of care. Inspectors attended school assembly, a morning staff briefing, met formally and informally with staff and students, including boarders. Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents and considered the responses to the school's most recent parent survey as well as the responses to Parent View (Ofsted's on-line questionnaire). Inspectors spent time in the residential provision, particularly assessing the effectiveness of arrangements to ensure residential students' safety and wellbeing. Inspectors also met with a senior representative of The Priory Group. Lessons in all key stages, including the sixth form were visited.

Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentary evidence relating to both education and welfare including the school's complaints policy, child protection records and the safeguarding policy, records of sanctions, risk assessments, placement plans, curriculum policies, monitoring records, evidence of staff training and school improvement planning documentation. Procedures for recruitment, including pre-employment checks were also examined.

Policies and staff training linked to safeguarding are up to date. New members of staff receive guidance and training as part of the induction process. The head of care has completed required training to act as a designated child protection officer, although his role in this respect is not sufficiently formalised. Plans exist for the headteacher to undertake the same training. Arrangements to train key staff and formalise safeguarding roles have been slow. E-safety is considered as part of the overarching safeguarding policy. Training and information is regularly conveyed to students and staff including through assemblies and guest speakers, such as a police talk on 'Cyber Safety'. Restrictions are in place on school computers forbidding access to unsuitable sites. However, there have been incidents of students possessing inappropriate materials, for example on personal mobile phones. There is no system whereby students can report an incident of e-safety anonymously.

HMI considered records of, and responses to, concerns raised by parents as well as more general communication. Results of a recent parent survey and minutes from the newly established parent forum were scrutinised. These identify a commitment on the part of the school to increase parental involvement in reviewing policies and practices, as well as to

promote active participation from families in school life. There is a clear indication that parental confidence in school leadership is increasing from a low base. Previous failings relating to written records of complaints have been addressed and, in accordance with the action plan, staff, students and parents are being informed of updates to the complaints policy and what to do should they have a complaint.

Students generally feel positive about school and understand that adults are there to help them. They report that there are incidents of disruptive behaviour and that students and adults are aware of the hierarchy of sanctions and that these are usually fairly applied. Day students report feeling safe in school. Students identified positive changes since the appointment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher including their willingness to listen to and show respect for students' opinions. Students all felt confident that they received helpful feedback from staff about their learning and what they needed to work on next.

Since January 2014, the headteacher and deputy headteacher have firmly established themselves as highly motivated and determined leaders ambitious to improve the quality of education and outcomes for the students of Unsted Park School. A school improvement plan is in place, which responds to the concerns in the previous inspection and emergency inspection and includes a focus on staff development particularly for those in middle management positions. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is regular, feedback is precise and areas for improvement are detailed, giving staff a clear understanding of what they must do to improve. Teaching staff are clear about what is expected from them and have performance management targets appropriately linked to students' progress.

Inspectors conclude that the headteacher and deputy headteacher hold a precise view of what more needs to be done to strengthen education provision further. Furthermore, they demonstrate the leadership ability to drive improvements rapidly and to secure at least good teaching and good rates of students' progress as a minimum expectation.

The school has made progress in addressing the three national minimum standards (NMS) for residential special schools unmet at the last inspection. The complaints policy has been revised, briefings have taken place with staff and students to clarify the process and this standard is now met.

The school has reviewed how they record physical restraints and are planning to introduce a new recording format which will include all the required information such as the date the record was made, the views of the student involved and the effectiveness of the restraint. The new system of recording has yet to be introduced and there are still gaps in the existing record such as the date of the entry and recording the views of the student. As a result, this NMS remains unmet.

File sampling showed some placement plans are more up-to-date than others. A new format has been devised and is being worked on. Targets and goals for individual students are very separate in terms of education/care/therapy. A more co-ordinated and shared approach is strongly recommended. The format for placement plans has been reviewed and a number of the new style placement plans are on the residential students' files. Not all the placement plans have been completed and so this NMS remains unmet.

The residential provision encourages the educational, personal, social and cultural development of students' lives. Residential staff know students and their individual needs

well and relationships are positive. Residential students are suitably prepared for adult life and a number of students shop and cook some of their evening meals, which they enjoy. Effective health care arrangements are in place including the safe storage of medication.

