

Priory Lodge School

Priory Lane, Roehampton, London SW15 5JJ

Inspection dates

16–18 November 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
Sixth form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is rapidly improving as a result of good leadership and governance. The principal, supported by two highly effective leaders from the wider organisation, has worked effectively to ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Leaders and governors have shown unrelenting and decisive leadership when faced with significant challenges. Performance management processes have been implemented effectively and rigorously, with pupils' safety at the centre of decisions made.
- Leaders and teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Teaching is truly personalised. As a result, pupils make good progress in all their subjects.
- The quality of leadership and teaching in the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) hospital unit is very good. Against the odds, pupils residing in wards for acute eating and anxiety disorders continue to learn and make good progress.
- Safeguarding is effective. Regular training and clear systems ensure that pupils are kept safe. However, all recently appointed staff need training in de-escalation and physical intervention as soon as possible.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils regularly learn about embracing difference and are very well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The sixth form is good. Though it is a new and evolving provision, the bespoke curriculum offer is effectively preparing pupils for their next steps.
- The school's leaders acknowledge that a review of its therapeutic provision is required. The therapy team lacks leadership and cohesion. Some key appointments are yet to be finalised.
- Many parents say the school has transformed their children's life chances. However, leaders have more work to do in communicating with some parents, for example in relation to high staff turnover during the previous academic year.

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?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - a review of the therapeutic provision in the school is undertaken, ensuring that therapists are well led and pupils' therapeutic needs are met
 - slow, inflexible administration does not prevent key staffing appointments being made
 - every effort is made to communicate as openly and positively as possible with parents and staff to keep them abreast of the many positive changes being made in the school.
- Improve pupils' outcomes and personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - introducing an effective system for identifying starting points and tracking progress in pupils' personal, social and emotional development
 - ensuring that all staff are trained in de-escalation and physical intervention and that this is offered as a matter of routine for new staff as quickly as possible.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The education operations manager and the school's leadership team share a clear vision for the future of Priory Lodge School. Some significant challenges have been faced over the past academic year. Two senior leaders have left the school, staff turnover has been higher than usual and there is a continued feeling of uncertainty among a minority of staff. However, leaders have worked professionally and diligently to tackle weaknesses in performance and to resolve historical concerns. Difficult decisions have been made. Since September 2016, the proprietor has commissioned a highly effective leadership consultant to work alongside the education operations manager and the principal to get the school 'back on track'. This has proved to be very successful. Appointments of new leaders have been made at both the main school and the sixth form learning hub. An additional assistant head is also currently being recruited.
- The inspection found the school to be very well staffed and resourced, and the vast majority of staff to be energised about the quality of provision and the direction in which the school is heading. Leaders know that there is further work to do on positively communicating the school's vision and values to all members of staff.
- The leadership of the educational provision within the CAMHS hospital unit is highly effective. This specialised hospital environment supports pupils with extreme psychological disorders, including many at risk of suicide or of developing further medical difficulties. Against the odds, in addition to the medical and therapeutic attention that pupils access, staff work effectively to enable pupils to learn again.
- The school's therapeutic provision is currently under review. Some therapists, such as those providing speech and language and occupational therapies, are working effectively but in isolation. The therapy team lacks leadership, cohesion and clear direction. Some key appointments, including of new therapists and an educational psychologist, are yet to be made or the relevant recruitment checks are processing too slowly. This has meant that some pupils have not accessed for some time the appropriate therapeutic support they deserve. Leaders acknowledge this and are addressing it as an absolute priority.
- Some parents are exceptionally positive about their experiences of the school. Five parents felt compelled to write to, or meet with, the inspector, telling him 'this school is an amazing place; everyone is so helpful, so friendly. Nothing is ever too much trouble. The staff really, really care about the children' and 'the school is very supportive of us as parents and keen to work with us'. On the other hand, there continue to be parents who are unhappy, especially in relation to staff turnover. Leaders know they have more work to do on engaging with all parents to more clearly convey the positive changes in the school. They are right to say that this will take time.
- The curriculum is very well designed to meet the needs of pupils. It is effectively planned and personalised across the school's sites. Pupils in the main primary and secondary schools access the full national curriculum, while pupils at key stage 4 have a number of options, including qualifications in performing arts, history, physical education, art and design, food and nutrition, design and technology, psychology and media studies. Where possible, the school provides more bespoke learning; for example, one pupil was happy to share that the school had facilitated his study of a GCSE in astronomy. Pupils have also

requested to learn Latin, which is now also offered. The sixth form curriculum includes core study of qualifications in employability, independent living and personal development. A-level options are available to those studying an academic route and supported vocational courses for other pupils, such as horse care, plumbing and business studies. The quality of careers education for secondary-aged pupils and students in the sixth form is strong and developing further under new leadership.

