

# Priory School

Priory School, Mount Road, BURY ST. EDMUNDS, Suffolk, IP32 7BH

## Inspection dates

01/12/2015 to 03/12/2015

## The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

The quality of care and support	Outstanding	1
How well children and young people are protected	Outstanding	1
The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings

### The residential provision is because

- Young people benefit from their stays in the residential accommodation. A skilled management team prioritises the safety and welfare of young people extremely well. There is excellent planning and preparation for new admissions.
- Staff are skilled and insightful at promoting good behaviour through positive role modelling and consistent routines. There is an emphasis on courtesy and respect. Young people know what is expected of them and respond constructively to staff, who they like and trust.
- Young people make exceptional progress in their independence skills. This has greatly enhanced their confidence and helps them work towards adult life with optimism and hope.
- Partnership with parents is excellent. Parents feel they are a valued part of the team. They are kept informed of all developments and can contact the management directly at all times.
- Young people have access to an outstanding range of activities in the school and the community. Imaginative and creative initiatives such as the new Scouts group in the school have been introduced, to promote the young people's well-being and enhance their self-esteem.
- Leadership and management is purposeful and forward thinking. The new multi-academy trust offers an exciting vision of services collaborating to provide

improved specialist provision for young people with special needs. Residential care is regarded as an integral part of these developments, as it makes a vital contribution to ensuring young people's physical and mental well-being

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools

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

- Provide a hard copy of the current fire assessment for the school.
- Continue to encourage parents to record their views using Parent View surveys.

## **Information about this inspection**

The inspection of the residential provision, covering two boarding houses, took place within two hours of announcement. The inspection activities included meetings with young people, residential care staff, residential governor representative, headteacher, head of care and deputy head of care, business manager, head of catering and external professionals and contact with parents through direct meetings and telephone discussions. Observations included a tour of the premises, activities, meal times and residential routines. Information was taken from young people's care plans, activity records, documents and policies plus review of a survey carried out by the school, featuring 20 returns from parents and carers.

## **Inspection team**

Fiona Littlefield

Lead social care inspector

# **Full Report**

## **Information about this school**

Priory School is a residential special academy for male and female pupils with complex moderate learning difficulties. It caters for pupils aged between 9 and 16 throughout western Suffolk. The school provides a 24-hour curriculum to support cognitive, social and independence skill programmes. The school has 23 residential bed spaces per night, with 48 pupils accessing residential provision each week. The residential accommodation is provided in two boarding houses located on the school site.

The residential provision was last inspected in November 2014.

## Inspection Judgements

### The overall experiences and progress of children and young people

The overall experiences for young people are outstanding. Young people make exceptional progress in learning to live harmoniously with those around them. They benefit from close and trusting relationships with staff who promote regular consistent routines where everyone is expected to contribute. Young people learn to work together and are encouraged to negotiate, talking to each other over dinner or choosing the activity for the evening. Consequently, the atmosphere is calm and settled and young people are relaxed.

Young people make outstanding progress given their starting points. They each have a detailed, highly individualised care plan, which looks at their overall development. Educational attainment is monitored alongside good behaviour, respect and empathy. Their social skills are developed to a remarkable level and many require little support with their personal routines such as getting up, washing and dressing. Parents routinely comment on the confidence that this brings. One parent said: 'She has developed independence skills. They have managed this through consistent expectations so she will help prepare a meal and then wash up. She would never have done that before. She has learned and she enjoys it.'

Young people participate in a wide range of activities and enjoy community based outings including sports and attending the local youth club. One parent said: 'He gets the chance to do so many things that he couldn't do at home. He is joining the scouts, which he is so excited about. It is such a great opportunity for him.'

Staff and managers are committed to ensuring that the views of young people are taken into account. Young people are encouraged to participate through attending the school council, residential council or food forum. The introduction of the daily meetings for young people staying in residential care that night has led to an immediate and lively dialogue with staff. This helps young people express their views and confirms that they are taken seriously.