There are staffing vacancies and although these vacancies have been filled, subject to recruitment checks, staff report that they are 'stretched' and that this is having an impact on the amount of quality time they are able to spend with students as well as reducing the time they are able to spend on completing records. Other school staff are used to cover gaps as far as possible in order to minimise the use of agency staff. The staff covering shortages, including agency staff, are provided with minimal written information regarding students and no information regarding immediate and potential risks. This results in staff being unaware of safeguarding concerns or how to respond in a medical emergency and does not sufficiently protect residential students.

The boarding accommodation is located within the school block and some areas appear institutional. However, there is a programme of refurbishment and improvement in place and since the last inspection, the sixth form bathrooms have been refurbished and a new large kitchen and dining room has been added. Both refurbishments are of good quality. Robust health and safety checks are in place.

Staff are aware of the safeguarding policies and regularly use them to report incidents. The child protection policy is comprehensive and is regularly reviewed in consultation with the local authority. The school is planning to increase the number of staff trained at a senior level across the different disciplines at the school, which is a positive move. Procedures for the recruitment of staff and checks on their suitability to work with children meet requirements. Child protection training for all staff takes place regularly and last took place in January 2014.

There are some weaknesses in the recording of child protection incidents. Entries vary in quality and records do not contain all the information to gain an accurate overview of all child protection concerns or the reasons to explain why not every incident has been referred to the local authority.

There are weaknesses in the school's arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of students at the school. There are gaps in records which do not indicate how students' needs have been safeguarded. For example, one student went missing and neither the risk assessment (which did not indicate any risks from absconding), nor the behaviour management plan had been updated as a result of this incident. This does not make it clear how such risks will be minimised or managed in the future.

Limitations were found regarding individual students' risk assessments. Not all student files contain them and they are of variable quality. The risk assessments are written by the residential staff and do not make use of the knowledge of the therapy and education staff working with that student. An approach whereby education, therapy and residential staff work together on areas such as behaviour management, care planning and risk assessment would ensure a more comprehensive and integrated approach to meeting students' needs.

The school has installed alarms to the bedroom doors of residential students which alert the waking night staff when a door is opened during the night. There was a delay in completing the installation which was considered necessary following an incident and the

school has not carried out a risk assessment to assess whether this surveillance measure is needed for all students and to ensure that it does not intrude unreasonably on them. Parents and placing authorities have not been consulted or informed of the installation of the alarm system.

Inspectors conclude that there are continuing weaknesses in the school's arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of students, with flaws being identified in record keeping systems and in communication with staff, the local authority and placing authorities and parents with regard to one specific matter. Progress has been made in addressing the weaknesses identified at the last inspection, but two of the three national minimum standards for residential special schools remain unmet. Progress should be accelerated so that all standards are met.

### **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**

Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Paragraph 7

Arrangements are in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders and arrangements have regard for the national minimum standards for residential special schools. Paragraph 8

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

The school ensures that:

- arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and NMS 11
- such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State

a written record is kept of major sanctions and the use of any physical intervention. Records may include the information in Appendix 2 (use of physical restraint). 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 restraint and examines trends or issues to enable staff to reflect and learn in a way that will inform future practice NMS 12.6

all existing care staff have attained a relevant minimum level 3 qualification or have qualifications which demonstrate the same competencies. All new staff engaged from the commencement of these standards hold these qualifications or begin working towards them within 3 months of NMS 19.2

confirmation of employment

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 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

Hilary Macdonald, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lucy Martin	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sophie Wood	Social Care Regulatory 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.
- The school caters for young people with Asperger's Syndrome and high functioning autistic spectrum disorders. Students have a history of disrupted education or non-attendance at school.
- There are currently 67 students on roll, of whom 19 are resident. The vast majority of students, including all of the boarders are boys.
- Students are taught in small groups and have access to a range of supporting professionals including therapists, a counsellor and an educational psychologist.
- The school opened in October 2007. Its last full integrated inspection was in July 2013. An emergency inspection took place in January 2014.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined the school in January 2014. There is a head of care. A Principal has overall responsibility for the education and residential provision.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	135419
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC363144
<b>Inspection number</b>	444923
<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 years
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	67
<b>Number of part time pupils</b>	0
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	19
<b>Proprietor</b>	The Priory Group
<b>Chair</b>	Helen Sharpe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Steven Dempsey (Principal)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 January 2014
<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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