

Chelfham Bere Alston

Bere Alston, Yelverton, PL20 7EX

Inspection dates 7–9 July 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
Sixth form provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This is a good school

- When students join the school, they mostly have extremely challenging behaviour patterns. They re-engage with learning and adopt positive attitudes and behaviour over time in this good and improving school.
- Staff are extremely effective role models in an environment where students feel safe. Behaviour is good.
- Teaching is good and enables students to make rapid progress, including developing their skills in English and mathematics. This helps them achieve well.
- The sixth form is effective, preparing students well for their next steps. Provision is good.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Students gain self-confidence and the skills of sharing, team working and collaborating.
- The school works hard to help students develop an appreciation of the rights and responsibilities of living in modern, democratic Britain.
- Good leadership and management are focused on raising standards and are very effective. Teaching and learning are monitored very carefully.
- Leaders help staff to develop their expertise, and professional development is effective and much appreciated in improving classroom practice.
- Leaders ensure that the independent school regulations are all met.
- Those responsible for governance hold leaders to account and have high expectations.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers lack opportunities to work alongside colleagues in other schools to support their moderation of students' work.
- Students' success in the outdoor education adventure programme is not fully rewarded by accrediting the range of skills gained.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the schedule for The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection took place with one day's notice. The inspector observed six lessons, all jointly with the headteacher. The inspection took place at the same time as an aligned inspection of the children's home on the same site. Inspectors collaborated but report separately on the school and residential provision.
- Meetings were held with the Priory Education Service's regional operations manager and acting principal, together with the school's headteacher, teachers who have additional leadership responsibilities and the head of the school's therapy service.
- A telephone conversation was held with a local authority representative in order to gather their views on the quality of provision at the school.
- There was limited response to Ofsted's online Parent View survey and so the views of parents and carers were gathered from telephone conversations with six representative parents.
- The inspector spoke with students throughout the inspection to ensure that their views were taken into account. Samples of work completed over time and of work in lessons were scrutinised to check progress over time. Two students read to the inspector. Case studies provided a detailed picture of wider support and provision for students.
- Staff views were gathered from their questionnaires and from discussions throughout the inspection.
- The inspector checked compliance with the independent school regulations. He looked at a range of policies and documentation, including data on students' progress, teachers' planning and assessment, the school's self-evaluation and key documents, including those around safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is part of Priory Education Services, within the wider Priory Group. It provides education for up to 30 students between the ages of seven and 19 years. About half of the students are placed in the school by local authorities as day students. The rest live in residences owned by the company in the locality. The residential provision that shares the same site was inspected alongside the school and Ofsted will report the outcomes separately.
- There are currently 17 students on roll, of whom 15 are boys. Six are children looked after by their local authority. All have a statement of special educational needs, or an education, health and care plan. These specify social, emotional and mental health difficulties, or autistic spectrum conditions, with associated complex learning difficulties. Some students are eligible for additional government funding for those who are disadvantaged or looked after by a local authority. Numbers, however, are very small.
- The school was first registered in 1986. Its last full inspection was in September 2012 and there was an emergency inspection in January 2014.
- The proportion who are disadvantaged, in that they are known to be eligible for free school meals or are children looked after by their local authority, is much higher than that usually found. Many of these are supported by the pupil premium, additional government funding to support these students, although not all of the placing authorities pass this on to the school.
- The school does not make use of alternative placements and does not enter students early for external examinations.
- Since the last inspection, the former Chelfham Senior School, which was situated on two sites, has split into two separate schools. This has created Chelfham Bere Alston in its current form. A new headteacher was appointed from September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen opportunities for teachers to work alongside colleagues in other local schools so that they can gain confidence and expertise in their understanding of the levels at which their students are working and share opportunities for professional development.
- Extend opportunities for accrediting the developing programme of outdoor and adventure education to better allow students to show the extent of their achievement and reflect the range of skills they have learned.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since joining the school, the headteacher has successfully set in place changes that seek to raise standards further. At the same time, he is seeking to increase the numbers of primary-aged pupils so the school can start to meet students' needs earlier than was the case in the past. There is a good process for monitoring compliance with the independent school regulations.
- Teaching is good. Effective monitoring of teachers and support staff links in with the company's system of appraisal and professional development. Challenging objectives are set each year and there are clear links between teachers' performance and their pay. The impact of the drive to support classroom practice is seen in the rising achievement of students.
- The school's self-evaluation is effective, enabling it to set clear priorities for development. Annual performance objectives enable staff to address these needs, while at the same time providing scope for staff to develop individual expertise.
- There are three distinct strands in students' learning. The core skills of reading, writing and mathematics form one, while the other two cover vocational skills and project-based learning. Each is the responsibility of a teacher with clear additional roles and responsibilities for leadership. This 'middle leader' role has successfully promoted good teaching and learning and has raised students' performance.
- Whatever their academic ability, teachers make sure that students are able to learn effectively, reflecting the commitment to equality of opportunity in that all can succeed. Staff get to know the students very well and work hard to foster good relations in an atmosphere where there is no discrimination.
- A developing area of learning is the outdoor adventure learning programme. This is a key element in helping students to develop greater self-confidence and self-awareness and in promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, students develop the skills of collaboration, teamwork and taking the needs of others into full account. Students can gain accreditation for some elements of the programme but the possibilities to develop a more detailed portfolio of achievements and accreditation have not yet been fully developed.
- There are good opportunities for students to develop their understanding of life in modern Britain. These are fostered within school, such as through the recent mock election that coincided with the general election. The school also make effective use of outside organisations such as the local police force. This helps students appreciate the importance of the rule of law, individual liberty within a democratic society, and respect and tolerance of other traditions and faiths.
- Students are helped to think about their futures. Careers education is in place for the secondary-aged students and good links with the careers service help promote effective transition arrangements to college, training or employment.
- There are good links with a range of external professionals who help and support the students. Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements and are implemented rigorously. Wider social, emotional and medical needs are supported by regular contact with social care and health professionals.
- Links with parents and carers are strong and they appreciate the frequent contact they have with the school. They know how their children are doing and express praise for the work done by the school in helping to transform young lives for the better.
- The premises promote effective education and are well equipped. This includes the use of technology, including tablet computers and interactive whiteboards, as a tool for engaging students in learning.
- **The governance of the school:**

