

Prism Independent School

Walker Drive, Gillington, Bradford BD8 9ES

Inspection dates 15–17 March 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Satisfactory

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Enthusiastic leadership from the executive headteacher has energised staff in their successful quest to ensure that pupils achieve well academically, personally, socially and emotionally during their stay at Prism.
- Leaders' sharp focus on what needs to be better has resulted in good improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection. As a result, pupils make good progress from their well-below average starting points in school.
- Pupils' personal development continues to be at the heart of the school's work. The care and support provided to each pupil are the bedrock from which trust and respect are built, resulting in pupils' improved attendance and behaviour, and their attitudes to and active engagement in learning.
- The curriculum is carefully matched to pupils' individual needs. This means that the most-able pupils are suitably stretched. Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disability are well supported to improve their basic literacy and mathematical skills and achieve the range of qualifications and accreditations they study.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and well taught about risks to their personal safety. They are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the changes in their school lives as a result. Parents are equally positive.
- Leaders and the management committee have tackled the areas in need of improvement at the last inspection successfully and ensure that the school continues to meet all independent school standards. They have used the diminishing resources well to secure a good quality of education for pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In line with the school's policy, teachers' assessment of and feedback on pupils' work for their individual accreditations and qualifications are regular and strong. However, assessments and feedback on pupils work in 'enrichment activities' (the broader curriculum) are more variable.
- The management committee receives regular reports about the school's work, including finances and actions to safeguard pupils. Reports do not identify the impact of the school's work on pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour clearly enough.
- Action plans have insufficient measurable targets against which the impact of actions can be checked.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers' assessments and feedback to pupils on their work within the broader curriculum are as effective as those found in the work pupils do for their formal qualifications and accreditations.
- Improve the way the management committee holds school leaders to account for the impact of their work by ensuring that:
 - reports to the committee always include information on pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance
 - action plans include a broader range of measurable targets against which the impact of actions can be measured.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher has an inspirational passion to do the best for pupils who have floundered in aspects of education at their host schools (pupils remain on the register of the secondary school that places them in Prism). This passion has energised staff, the management committee and the trained volunteers who work in the school. There is a strong sense of moral purpose in all that the staff do.
- Well supported by her deputy, the executive headteacher works closely with the staff team to support pupils in managing their complex behaviours and then to develop the positive learning habits that are enabling pupils to achieve well and be effectively prepared for their next steps, whether back to mainstream school or to college or training at the age of 16.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the things that are working well and what needs to be better. Appropriate and timely actions are planned to tackle any area that needs improvement. However, there are few measurable targets in the action plans, so it is difficult for the management committee to check the impact of those actions, particularly on the progress pupils make over time.
- Middle leaders (senior workers) lead their areas of responsibility well, both on the Farm and at Triangle. They work with senior leaders regularly to monitor each pupil's achievements, progress, behaviour and attitudes. Any pupil identified as being at risk of underachieving, or of slipping back into previous habits of poor behaviour or attitudes, is quickly supported and guided to reflect, recover and move on effectively.
- Staff report how they are well trained and supported to improve the effectiveness of their teaching and areas of responsibility and in managing the complex needs of the pupils in their care. Support workers and volunteers are also well trained to support pupils throughout the day.
- The executive headteacher has brought rigour to the management of staff performance to ensure that staff are held to account for their work and their impact on pupils' learning and development. Teachers report that they value leaders' regular review of their teaching, planning, assessments and feedback on pupils' coursework and the resulting action plans that identify areas they can improve further. This helps teachers to know what they are doing well and then to strive to improve their practice further.
- Pupils are effectively prepared for life as citizens in modern Britain. Values that lie at the heart of British culture, such as the rule of law, the monarchy and democracy, are threaded through pastoral and social times and the 'enrichment curriculum', which includes subjects of the national curriculum, and personal, social, moral, spiritual, cultural, health and citizenship education.
- Individual guidance and support to pupils help them to make appropriate choices for their future lives. Pupils achieve a range of accreditations, including functional skills in English and mathematics. Strong relationships developed with local colleges and the Connexions service help pupils gain independent advice to make the right choices. Nearly all 16-year-old pupils move on successfully to college or training.
- The executive headteacher has developed strong partnerships with parents, host schools and agencies, which she draws on to support families in times of great need. She attends all key meetings regarding pupils in their host school and reports on pupils' behaviour, attitudes, personal qualities and learning regularly. Staff from host schools who spoke to the inspector were positive about the work of Prism and its impact on the safety, care and achievements of their pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The management committee has ensured that all independent school standards continue to be met, that performance management of staff is effective and that all statutory policies are in place and reviewed regularly
 - Membership of the committee has changed since the executive headteacher's appointment to improve its effectiveness. Members have a good understanding of the school's day-to-day work, financial management and safeguarding arrangements through regular work with the school and the executive headteacher's termly reports.
 - Members do not have enough information about pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour over time to know the impact of the school's work fully.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Required checks to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers who work with pupils are in place. Safeguarding policies are up to date and in line with the Department for Education's requirements.
- Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding procedures. They are well trained in helping pupils understand risks to their sexual health, and risks from sexual exploitation, radicalisation or extremism.

