

The Old Priory School

Priory Road, Ramsgate, CT11 9PG

Inspection dates 23–25 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- Students with negative prior experiences of education develop positive attitudes to school. As a result, they make strong progress with their learning and achieve well.
- Good teaching is informed by an excellent understanding of the complex emotional and social characteristics of each student. Learning tasks and activities are planned effectively to ensure that each student experiences success.
- The school provides a safe environment in which students feel secure and valued. Arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and implemented consistently. Students behave well and their behaviour is well managed by staff.
- Senior leaders are ambitious for students to achieve well. They provide sensitive and well-informed support to students and staff which enables successful learning to take place.
- The headteacher has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths as a result of rigorous arrangements for checking on the quality of teaching and students' personal development. Actions for improvement are planned systematically and implemented effectively.
- The proprietors provide strong support and appropriate challenge to school leaders and staff. Working closely with the headteacher, they have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching and students' achievement are not outstanding.
- Arrangements for the assessment of students' progress are not precise enough to measure small steps in learning over short periods of time.
- The school does not have a consistent approach to ensure continuous learning for any student finding it difficult to respond positively to classroom activities.
- Students do not read widely and often to a high standard.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed students' learning on all four school sites, together with examples of their written and practical work in a range of subjects.
- Discussions were held with a number of school staff and proprietors, and informally with a number of students. Responses to inspection questionnaires completed by 10 members of staff were considered.
- There were too few responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire for these to be taken into account. The quality of the school's relationship with parents, carers and placing authorities was considered in records of review meetings involving all partners.
- A number of school policies, procedures and records were scrutinised to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

David Young, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Old Priory School is located in the premises of a former local authority primary school in Ramsgate, Kent. It is owned and run by Ethelbert Children's Services.
- Additional sites at Park Lane and Eastry are used to provide vocational education in a number of areas of learning. A further site at Manston provides full-time education for a small number of students who require specialised small-group provision.
- The school is registered to admit up to 30 boys and girls across all four sites. Students placed at the school are almost all in local authority care. The majority live in residential accommodation, or with foster parents, arranged by the company.
- Students are placed at the school as a result of their complex emotional and social difficulties. They have experienced disruption and a lack of continuity in their previous education. A large majority of the current students have been placed at the school for less than 12 months.
- There are currently 25 full-time students, aged 11 to 17 years, on the roll of the school. The school does not operate a separate sixth form. Permission has been received from the Department for Education (DfE) to admit a small number of students aged 17 years into Year 11.
- Twelve students have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school aims, 'to provide a child centred environment that meets the individual learning needs of all students... through a varied and creative curriculum that develops physical, cognitive, emotional and social skills'.
- The school was last inspected in February 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that each small step in students' achievement is assessed reliably to provide a more precise record of their progress over each term.
- Ensure consistent arrangements to continue the learning of any student experiencing short-term difficulty coping with the demands of the classroom.
- Develop agreed arrangements, in cooperation with students' homes, to improve students' literacy skills through regular reading.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides exemplary leadership and high expectations for what students can achieve in a short time. She works extremely effectively with proprietors and parents to understand those details of students' life histories which have contributed to their barriers to learning. As a result, the staff have created an environment in which students experience security and form strong, positive relationships with staff.
- Senior leaders ensure that the quality of teaching is good through regular observation of what is happening in classrooms and off-site activities. Each member of staff meets regularly with a senior staff member to discuss their work, agree targets and identify areas for improvement and personal development. These arrangements place an effective focus on students' achievement and progress.
- The headteacher has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and involves all staff in identifying areas for improvement. Since the time of the previous inspection there have been positive developments, for example in the range of subjects and courses available to students and their access to external accreditation.
- The school's curriculum leader and pastoral manager provide excellent support for staff in the day-to-day management of students' behaviour and engagement with school activities. Effective support is provided for staff in the analysis and improvement of students' learning through the expertise of the school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCO).
- The continuous development of subject teaching, oversight of the school's off-site provision, speech and language therapy and a range of additional responsibilities are shared effectively by a number of middle leaders. There is considerable strength in the manner in which staff work cooperatively in challenging circumstances.
- The school ensures equality of opportunity for all students. The combined quality of the work of all staff has a considerable positive impact on the life chances of disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs.
- The school makes effective provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. An assembly on 'well-being' during the inspection demonstrated students' ability to be reflective about the impact of their senses and to comment positively about their feelings.
- The school makes a strong contribution to the preparation of students for life in modern Britain. Students elect a student council, members of which meet with representatives of the proprietors to share their views about the school and its development. Sensitive work is undertaken, for example through a recent themed week, to challenge students' prejudices about race, diversity and the requirements of equalities legislation.
- Staff provide strong support for students in managing their transition from Year 11 into further courses of study. These arrangements include excellent joint working with students' parents and the appropriate services, including careers advice, of placing authorities.
- A number of policies and agreed procedures underpin the work of the school; these are reviewed regularly and implemented consistently. The proprietors and senior staff implement robust arrangements for safeguarding students. These include thorough procedures for the appointment of suitable staff, staff training in child protection at the required levels and frequency, and good attention to the assessment of risk.
- The school meets all the statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection. The safeguarding policy has been checked on the school's website for compliance with paragraphs 32(1) and 32(1)(c) of the independent school standards.
- The school demonstrates strong capacity for continued improvement under the excellent leadership of the headteacher and her senior staff.
- **The governance of the school:**