The governance of the school is provided by Priory Education Services. A range of systems holds school leaders to regular account. Many company leaders have professional backgrounds in education and a strong professional understanding of how to promote effective education. They visit the school themselves to monitor the quality of teaching and of the curriculum, and to check how this is re-engaging students in learning. They analyse data on students' progress and are aware of the performance of staff through observations, as well as through monitoring the performance management arrangements. Financial planning, including the use of the pupil premium, is monitored and outcomes looked at carefully. The checks on teachers' performance are monitored with care. Challenging annual objectives are set for the headteacher. The company ensures that good practice is rewarded. There are well-established procedures for dealing with underperformance.

All of the independent school regulations with regard to leadership and management are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is good. Many had periods out of school before they joined. On arrival all display extremely challenging behaviours and wider emotional difficulties. Individual behaviour plans provide very strong and effective support and enable students to start to adopt much more positive attitudes within a short time of arriving. As a result, their behaviour improves rapidly. These plans are monitored regularly and amended as necessary to ensure they focus effectively on supporting current needs as they develop an ever-greater maturity.
- Staff and students are given strong support from the school's own therapy team which offers advice and support in developing and sustaining improving behaviour. This helps teachers to maximise the support they can give to students in helping them come to terms with negative attitudes and behaviour.
- Students are supported and encouraged to re-engage with learning in a way that supports rapid progress and achievement. This is reinforced by the staff, who provide effective role models. They help students to develop a greater resilience, an awareness of their own actions and an ability to do the right thing.
- Students told the inspector how they had developed since they joined the school and how their behaviour had changed for the better. Case studies provide clear evidence of the dramatic change for the better that has come about.
- There is mutual respect and warm working relationships. This is reflected in the behaviour of students out of lessons. For example, at lunchtime staff and students eat together in a very relaxed atmosphere.
- Over the current school year, the school has started to make more detailed use of a software package to measure behaviour. This allows leaders and managers to complete careful analysis through the ability to produce detailed information. For example, it provides detailed breakdown of types of incidents, frequency of occurrence and incidents in which individual students are involved. This is helping policies and procedures become more effective, reflected in the current redevelopment of incident reporting systems.
- All of the independent school regulations relating to behaviour are met.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Clear and consistent policies, with advice and guidance from the therapy team, support staff in implementing systems that ensure the safety of students. Risk assessments of activities, sites and of students themselves are detailed and care is taken to ensure safety in any planned activities.
- There are positive links with the local safeguarding children's board and the school's policies are fully in line with its requirements. Staff receive annual training in child protection, first aid and the use of restraint.
- Incidents of restraint are logged and information analysed carefully, looking for trends, or triggers of incidents, for example. Over the past school year, there is clear evidence of a big reduction in the use of holds and of negative incidents in general. This coincides with the greater depth of monitoring and analysis of behaviour-based incidents than had previously been the case, reflecting the success of steps taken to bring about this reduction.
- Effective supervision means that there are few instances of bullying, although students develop an appropriate knowledge of it in lessons. They understand that there are different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and are also aware of the dangers of misuse of the internet and social networking sites.
- The school works hard to ensure there is no use of derogatory or discriminatory language, including comments that are racist or based on disability. It is a positive community where people are encouraged to get on well together. The strong commitment to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in the ways in which the school has developed systems to track individual students' progress across all four aspects. The impact of the school's work is shown in the positive relationships that are encouraged throughout the school. As students start to engage and to enjoy their education their attendance improves, so that it is currently higher than that found in both primary and secondary schools nationally.
- Parents and carers, placing authorities and students themselves agree that this is a safe place. This is reinforced by the careful supervision of all visitors to the site.
- All the independent school regulations around welfare, health and safety are met. These include fire safety, first aid and arrangements for sick students.