- The curriculum is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities. In addition to residential visits and local trips, for example pupils' recent trip to the RAF museum as part of their study of the second world war, pupils have access to a wide range of clubs including chess, football, computer science, dance, guitar, debating and drama. These activities have a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, alongside learning about the 'British value of the term', daily 'wellbeing walks' and the range of calendared events organised by pupils who represent the school council.
- The school's commitment to preparing pupils for life in modern Britain, and to teaching pupils about the protected characteristics as identified in the Equality Act 2010, is very good. It is exemplified by the fact that transgender pupils are supported and confident enough to talk about their transitions in front of their peers. The school's inclusive and caring approach means that bullying is rare, but dealt with effectively when it arises.
- The monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is strong. A clear programme of visits to classrooms and checks on planning, workbooks and outcomes is well received by teachers and is effective in monitoring the quality of work in the school. It is well linked to the school's system for managing staff performance. The school's judgement that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good coheres with the evidence gathered throughout the inspection.
- Though this inspection did not include a formal commission to check the suitability of additional premises, the Department for Education has agreed to the temporary use of the school's new premises in Putney, south-west London. The building is being used as the 'sixth form learning hub'. The use of this building meets all of the relevant independent school standards.

Governance

- Governance is good. The principal is effectively supported and held to account by the wider organisation's education operations manager, who acts as the school's 'chair of governors'. The principal's weekly reports are scrutinised and half-termly monitoring visits verify the content of these reports, drawing on evidence from learning walks and a range of documentation. In addition, more detailed reports are submitted by the principal every half term, which are followed up by conference calls to discuss and challenge, as appropriate. Full governance meetings are held twice each academic year. With support from senior colleagues who lead on quality and improvement across the group's schools, annual quality assurance visits are also undertaken.
- Governors effectively oversee the school's system for performance management and for school improvement. They are closely involved in ensuring that decisions about salary increases for staff are based on evidence that is securely linked to performance and pupils' outcomes. Governors have an accurate view of the school's performance, which is reflected in the school's self-evaluation of its strengths and areas for development.

- The current model of governance is under review, and includes the proposal to involve professionals who are external to the company and schools.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's systems to ensure pupils' safety are understood by all staff. A safeguarding culture of 'no concern is too small' is inherent and concerns are very well documented and referred on to external agencies, where necessary.
- All relevant staff training, including for the four members of staff who lead on safeguarding, is up to date. Where specific training needs have arisen, for example in relation to self-harm, child sexual exploitation or pupils who are transgender, the school has organised specialist training.
- The school's policy and actions on the use of physical intervention is effective. However, the departure of staff members who are trainers in de-escalation and physical intervention has meant that some recently appointed staff have not yet had this important training.
- The inspector's conversations with the local authority's designated officer confirmed that the school's safeguarding leaders work in partnership with other professionals and investigate concerns thoroughly, sometimes making difficult but necessary decisions as a result.
- The school's safeguarding policy reflects the most recent statutory guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2016), which is published on the school's website alongside all other required policies and information.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is typically good and enables pupils, who have generally had very difficult educational histories, re-engage with learning and make up for lost time.
- Though the school is a caring and nurturing environment, teachers have high expectations of pupils' learning across the school. Teachers' careful and personalised planning ensures that pupils are engaged in learning and develop confidence and self-esteem to ask questions and engage in discussion. Pupils' reading skills are very well developed.
- Very positive working relationships with teachers and learning support assistants enable pupils to feel able to seek advice and guidance when it is needed. In all areas of the school's three premises, levels of staff supervision were high and very often one to one, providing pupils with the appropriate level of support.
- Rigorous checks on pupils' attainment on entry to the school enable staff to track progress over time and to use this information to inform their planning. The new 'learning ladders' assessment system, successfully trialled last year with primary-aged pupils, has been introduced across the school since September 2016. It is too early for teachers to make best use of this new system, which will be reviewed throughout the academic year.
- Pupils receive regular oral and written feedback on how well they are doing, in line with

the school's marking policy which focuses on telling pupils 'what went well' and how their learning could be 'even better if...'. Scrutiny of workbooks and progress files confirmed that teachers are following this policy, and that pupils improve their work as a result.

- Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour in class is effective and no incidents of challenging behaviour were observed during the inspection. Pupils understand the school's expectations and enjoy being rewarded, especially as they now know that 'points mean prizes'. Some pupils say that their learning is occasionally disrupted by other pupils but that this has significantly diminished recently.
- At the CAMHS hospital unit, a significant proportion of admissions are pupils who are the most able in their schools; many are working towards the highest grades at GCSE and A level before admission. Through communication with the schools at which pupils are enrolled, tailored teaching of qualifications is rapidly organised and pupils access specialist personalised and small group teaching. Where appropriate, pupils are also now able to access learning at the main school site. Leaders closely monitor pupils' educational progress alongside their journey towards recovery and ensure that pupils are able to return to their schools when discharged.
- Leaders have begun to work with other schools within the group to share best practice and moderate assessment judgements. This work is in the early stages and leaders have ambitious plans to increasingly engage with other schools, both mainstream and special.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they feel and are safe at all three sites. They know that staff are always available to support them. Bullying is rare.
- Pupils know how to stay safe, including online.
- Pupils say they do not like change. Regular changes in staffing and timetabling therefore cause stress and discomfort. Leaders are working hard to further stabilise the staff team and keep change to an absolute minimum.
- Though the school monitors pupils' personal development anecdotally and in case studies, leaders are rightly developing a consistent system to record the specific elements of progress in pupils' personal improvement, especially in relation to social and emotional development.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders track incidents of misbehaviour carefully. As a result, staff are clear about pupils' specific triggers and tailor teaching and social activities accordingly.
- Incidents of challenging behaviour are dealt with safely and effectively. The use of physical intervention is well documented and monitored.
- Attendance and punctuality are good. The vast majority of pupils attend very well. This is especially impressive as many of the pupils arrive at the school with histories of school

refusal. Where pupils' attendance does not meet the school's high expectations, pupils and their parents are effectively supported to improve.