The proprietors provide effective oversight of the school, particularly through the work of their senior area manager. He meets regularly with the headteacher and has a thorough knowledge of the characteristics and needs of each student.

Appropriate reporting arrangements ensure that the proprietors' management board is regularly and appropriately informed about all aspects of the quality of teaching and students' achievement. They have a good understanding of the need for balance between the personal and academic development of students.

The headteacher and staff are held to account effectively for their work. Arrangements for the

supervision and training of all members of staff are reviewed regularly. The proprietors ensure that outstanding performance is rewarded appropriately.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good and extremely well managed by the staff. Students are placed at the school mostly as a result of moving into accommodation within the area. They enter into a variety of year groups and at different times of the school year. The majority experience significant emotional barriers to building secure relationships.
- Students' attitudes to learning are mostly turned around positively over time. They benefit enormously from the opportunity to experience different learning environments on the school's various sites. Some students enjoy the security of a traditional classroom; others relax visibly in a more rural location or respond positively to the challenges of a practical workshop.
- Many students develop strong positive relationships with staff members or with each other. They learn to cooperate well and to take appropriate responsibility for aspects of their own learning.
- Levels of supervision are high and any distracting behaviour or inability to cooperate with required routines are managed effectively. Students demonstrate an increasing ability to follow instructions and to work safely.
- The school follows an agreed approach to restorative justice. Students are helped increasingly to understand the consequences of their actions and to take responsibility for putting things right. There are regular and effective arrangements for communication between school and home and every effort is made to ensure a consistent approach to students' personal development.
- Good attention is given to students' spiritual and moral development. There is a strong focus on personal reflection and the development of self-discipline. Students gradually respond positively to opportunities to explore their own emotions and relationships.
- The attendance of the majority of students is close to the national average. The school works very closely with students' homes to manage the persistent absence of a small number of students.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. There is evidence in school records of a reduction over time in the number of incidents of unacceptable behaviour. Students are well informed about the different forms of bullying and incidents are rare.
- Senior leaders ensure that all requirements for the safeguarding of students are implemented rigorously. Arrangements for the recruitment of staff and for the training of staff in all aspects of child protection are robust. Levels of supervision are high and the school's policy for the assessment of risk is implemented securely at all sites.
- Arrangements for welfare, health and safety on all sites, including the maintenance of the premises and fire safety, are checked and recorded regularly.
- The requirements of the welfare and safety regulations are fully met.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching supports effective learning in classrooms and vocational settings. The quality of teaching has a strong positive impact on the engagement and attitudes of disadvantaged students.
- Staff are successful in enabling students who have mostly had negative experiences of school and authority to develop trusting relationships. Teachers and teaching assistants show enormous patience and resilience in building the confidence and cooperation of students.
- Teachers demonstrate patience, flexibility and a sensitive response to individual students' continuously changing moods. They avoid confrontation and build on each small step of progress in students' confidence.
- Students' behaviour is managed appropriately through well-established classroom routines. Students know what to expect and mostly cooperate well with staff expectations.
- Staff are supported well through agreed arrangements for managing any student who demonstrates resistance or lack of readiness to learn. Disruption and distraction to the learning of others are avoided. The limitations of the small building at the main site restrict the range of options available to senior managers to ensure that all students continue with their learning consistently in these circumstances.