The quality of teaching is good

- All of the regulations relating to teaching are met. Teaching throughout the school is good, and some is outstanding. This helps students to enjoy their learning and helps explain their rapid progress. Students form positive relationships with staff, which also help them to learn well.
- Teachers challenge the most able, meet the additional needs of disadvantaged students and appreciate the impact of the special educational needs faced by every student. They work with classroom assistants in very effective teams that are reinforced by the advice and support of the therapy team. This enables students to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as in wider learning.
- Teachers plan lessons with care, making sure that they can address the needs of each individual. Students are challenged and supported in reaching their learning targets, and are not deterred by work that is too difficult or easy. Teachers appreciate that often learning will be held back by gaps in prior knowledge as a result of time out of education earlier in a student's life. They work hard to identify and fill these gaps.
- Teachers use questioning well to check levels of understanding and also to encourage students to think for themselves and express opinions. The positive relationships between students and the adults with whom they work mean that students gain confidence to express their ideas because they know they will be taken seriously.
- Learning is increasingly organised around a theme or project, helping students to develop and apply skills in different ways. At the same time, there remains a focus on promoting the core skills of reading, writing, communication and mathematics.
- Work is marked regularly and with good detail. This helps students to know what they have to do in order to reach their targets and to understand their current levels. The best marking supports an element of student self-assessment, which helps them reflect on their achievement.
- Teachers do not yet have many opportunities to work alongside colleagues from other schools to compare the standards at which students are working and in this way gain confidence in their own ability and judgement. There are few professional development opportunities with other schools in the locality for staff to share and develop their practice.
- All of the independent school standards with regard to teaching are met.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment on first joining the school is low because of turbulence in their previous education. As the school successfully re-engages them in learning, students are able to show rapidly increasing progress and attainment. Virtually all go on to gain a range of worthwhile external accreditation in academic and vocationally based learning by the time they leave.
- From an initial assessment, staff track students' levels in reading, writing and mathematics, as well as their increasing emotional maturity. Each student has a detailed individual education plan that includes clear and measurable targets.
- Progress is tracked on a half-termly basis by teachers and information used effectively to intervene and raise achievement. Where progress has not been as strong as expected, additional short-term support to address the identified problem is initiated and reviewed at the following half-term.
- Virtually all students make at least expected progress in English and mathematics, albeit from a low starting point. A high proportion makes faster progress as they successfully re-engage with learning.
- Students are successfully encouraged to read. As student numbers in the primary-aged part of the school have increased there has been a successful focus on promoting phonics (the link between letters and sounds). Phonics is taught exceptionally well and students develop their reading skills rapidly. Their pride in this was reflected in their enthusiasm to read to the inspector.
- The most able students are pushed hard to fulfil their potential and some go on to achieve the higher grades at GCSE or examinations of a similar standard by the time they complete Year 11.
- The progress of students eligible for additional pupil premium funding is tracked closely. The additional funding brought into school by the pupil premium is used carefully to support identified needs. Numbers are too small to compare the outcomes with other students both in the school and nationally.
- The school also checks the rates of progress of identified groups of students, the most obvious one being day students as opposed to those who live in the company's residences. The data show that, because work is individualised to meet the needs of each student, all are encouraged to do their best and there are no differences between any identified groups.
- There is full compliance with the independent school regulations concerning students' academic and

personal development.

The sixth form provision is good

- Sixth form provision is well organised and managed, although numbers of post-16 students are very small. With a focus on promoting life skills, the provision gives strong support to enable students to move on with confidence. Often this will mean going to college but there have been examples of students moving straight into full-time employment. Arrangements for transition are managed effectively. Care is taken to ensure this is done in conjunction with parents, carers and placing authorities.
- Teachers have a good understanding of students' needs, which are well met. There is no break between Key Stage 4 and sixth-form provision. Teaching remains individualised to help students make the most of their talents. This is also reflected in accreditation opportunities. Students remain committed to learning and behave very well. They develop an increasing awareness of their responsibility for their own safety.

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	113616
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Inspection number	462861
DfE registration number	878/6039

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 and residential school – autism with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	7–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	17
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	1
Number of part time pupils	1
Proprietor	Priory Education Services
Chair	Mark Underwood
Headteacher	Jon Ascot
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2014
Annual fees (day pupils)	£60,000
Annual fees (boarders)	£125,000-£185,000
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