- Risk assessments for the activities pupils undertake are thorough, including all activities on the Farm site. A particularly good strategy used when pupils arrive at Triangle each morning is the way that staff note down what pupils are wearing. This is helpful if pupils do not return home after school or go missing because accurate descriptions can be provided to the police.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Careful assessment of pupils' skills, knowledge, behaviour, attitudes and styles of learning on entry into school ensures that staff quickly get to grips with pupils' learning and emotional needs. They use this information to plan lessons and accreditations that move pupils on from their often very low starting points to gain qualifications and accreditations that will help them succeed in their future lives.
- Typical of all lessons are the good relationships developed between adults and pupils. Teachers are skilled in establishing a calm working atmosphere and keeping a vigilant eye on pupils' moods and attitudes. They are adept at knowing just when a pupil might be at risk of misbehaviour and take action to defuse the situation so that the learning of others is not disrupted, and so that pupils can return to their lesson without too much delay. Teachers, support staff and volunteers work as a close and effective team.
- Staff have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and in the teaching of functional skills leading to qualifications in English and mathematics. They provide a range of opportunities for pupils to practise their functional skills in other aspects of the curriculum. For example, pupils in a construction lesson were seen competently reading online catalogues for materials to build their bird tables, writing down their requirements and grappling with the mathematical problems of calculating the costs of materials.
- Science is taught through the land-based studies, and health and social care work, aspects in enrichment activities and functional English and mathematics lessons. For example, some scientific exploration of crystals was being used well in one literacy lesson to motivate pupils and develop their speaking, listening and writing skills. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop the full set of skills, knowledge and understanding of science. Leaders know this and are adapting the curriculum to provide more distinct opportunities.
- Practical, work-related subjects are well taught and successful. The Farm is full of high-quality buildings, sections and equipment built by pupils as part of the curriculum. The most recent project, comprising the duck house, pond and accompanying grounds, is a spectacle for all to admire.
- Improvements in the way that staff assess and mark pupils' coursework for their Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications mean that pupils know precisely how well they are doing towards their accreditations and what the next steps need to be. Checks on pupils' functional skills are also regular and systematic. However, teachers are not always as vigilant in checking pupils' progress in enrichment activities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically about how their school lives have changed since coming to Prism. They all spoke highly of the support and care from staff and the way staff are helping them to tackle their own barriers to learning and to succeed.
- The common view of pupils is that the school is 'one happy family' and people usually get along well together. Parents who responded in writing to the inspection questionnaire were equally positive about the school and the good relationships between staff, themselves and their children.
- Respect, trust and equality for all are watchwords of the school. Staff act as good role models and quickly challenge any stereotypes or derogatory language. Pupils are challenged when their views are at odds with the school's values. Focused sessions or one-to-one discussions take place to ensure that pupils understand individual liberty, respect for diversity and valuing others. They learn to live up to their responsibilities and previous incidents of inappropriate language or attitudes reduce well during pupils' time here.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe on both sites. They feel well informed about health and safety aspects of their vocational courses including health and social care, construction and land-based studies. Pupils on the Farm were seen to use farming implements safely and maturely.