- Teachers adopt very individualised approaches to learning which are respectful of students' preferred learning styles and personal characteristics. Students, for example, worked with good concentration on individual tasks in lessons in mathematics and science. They demonstrate the ability to sustain their concentration and to discuss their progress effectively with staff.
- Students are provided with a wide range of choices in their vocational studies at the Eastry and Park Lane sites. Individuals demonstrated excellent interest and concentration, for example in the production of a shelf unit for storing shoes, designing a frame for growing chillies or completing routine service tests on a motor vehicle.
- The small number of students at the Manston site are provided with effective learning opportunities with a suitable focus on the development of their skills in numeracy and literacy. They enjoyed, for example, their study of mythical beasts, providing well-informed views about the possible existence and characteristics of such creatures. The nurturing environment of this provision is well suited to the needs of students who are unable to cope with the demands of a larger school.
- The school has developed effective arrangements for the assessment and recording of students' achievement since the time of the last inspection. All staff are familiar with the external accreditation requirements of the subjects taught and have developed a range of approaches to the production of suitable evidence.
- The assessment data recorded are not always broken down into sufficiently small and precise measurements to be able to readily judge the extent of students' progress over short periods of time. This is an essential requirement when students are placed for relatively short periods of time and staff need to be sure that they are progressing at a suitable pace within and between specific GCSE grades.
- A major strength in the quality of teaching throughout the school is the extent to which learning is matched well to the individual learning needs and emotional circumstances of students. Students' individual education plans, skilfully managed by the school's experienced SENCO, provide effective up-to-date targets to guide the work of all staff.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The school experiences significant turbulence in student numbers as a result of frequent changes to their residential placements. Senior leaders ensure that students' experiences of school are positive and productive. As a result, students make good progress despite the relatively short time for which they are placed at the school.
- The headteacher, working closely with senior and middle managers, ensures that all staff place a high priority on students' academic progress in combination with attention to their emotional and social development. All students complete work which is externally accredited and can form the basis for further study in the next school or college attended.
- Students enter the school, often during Key Stage 4, with standards of achievement which are below or well below those expected for their age. From these relatively low starting points, the proportions of students making expected progress in core areas of learning are above national figures.
- Disadvantaged students make good progress in closing the gaps in their achievement compared with other students nationally. Their typically short period of attendance at the school restricts the breadth and extent of the academic qualifications achieved.
- Staff ensure that all students make good progress in the development and application of their skills in literacy, communication and numeracy. These skills are applied effectively in practical learning, including woodwork, motor vehicle studies, horticulture and construction.
- Students with special educational needs are enabled to make good progress in the improvement of their skills in literacy and numeracy during their time at the school.
- The school is beginning to experience some success in motivating students to enjoy reading and to read more widely beyond the classroom. This is an area for further development.
- Students who are placed at the school for sufficient lengths of time in Key Stage 4 are prepared well for GCSE examinations. They experience success in foundation level examinations in English, mathematics and science. A small number of more able students who enter the school suitably prepared in these core subjects achieve a small number of GCSE passes at the higher level.
- Students' work in citizenship and personal and social education is also externally accredited; most students make good progress in these areas of study. Students also achieve externally accredited certificates for their work in vocational subjects, together with art and design, and information and communication technology.
- Excellent photographic evidence is provided alongside the artefacts and outcomes from their work across

a range of practical learning. This evidence from a number of areas of learning is brought together to contribute to awards at Levels 1 or 2 on the national accreditation framework.

- All students who left at the end of Key Stage 4 last summer moved on to courses at further education colleges. Similar arrangements, planned in conjunction with students' placing authorities, are in place for students about to leave Year 11. The majority continue their studies in areas of vocational learning in which they have already experienced some success.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/non-association-independent-school-inspection-handbook.

School details

Unique reference number	131422
Inspection number	462876
DfE registration number	886/6076

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, 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.

Type of school	Day special school
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	24
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Ethelbert Children's Services
Chair	Gordon Shaw
Headteacher	Julie Bartlett
Date of previous school inspection	February 2012
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,500 – £33,500
Telephone number	01843 599322
Fax number	01843 599333
Email address	topsoffice@ethelbert.net

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our website for news, information and updates at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/user>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2015