

Rossendale School

Bamford Road, Ramsbottom, Bury, Lancashire BL0 0RT

Inspection dates

10–12 October 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Sixth form provision	Outstanding
Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher and school leaders provide exceptional leadership and set very high expectations. They relentlessly focus on raising pupils' aspirations and achievement.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are highly effective. Pupils, often having previously missed out on long periods of education, make rapid progress from low starting points.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Staff know pupils well and understand their complex needs. The team of therapists provides further effective support to pupils.
- Pupils enjoy school. This is reflected in their high rates of attendance. Pupils are very proud of their school.
- Pupils behave very well. They have excellent attitudes to learning and demonstrate independence and resilience.
- Pupils are very well cared for in school and in the residential homes. Safeguarding arrangements are very effective.
- Excellent communication between staff in the residential homes and the school helps to motivate pupils. This also ensures that pupils receive the support to make outstanding progress.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students' individual study programmes are well planned to ensure that students have a positive future.
- Parents hold the school in extremely high regard.
- Staff from the proprietor's central team know the school very well. They hold leaders to account and provide strong support.
- Very occasionally work set for the most able pupils is not as challenging as it should be.
- The proprietor works closely with leaders to ensure that the independent standards for residential special schools are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements and national minimum standards for residential special schools

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards'), the national minimum standards for residential special schools and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers build further on existing work to challenge the most able pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
The effectiveness of leaders and managers in the residential provision	Outstanding
How well children and young people are helped and protected in the residential provision	Outstanding

- The headteacher and his senior leadership team provide exceptional leadership. They have developed a culture of high expectations which is shared by all staff. All staff are committed to ensuring that pupils can rediscover self-belief, re-engage in learning and achieve their full potential. The shared vision of leaders, staff and governors is a key reason why the school has continued to improve so that the quality of education it provides is now outstanding.
- The headteacher and leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas of development for the school and residential provision. Leaders' procedures for assessing pupils' skills and abilities on entry to the school are rigorous and much improved since the previous inspection. Leaders use nationally standardised assessments to set challenging targets. Pupils' progress is analysed systematically by leaders to identify those who need additional help. Consequently, pupils who are at risk of falling behind catch up with their peers well.
- Leaders relentlessly focus on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They ensure that teaching is of high quality. Staff receive very useful feedback on their work and they use this guidance to improve their teaching continuously.
- The performance management of staff is rigorous and linked to whole-school priorities, training and outcomes for pupils. Leaders have a very effective programme of ongoing professional development for all staff. Leaders work well with other schools to share expertise and best practice with colleagues. Recent training has focused on a range of topics, for example the autistic spectrum disorder and the moderation of pupils' work. Newly appointed teachers are very well supported in their roles.
- All staff are proud to work in the school and morale is high. They feel that their work is valued and appreciated. One staff member said: 'It's a pleasure to work with the pupils and see the progress they make.'
- Residential staff have been recognised for the quality of their work and they have received a three-star nationally recognised award for achieving excellence. They provide a high level of nurturing care so that pupils have memorable stays within the residential houses. Pupils who utilise the residential provision make excellent progress and enjoy a range of positive experiences. One parent reported: 'I don't know what I would do without this service. It really supports my son and me. It is a blessing.'
- Middle leaders are highly effective. Their robust monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been effective in securing rapid improvements in pupils' progress and attainment across the curriculum.
- The curriculum is balanced and provides a range of opportunities for pupils. It is carefully adapted to meet individual pupils' needs. Leaders provide a range of academic and vocational courses including BTECs that inspire pupils to learn. Vocational courses include

media studies, preparation for working life and home cooking. Specialist therapy support is built into pupils' timetables to provide expert individual guidance and to remove barriers to learning.

- Pupils benefit from a very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities such as orienteering, horse riding and kayaking. Regular trips, residential visits and visiting speakers, such as authors, stimulate pupils' interest and creativity. Pupils raise money for charities. They also have the opportunity to complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- Opportunities for encouraging pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values are very well planned. Assemblies and tutorials include a range of topics such as democracy and respect for others. Pupils learn about other cultures and beliefs, for example through visits to a local temple.
- Care staff maintain high standards of communication with their school colleagues and the parents and carers of residential pupils. This helps pupils to transfer the excellent progress they make in the residential houses to the classroom and family home environment. Pupils are supported well with their homework during their time in the residential houses.
- Parents view the school with a high regard. One parent commented: 'I cannot praise the staff highly enough for both their pastoral and academic care. It is genuinely a life-changing place to be.' All parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to others.
- Leaders are rigorous in checking that the school meets the independent school standards for residential special schools.