- The few sixth form students who attend some of their provision at a local college are always accompanied and supported by a member of the school's staff.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils typically arrive at Priory Lodge School with significant gaps in their education as a result of their complex needs and previous placement breakdowns. Many have previously refused to attend school and have attended many schools in a short space of time.
- On entry, each pupil's attainment in the core skills is checked to confirm his/her starting points. This allows teachers to plan activities that are carefully personalised to meet each pupil's needs.
- From these starting points, the school's information shows that pupils make good progress across the range of subjects, including in English, mathematics, science, computer science, personal, social and health education and physical education. This information shows that no particular group achieves significantly differently. All groups, including boys, girls, disadvantaged pupils and the most able, all make good progress overall. Older pupils experience success and achieve good outcomes at GCSE, A level and in a range of vocational qualifications.
- Where academic achievement falls below the school's high expectations, effective interventions are put in place.
- Pupils evidently make significant progress socially, emotionally and personally, though this is not tracked and reported formally.
- Annual reports to parents are thorough in their explanation of pupils' attainment, progress and wider personal achievements.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The school's sixth form provision is new and evolving. The 'learning hub' building was established in January 2016 for the few students who need a more vocational programme. The majority of sixth form students remain at the main school building and study academic routes, such as GCSEs and A levels, alongside students in other year groups.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good and will be strengthened when the new sixth form leader takes up his position in January 2017. All the relevant independent school standards are met.
- Students follow tailored educational programmes based on their needs and prior achievements. Students access vocational courses, such as business studies, horse care and plumbing at a local college, with consistent support and supervision from a member of the school's staff.
- There is a strong focus on independent living skills and preparing students for their next steps, with personalised careers education and an employability focus. Students' programmes include a range of personal learning modules which form part of wider

independent living qualifications, such as learning about living in the community, household skills, personal care and rights and responsibilities.

- All students who left the sixth form in the previous academic year were successfully enrolled on appropriate courses in further or higher education, or on an apprenticeship. However, as the new sixth form 'learning hub' provision continues to develop, students have not yet left and are working with staff to consider their possible destinations.

School details

Unique reference number	136110
DfE registration number	212/6041
Inspection number	10026156

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	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	24
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Simon Coles
Education operations manager	Sophie Garner
Principal	Lucy Wood
Annual fees (day pupils)	£45,000 to £70,000
Telephone number	020 8392 4410
Website	www.priorychildrensservices.co.uk
Email address	thepriorylodeschool@priorygroup.com
Date of previous inspection	29–31 January 2014

Information about this school

- Priory Lodge School is part of the Priory Group and caters for up to 82 pupils and students aged five to 19 years with autistic spectrum disorder, eating disorders, anxiety disorders and other special educational and medical needs. All pupils have education, health and care plans and the overwhelming majority are placed and funded by their local authorities.

- The school's main building is located within the grounds of The Priory hospital in Roehampton, south-west London. Its second premises, opposite the main building, are located on the same grounds and form part of the CAMHS hospital. Its third premises, checked by an inspector for the first time during this inspection, are used as the school's 'sixth form learning hub' and are located locally in Putney, south-west London.
- The school's last standard inspection was in January 2014 when the overall effectiveness was judged to be good and all the independent school standards were met. Since this inspection, there has been significant staff turnover at all levels and pupil numbers have significantly increased.
- The only alternative provision used by the school is South Thames College, for students in the sixth form to access vocational learning as part of their educational programmes. Students are always accompanied by a member of the school's staff when they attend.
- The school's website meets the requirements of the independent school standards.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was commissioned by the Department for Education to take place earlier in the cycle than previously planned.
- The inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector jointly observed teaching and learning with the principal during four learning walks across the school's three sites. He also heard pupils read, met with a group of pupils and spoke with pupils and staff informally throughout the inspection.
- The inspector jointly scrutinised the school's information about pupils' progress and attendance.
- The inspector took account of parents' contributions to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, met with two parents and read three emails from parents for his attention.
- The inspector had several meetings with a wide range of staff including teachers, therapists and leaders and managers. He also observed a cross-site briefing and considered questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspector spoke with a representative from a placing local authority.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including school policies, logs, evidence of staff training and information related to safeguarding and health and safety. The inspector also toured all three premises and considered additional information and evidence in relation to the independent school standards.

Inspection team

James Waite, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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