

SC069336

Prior's Court Foundation

Monitoring visit

Information about this children's home

This school provides care and accommodation for up to 76 children and young people who have autistic spectrum disorder and/or learning disabilities, providing accommodation for a number of children and young people who receive up to 52-week placements. It is therefore registered as a children's home. It operates as an independent, co-educational residential special school with charitable status.

Children and young people are accommodated in nine on-site residential houses and one off-site house in a neighbouring village. The school is set around a restored country house, within acres of parkland.

The organisation also provides residential services for young adults, for which it is registered with the Care Quality Commission.

Inspection date: 19 July 2017

This monitoring visit

This visit was made as the home is about to open four houses as part of a programme of providing both new and refurbished accommodation for young people. Although this does not bring the number of placements above that for which the home is registered, it is a substantial development with 24 new rooms (six in each house) for young people to live in.

Observations

At the time of the visit builders were completing the 'snagging' process. However, the house that it is planned to open first is almost ready to welcome its first residents. Rooms have their names on doors and transition plans are in place to help young people prepare for and make the move.

All bedrooms incorporate features to make young people's experience of living in

them safe and pleasurable. Examples include: ensuring that all ceiling fittings (other than smoke alarms for necessity) are flush to prevent them being damaged; drawers and hanging space are incorporated into built-in wardrobes that limit the need for free-standing units; and beds that have been chosen with the specific needs of the proposed occupant in mind. A light that illuminates the head of each bed can be turned on from outside the room so night staff can check on young people who need monitoring through a door-viewing pane without disturbing them.

Two rooms in each house are designated for young people who display the most challenging behaviours, and who are likely to take a toll on all fixtures and fittings. Therefore, their bathrooms, for example, have single-unit moulded furniture, water inlets that are operated by sensors rather than taps, and fully sealed doors that prevent water ingress.

Communal areas have been given a high level of attention, with each house having a colour theme throughout, including the path to the front door, carpets, decor and noticeboards. This particularly helps orientate young people who benefit from visual cues. Settees in sitting rooms have been specially made to fit the colour schemes and to be robust; those closest to doors have a reinforced end incorporating a doorstep. This prevents the need for intrusive floor or wall fittings.

Kitchens have been equipped with double appliances – cookers, fridge-freezers and sinks – to facilitate training in life skills.

Each house has a dedicated medical room that is fully equipped to store and administer medication; they have anti-microbial chairs and floors to inhibit the spread of infection.

Gardens feature designs that reflect the individual houses, each named for a particular season. This, together with the striking design of the building, gives a unique and highly appealing exterior. Shrubbery has been planted, which will obscure and soften the fencing between the houses over time.

The manager has overseen the design and build process with characteristic thoroughness. No detail has been too small to be considered, with the focus constantly on the potential impact on the lives of young people. The result is that the new houses are highly likely to significantly improve the quality of life of those young people who move into them. Managers are keen to measure how young people's lives change once they move in, by collating information about such things as the number of incidents, medical errors and how quickly they make progress, and compare this with what is known about them when living in other houses on the campus.

Transitions into the new houses (and for some young people back to their existing ones once they are refurbished and for a few on to other houses) have been meticulously timetabled. Impact risk assessments identify the benefits to each young person of the move and potential hazards to be considered. However, they do not

reflect the consideration given to the implications of matching young people. This means that the opportunity to maximise benefits and minimise risks may have been missed. A similar issue was identified at the most recent inspection.

As a contingency, not all places in the houses will be filled, to allow the possibility of adjustments if required. Operating at less than capacity also means that staff will not be under undue pressure as they get used to the new environment.

Staffing of the new houses has been agreed, with house managers and senior autistic spectrum disorder practitioners already experienced in their roles elsewhere in the house. There will be a minimum staffing of 1-to-1 for each young person on daytime shifts. Across the four houses, it is planned to have eight waking night staff with a 'floating' senior and a sleep-in staff member. Doors at first floor level and gates between gardens will enable staff to move swiftly between houses if required.

The overall capacity (not including placements for young adults) will increase by eight to 67 young people, but the provider does not anticipate this being reached until the 2018/2019 academic year. This will allow time for the changes to be managed effectively, staff to be recruited and new children and young people to be gradually introduced.

A fire officer has visited the premises and approved all fire safety measures. The home's insurer has been informed of the new development, but this has not required a change to details on the certificate.

This is an excellent development, setting a very high standard for the accommodation of young people who have autistic spectrum disorder and creating an outstanding environment for staff to provide their care.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/03/2017	Interim	Sustained effectiveness
07/07/2016	Full	Outstanding
02/03/2016	Interim	Improved effectiveness
15/09/2015	Full	Good

What does the children's home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- The registered person should only accept placements for children where they are satisfied that the home can respond effectively to the child's assessed needs as recorded in the child's relevant plans and where they have fully considered the impact that the placement will have on the existing group of children ('Guide to Children's Homes Regulations, including the quality standards', page 56, paragraph 11.4). In particular, impact risk assessments should adequately consider and record the potential impact of placing children together when moving within the home to a new house and how these will be addressed.

Information about this inspection

The inspector visited the site of the new building, took a tour of the house closest to completion, and of the area designed to provide additional facilities, comprising a laundry training room, an arts/entertainment room and a gym. Documentation was examined and discussions held with senior managers about the new development.

This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Children's home details

Unique reference number: SC069336

Provision sub-type: Residential special school

Responsible individual: Michael Robinson

Registered manager: Sarah Butcher

Inspector

Chris Peel, social care inspector

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