Governance

- The governance within the Priory Group is highly supportive and committed to the development of the school.
- The regional director has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Staff from Priory Group's team monitor the quality of the school's work, including the performance of the headteacher. They are well informed and have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- The Priory Group ensures that the school complies with the independent school standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders promote a culture of safety and vigilance throughout the school and residential houses. Leaders make sure that recruitment practices are thorough. Staff have read the most up-to-date guidance on 'Keeping children safe in education'. They receive comprehensive training on a broad range of safeguarding topics, including online safety, countering radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety. They are trained on ways to reduce the need for any physical contact between staff and pupils when managing behaviour. The proprietor routinely checks the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Staff make safeguarding referrals in a timely manner and concerns are followed up

appropriately. Leaders work very effectively with other agencies to protect any pupils who might be at risk.

- Risk assessments are highly effective and responsive to incidents. These are individually recorded and clearly guide staff in how best to manage the pupils presenting risks and specific needs.
- The safeguarding policy is available on the website and reflects the latest updates in the statutory guidance.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers and other adults provide highly engaging and effective teaching. As a result, pupils make rapid progress from their low starting points.
- Leaders have successfully ensured that teachers' assessment is accurate by strengthening the moderation of pupils' work. Teachers track the progress that pupils make in their subjects meticulously. Teachers ensure that pupils are provided with learning based on a thorough understanding of their individual needs.
- Relationships are extremely positive between teachers and pupils. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to provide pupils with interesting work that excites them. For example, in a science lesson pupils were fascinated by an experiment to extract DNA from kiwi fruit.
- Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils. They use questioning highly effectively to make pupils think more deeply.
- Literacy and numeracy are taught very effectively across all year groups in the school. For example, in science lessons pupils use key words and technical vocabulary to explain their thinking. Pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are of a high standard. Similarly, numeracy concepts such as graphs and tables are taught effectively.
- Pupils read fluently given their starting points and use their skills to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers use the school's marking and feedback policy consistently. Pupils respond positively to teachers' comments about their work.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and work in close collaboration with teachers to provide a high level of support for all pupils.
- Occasionally, some of the most able pupils are provided with work which they complete quickly and find quite easy. The headteacher has already recognised this. Teaching strategies to provide the most able with work that matches their ability are being refined.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils were keen to tell inspectors how well staff care and support them. One pupil said: 'Teachers are really helpful and support us to make the right decisions.' Another pupil said: 'Staff teach us how to deal with issues and explain things in detail.'