School and care staff work closely with young people and their families to plan for the future, building on independence skills and developing a bespoke plan that can include work experience, college attendance and apprenticeships. This reflects their individual talents, disabilities and personalities. Staff are highly ambitious for them, wanting them to be as prepared and confident as possible when they begin adult life.

### The quality of care and support

### Outstanding

Managers and staff are committed to ensuring that young people benefit from their stays and prioritise preparation for any new referral. Parents are sent information in advance, visit the accommodation and share their views and aspirations with the head of care. When the young person visits for the first time, they are introduced to all the care staff who are going to look after them. This means that they start in a considered and

planned way, which helps them feel secure.

Staff are creative and empathetic with young people. They use a wide range of visual guides and tools. Each young person has a memory album, which contains all their achievement records, including certificates, artwork and photos of them enjoying activities. This enhances their self-esteem. One parent said: 'They celebrate success and recognise every achievement. They value the young people.'

Working relationships with parents are excellent. Parents feel part of the team, frequently commenting on the commitment of staff and managers to partnership and communication. One parent commented: 'The whole staff have a caring, hands-on attitude and keep us fully informed of any issues by telephone calls, hand-out-letters and parent emails.'

There is evidence of a well-coordinated response across the education and care teams. Education staff contribute to care plans for young people in the residential side and care staff spend time each week in the school. Young people gain confidence from seeing the professionals working together as a team.

Staff collaborate purposefully to promote the health of young people. Meals provided for young people are balanced and nutritious and staff encourage them to try new foods. Young people with special dietary needs are well looked after. Residential staff supervise young people during mealtimes and encourage them to talk and interact, with an emphasis on listening and good manners. Young people learn how to look after themselves and develop social skills, which help them in the future.

Staff are skilled and creative and work positively with young people. Staff take every opportunity to help young people develop a sense of self-awareness and take on responsibility for their personal routines. Parents consistently remark on how they have made progress in being able to look after themselves and even offer help to others. The father of one young person said: 'I have recently injured my hand and she offered to make me a snack. This has never happened before. I was delighted.'

Managers and staff show outstanding commitment to encouraging young people to develop as well-rounded individuals. Young people have access to a wide range of activities both in the school and in the community, where they can enjoy options such as swimming, cycling and attending a local youth club. Most recently, some young people have joined a school scouts group at a special ceremony attended by members of their families and senior managers from the scouts association. One parent said: 'He is treated as a young person first and not just a disabled child. He is learning to cope with the outside. All of this is giving him such confidence.'

## **How well children and young people are protected**

**Outstanding**

Staff and managers consider the safety of young people to be their foremost concern. They develop close relationships with young people who trust them and who are confident that they can raise any issue either directly or using a report system called 'I

want you to know'. Staff respond to concerns or complaints directly and speedily. Young people feel that while they may not always get exactly what they want, their comments are taken seriously. One young person said: 'You can talk to any of the staff here if you are worried about something.' As a result, they feel safe and are safe.

Managers develop a robust and detailed risk assessment for any new referral. This identifies any potential risks and balances them with management strategies to ensure that the young person is safe. Staff and managers systematically review these plans so that arrangements are clear and comprehensive. For instance, staff from the school and care staff liaise to ensure that any young person due to stay that night arrives safely. As a result, no young person is left unattended at the end of the day or goes missing.

Staff are subject to appropriate checks prior to working with young people. They receive full induction training with an emphasis on safeguarding and are confident that they could respond appropriately to any child protection concerns. While child protection referrals from the residential side are low, staff and managers are in regular contact with local authorities and raise concerns about young people and their families who may need support. Managers help parents access specialist care, attend meetings with external professionals and complete paperwork. A child psychiatrist who works with the school reports: 'They consider themselves as part of the team working with a young person, this enhances multi-agency work and promotes the interests of the young person.'