- Pupils report that bullying is rare. They have a good understanding of what constitutes prejudice-based bullying, which is 'stamped on immediately'. Pupils value the guidance they receive on risks to their personal safety such as sexual health, drugs, alcohol, gangs and crime. Pupils say that staff help them to make safe choices.
- Pupils are well taught about major world religions and cultures other than their own. Pupils from many different communities and cultures work and socialise together well. Educational visits to local mosques, museums, parks, the town hall, libraries, sports centre and outdoor education opportunities extend pupils' experiences and support their good social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. Displays in corridors and classrooms and discussions with pupils and staff illustrate the wide range of work that takes place.
- When local primary school pupils visit the Farm, Prism pupils take on roles of responsibility in showcasing their work. Pupils work in the local community, distributing the food they have produced. This work and the open events that pupils plan at the Farm are just a couple of examples of how the school works successfully to promote pupils' understanding of, and involvement in, their local community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils attend Prism as a result of their challenging behaviours in their host school. Sensitive support and guidance and clear boundaries and expectations of staff ensure that behaviour is managed effectively.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school sites is friendly and generally orderly. Pupils move to lessons appropriately and usually knuckle down to their work. The high adult-pupil ratios mean that there is always an adult close at hand to help them when they are having a difficult time emotionally or when their minds start to wander from the task in hand.
- Staff remain calm in all situations and carry out the school's behaviour policy consistently. The 'restorative justice' approach brings pupils together to understand the underlying causes of problems, and helps them understand the effect of their actions and then to learn to manage their own behaviours more successfully.
- During their time here, pupils' behaviour improves. Incidents of serious misbehaviour are low. Those that do occur are carefully recorded and followed up. The school has not excluded any pupils temporarily this year. The 11 incidents recorded in school logs are as a result of actions taken at host schools.
- Detailed tracking for each day, week, month and term shows that pupils' attendance rates are currently around 78%. Although this is below that found nationally, it shows improvement term by term. Many pupils were out of school for long periods before they came to Prism. One parent explained how her son was out of school for six weeks before coming to Prism. A third of the pupils now have high attendance rates.
- If pupils do not turn up in the morning or are late, parents are telephoned quickly to seek out the cause and tempt reluctant pupils back to school quickly. When this action does not work, formal letters are sent home and action plans are developed in school to try to improve attendance before it slips too much. The number of pupils leaving school without authorisation during the day is low; there have been only two incidents this year. The reasons why pupils chose to leave are carefully recorded and followed through.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Individual 'pupil passport folders' that are started when pupils arrive at Prism, observation of learning, review of pupils' work and tracking information on pupils' achievements provide evidence of pupils' good progress over time in their academic achievements and personal qualities. Pupils thrive on the positive feedback from their weekly log sheets that report on their attitudes, engagement and progress.
- There is a strong focus on helping pupils catch up with their reading, literacy and numeracy skills. Opportunities to read out loud are regular in class and at the start of the day where staff and pupils read local newspapers together and discuss current affairs. Such work builds pupils' confidence to engage successfully in other subjects. As a result, pupils leave with a wide range of qualifications including functional skills.
- Most-able pupils are quickly identified and provided with individual learning plans and targets that challenge and help them to succeed in the higher Level 2 qualifications. Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils because of the individual learning plans and activities provided that move them on briskly from their starting points. The small group of pupils with special educational needs are equally valued, nurtured and supported to achieve well from their very low starting points.

- Looked after children achieve well because the work is tailored specifically to their interests. Recently, the executive headteacher worked closely with the host school and the local authority's virtual headteacher for looked after children to secure additional available resources for extra tuition in English and mathematics to help a most-able, looked after child gain higher Level 2 qualifications in these subjects.

School details

Unique reference number	137785
Inspection number	10006098
DfE registration number	380/6001
Type of school	Pupil referral unit for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Number of part-time pupils	30
Proprietor	Prism Youth Project
Chair	Rachel Court
Executive headteacher	Tricia Stevens
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,145 to £10,725
Telephone number	01274 487633
Website	www.prismindependentschool.org
Email address	info@prismyouthproject.org
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2012

Information about this school

- Prism is part of a registered charity called the Prism Youth Project. The school provides education for pupils with social, emotional or mental health difficulties and associated behavioural difficulties.
- The school is registered to admit 110 pupils aged between 11 and 19 years. Forty-one pupils were on roll at the time of the inspection; none were sixth-form learners.
- All of the pupils who are registered at Prism are also on the roll of their host school (the mainstream secondary school pupils have come from or may still attend for part of the week). The host school pays for Prism to provide education for pupils on a full-time or part-time basis, at a daily rate of £55 per pupil.
- Thirty pupils attend part time and 11 are full time. Part-time pupils attend from one to four days. Some pupils only attend for specific qualifications that the school offers, such as land-based studies or construction. Other aspects of their education are then provided at their host school or alternative providers determined by the host school.
- Nearly half of the pupils are of minority ethnic heritage. None of these pupils has difficulties understanding or speaking English. Over 70% of pupils come from disadvantaged communities.
- Three pupils have special educational needs and have an education, health and care plan, and three are looked after by the local authority. The additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils (pupil premium funding) remains at the host school. The additional funding for looked after pupils (pupil premium plus) also remains at the host school.
- The school is currently operating on two sites: Triangle in Walker Drive, Bradford and the Farm, a short walk away. A third site, Woodville, in Keighley, is a centre for horticulture. Owing to the drop in numbers of pupils since the last inspection, this site is not currently in use.
- Since the last inspection, a new executive headteacher has been appointed and there have been changes in personnel on the management committee (the governing body).
- The school has a small team of teaching staff and a wide range of support staff and volunteers.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice and lasted for two and a half days. The inspector observed learning at both the Farm and Triangle sites. Nine lessons were visited, three of which were jointly observed with the executive headteacher.
- Pupils' work was reviewed in lessons and in the folders holding the pupils' Level 1 and Level 2 accreditation work and qualifications.
- The inspector spoke to senior leaders, a group of staff and a representative from the management committee. Telephone discussions were held with two senior leaders from host schools.
- Informal discussions were held with pupils in lessons and at social times and the inspector spoke formally with a group of pupils at the Farm and a group at Triangle.
- Written comments from two parents who completed the Ofsted survey, Parent View, were taken into account and also the views of one parent who met with the inspector on the second day of the inspection.
- A range of documents and policies were reviewed, as well as information available on the school's website.

Inspection team

Margaret Farrow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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