- Pupils are taught how to keep safe, particularly when using social media. Pupils say that they feel safe and know whom to speak to if they are concerned about anything.
- The school's excellent programme of personal, social, health and economic education includes topics related to pupils' welfare and the care of others. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures, including aspects such as equality and diversity. This inclusive approach enables pupils to express their individual identity with complete acceptance by all who care for them.
- Pupils quickly gain self-confidence, a sense of belonging and stability as a result of the encouragement and support that they receive from a dedicated team of care, education and therapy staff. For example, the art therapist works with pupils with complex needs to improve their emotional regulation. As a result, pupils are able to engage again with learning and are calmer and happier.
- Pupils' achievement is celebrated, both academically and socially. Pupils are awarded certificates for good progress, attendance and behaviour in celebration assemblies.
- Pupils have a strong voice. Staff listen to their hopes and wishes, as well as their concerns. As a result, pupils are confident that staff take their views seriously. Complaints are handled sensitively, acted upon and responded to within appropriate timescales. Residential staff create an inclusive environment where diversity is not a barrier that limits pupils' experiences. Residential staff, leaders and managers have high aspirations for all of the pupils.
- Leaders go 'above and beyond' to ensure that all pupils have access to impartial careers advice as well as support from the school staff in this area. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to participate in work-related learning and work experience.
- Pupils have numerous responsibilities around the school that they enjoy, for example being prefects and members of the school council.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning. They demonstrate very high levels of concentration and resilience in activities and tasks. Pupils' work is always well presented.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their rates of attendance are high.
- Pupils take pride in their uniform and arrive to lessons on time, ready to learn.
- Pupils develop safe, caring and thoughtful behaviours towards each other and the staff team. The school is calm during and between lessons, break and lunchtime.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare and if they report an incident, the staff deal with it efficiently.
- Inspection evidence shows that there is a three-year downward trend in physical intervention incidents across the school. There have not been any physical interventions in the residential houses.
- Pupils are proud of their school and keep the school environment free from litter and graffiti.
- Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that behaviour is managed very effectively in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils typically join the school with an incomplete assessment of their learning because of disruption to their previous education. Leaders, teachers and therapists assess pupils' potential as they join the school. Leaders use this information to plan tailored programmes of study that meet pupils' individual needs exceptionally well. From low starting points, pupils make substantial progress in lessons and over time.
- Leaders and teachers recognise that pupils' wider outcomes, including their ability to develop self-esteem, self-confidence and strong communication skills are of equal importance to their academic outcomes. The rapid development of such aspects is a key strength of the school.
- Pupils in Year 6 make rapid gains in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics from the moment that they start at the school.
- Inspection evidence, including observation of learning and scrutiny of pupils' work, shows that most pupils make very rapid progress across a range of subjects including GCSE English, mathematics and science. Pupils also achieve highly in science, history and geography, and additional qualifications in psychology, music and citizenship.
- Leaders do not have detailed information about whether pupils would have been considered disadvantaged elsewhere. Inspectors saw no differences between the strong achievements of pupils from different backgrounds.
- Leaders have developed close links with local colleges to help to broaden pupils' opportunities even further, in areas such as media and catering. Pupils make exceptional progress on these courses.
- The most able pupils are encouraged and challenged to take external examinations when they are ready to achieve a good grade. However, very occasionally, work set for some of the most able pupils in lessons does not offer them sufficient challenge. The headteacher acknowledges that this is an area for improvement.

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

- Teaching and learning are highly individualised and based on secure initial assessments of students' needs. There are excellent systems in place to monitor students' progress. Students appreciate the support that they receive and make strong progress from their starting points.
- The sixth-form centre provides a bright and stimulating environment in which to study. The kitchen area provides a pleasant place in which students can socialise.
- Students behave exceptionally well. They are polite, happy to meet with visitors and willingly give up their time to speak to people.
- Staff are sensitive to students' individual needs. Support for students' emotional and physical well-being is excellent.
- Leaders ensure that students have the opportunity to study personalised learning programmes that help them progress to their chosen career, employment or apprenticeship. Very few students leave the sixth form once they have started their courses.

- A small number of students who join the sixth form from other schools have not previously attained a grade C or grade 4 at GCSE in both English and mathematics. Such students have been successful in passing resit examinations.
- Both academic and vocational courses are equally effective at meeting the needs of students. Leaders use local colleges to enrol students onto some vocational courses. Students also have the opportunity to study A-level subjects, for example mathematics.
- Attendance is very high because students enjoy coming to school. There are robust procedures for monitoring absence and supporting individuals whose attendance drops.
- Students are well informed about the world of work, including participating in work experience. They receive very good careers guidance and support. All of them go on to further education, training and employment.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people in the residential provision

Outstanding

- Pupils enjoy a range of activities, in school, in the residential houses and within the local community. These include sport, pamper evenings, shopping, meals out, going to the leisure centre and local recreational parks. Physical activities, alongside varied and very healthy meals, help to sustain the pupils' health and well-being.
- Staff access specialist health training as required and are supported by a range of on-site professionals, including a clinical psychologist, neurodevelopmental family support worker, speech and language therapist, art therapist and an occupational therapist. This ensures that holistic healthcare for pupils is provided. In addition, their education is less affected as the need to wait for external appointments with professional services is minimised.
- The medication systems in the school and in the residential houses are established and work efficiently to ensure that stock is safely accounted for. Pupils' medication is securely stored and administered safely by trained staff.
- A programme of refurbishment is now complete and has had a significant impact on the school and residential sites. This included the installation of new systems linked to security and fire safety, coupled with a new roof on a residential building. Décor has improved in the residential houses and a new therapy suite is up and running on the school site.
- Inspectors noted the positive relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils are consistent in expressing a high regard about the staff who look after them. Staff work, and pupils live, in a community where equality and diversity are a natural part of the culture. As a result, pupils are able to express their identity with complete acceptance from all those around them.
- Care staff are highly motivated to understand the wishes and feelings of residential pupils. This creates a climate in which pupils feel free to express themselves. Opportunities for pupils to express themselves include: pupils' participation in the school council; discussions with other pupils and staff at mealtimes; residents' meetings; the complaints procedure; and pupils' sessions with key workers. Care staff are secure in their roles and embrace the positive and constructive feedback from residential pupils, parents and carers. They see this feedback as further opportunities for growth and development.
- Equality and diversity are embedded in the culture of the residential houses. Staff support