Staff and managers show exemplary skill in working with young people to promote their safety. Staff meet the young people when they first arrive after school to settle them for the evening, repeat fire evacuation procedures and confirm the agenda for the night. One parent said: 'Staff really listen and when they give instructions, they expect the young people to listen too. If they think that someone is struggling, they will add visual prompts.' Young people like and trust staff and accept their guidance and as a result, they remain safe.

Incidents of negative behaviour are rare. Young people retain their exuberance but are generally calm and patient. There have been no incidents of physical restraint since the last inspection and sanctions are infrequent. Discipline is routinely maintained by clear expectations, which are constantly repeated, and positive role modelling. For instance, young people are aware that bullying is not acceptable and any potential incident is dealt with immediately to prevent escalation.

Practical arrangements in the school ensure that the young people are safe. Arrangements for administering medication are robust and effective and staff receive regular training. The school is secure with gates on the driveway. All visitors are required to sign in and can only access the buildings when authorised. Closed circuit television monitors the outside and specific areas in the school but does not intrude on the privacy of young people. Senior managers ensure that all health and safety checks are routinely updated. This means that young people benefit from a protected environment. In order to improve further, the fire risk assessment should be available in hard copy.

## **The impact and effectiveness of leaders and managers** Outstanding

Leaders and managers demonstrate effectiveness and passion in working with young people with special needs. Residential accommodation in the school is provided in the context of a new multi-academy trust. The guiding principle is to provide specialist provision for young people with special needs. Currently, the trust includes the school and a local further education college. The mission statement for the trust states that they are committed to 'developing a continuum of provision that works collaboratively to further improve outcomes for young people.' Senior managers are held accountable through the trust board, which provides overall strategic vision. Residential targets, which are an integral part of this work, include the development of a monitoring tool, increasing the range of activities and improving the building. This rigorous approach provides the framework for the school's development plan.

Managers use feedback from a number of sources to monitor progress and can comment on the impact of residential care on young people. For instance, recent statistics indicate that young people who have been boarders exceed their expected targets in both English and mathematics, achieve high rates of school attendance and meet their targets in independence skills. Managers are introducing a new assessment tool, which will focus on the impact of residential care on each young person by concentrating on one goal, breaking this down into specific steps for that young person, which they review every month. An area identified to improve practice further is the promotion of Parent View for parents to give their feedback.

Managers are aware that staff need support and recognition to sustain this level of commitment. Staff receive regular supervision and confirm that this is full and reflective. They meet daily to discuss the young people staying for that evening and are confident that they are kept informed about any developments. In addition, all employees of the school meet throughout the school year for staff development days, which are used to provide an overview of developments but also to introduce training on issues such as internet abuse and cyber bullying. Staff appreciate this and are enthusiastic about their role and the impact that they have on young people.

## What inspection judgements mean

The experiences and progress of children and young people are at the centre of the inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement to determine the weight and significance of their findings in this respect. The judgements included in the report are made against *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools: the inspection framework*.

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A school where the experiences and progress of children and young people consistently exceeds the standard of good and results in sustained progress and achievement. The outcomes achieved by children and young people are outstanding and the impact the boarding/residential provision has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced.
Good	A school providing effective services which exceed minimum requirements. Children and young people are protected and cared



for and have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Requires  
improvement

A school where there are no serious or widespread failures that result in children and young people's welfare not being safeguarded or promoted. However, the overall outcomes, experiences and progress of children and young people are not yet good.

Inadequate

A school where there are serious and/or widespread failures that mean children and young people are not protected or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded or if their care and experiences are poor and they are not making progress.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137433
<b>Social care unique reference number</b>	SC024610
<b>DfE registration number</b>	

This inspection 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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Residential Special School
<b>Number of boarders on roll</b>	129
<b>Gender of boarders</b>	Mixed
<b>Age range of boarders</b>	8 to 18 years
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lawrence Chapman
<b>Date of previous boarding inspection</b>	06/11/2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	01284 761934
<b>Email address</b>	office@priory.suffolk.sch.uk

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