the pupils to celebrate their individual culture and identity and that of others, for example by promoting and celebrating all festivities and religions. The ethos of a strong community built on shared values is evident throughout the school and within the residential houses.

School details

Unique reference number	119845
Social care unique reference number	SC009656
DfE registration number	888/6020
Inspection number	10038838

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. The inspection of residential provision 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.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent residential special school
Age range of pupils	7 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	72
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	8
Number of part-time pupils	None
Number of boarders on roll	19
Proprietor	Priory New Education Services Ltd
Chair	Simon Coles
Headteacher	David Duncan
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,849–80,595
Annual fees (boarders)	£59,925–112,989
Telephone number	01706 822779
Website	www.priorychildrensservices.co.uk/find-a-location/rossendale-school-ramsbottom
Email address	rossendale@priorygroup.com
Date of previous inspection	30 September – 2 October 2014

Information about this school

- Rossendale School is an independent day and residential special school for pupils aged seven to 18 years.
- The school is situated in a rural environment and has a separate sixth-form provision in a nearby town, close to the school's residential provisions. The residential provision is spread between two sites away from the school. The accommodation consists of single bedrooms and each house offers communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing.
- The school opened in May 1989 as a school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and has evolved to meet the needs of young people with learning difficulties associated with autistic spectrum disorder.
- Prior to starting at Rossendale School, pupils have a history of severe disruption to their education, caused primarily by poor attendance, challenging behaviour or extremely withdrawn and isolating behaviour.
- The school provides both day and residential provision for boys and girls from a variety of local authorities in the north west of England. Residential provision may be weekly or for shorter periods determined in discussion with the school.
- All the pupils and students have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school provides a therapeutic approach to meet the educational, social and emotional needs of the pupils and accesses a wide range of external agencies to meet the needs of the pupils.
- The school has more boys than girls.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school accesses Manchester College and local colleges as appropriate for sixth-form students.
- The school is an active member of the National Association for Special Schools (NASS) and Engage.
- Its last full integrated inspection was in September 2014. The last inspection of residential provision was in February 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors toured all areas of the school, including residential sites and the off-site sixth-form education provision.
- The lead inspector observed teaching and learning across the school. He observed pupils' conduct in lessons and at other times during the school day. The inspector listened to pupils read in lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the head of care. Inspectors met with other senior and middle leaders, a group of teachers and care staff. Inspectors also met with a group of pupils and spoke with other pupils in lessons, around the school and in the residential areas.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the Priory Group education director who has oversight of Rossendale School. The lead inspector also spoke by telephone to a representative of a local authority that places pupils at the school.
- The lead inspector examined pupils' books in a scrutiny of samples of written work across a range of pupils and subjects and in files compiled by the school to provide evidence of the progress that pupils make.
- Inspectors reviewed documents to confirm compliance with the independent residential special schools standards and to provide other inspection evidence. These documents included policies, health and safety records and other safeguarding information, leaders' summaries of pupils' achievement and their own evaluation of the school and improvement plans, as well as external reports and information on behaviour and attendance. Inspectors examined the school's website.
- The lead inspector considered the views of parents, taking into account 13 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 14 free-text responses received from parents. The lead inspector reviewed the findings from the school's own surveys of parents' views conducted. The lead inspector also took account of the views of 45 staff who returned inspection questionnaires. In addition, he looked at a summary of parents' and pupils' views collected by the school.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector

Mark Kersh

Her Majesty's Inspector

Social Care Inspector

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