

Tadley Court School

Tadley Common Road, Tadley, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG26 3TB

Inspection dates

14–16 November 2017

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Sixth form provision | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Inadequate |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's ambitious vision to enable pupils to become successful learners and make progress towards independent living is shared by all staff.
- The proprietors, together with the local governing body, provide high-quality support and challenge to the headteacher and leaders. This has helped the school to improve since the last inspection. The school meets all the independent school standards.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the education their children receive.
- The school's curriculum is highly personalised, so pupils receive exactly what they need.
- Transition arrangements are highly effective. Staff make sure that pupils settle in quickly. Typically, pupils make rapid gains in their social and communication skills when they join the school.
- All staff are totally committed to providing pupils with exceptional care. Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding.
- Pupils rarely miss a day at school. Pupils enjoy school and have confidence in the adults that care for them.
- The sixth form is highly effective and provides outstanding learning experiences. Post-16 learners are prepared exceptionally well for life after they leave school.
- The quality of teaching is good overall. Leaders agree that teachers' planning in Years 5 to 6 could be linked more precisely to long-term aims. In addition, teachers' questions could be sometimes extended to deepen most-able pupils' learning.
- Teachers monitor pupils very closely to make sure pupils make progress. The headteacher analyses progress for different groups of pupils, but this is not yet extended to other leaders, such as senior leaders responsible for parts of the school and leaders of therapeutic services.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective because staff know their pupils so well. All adults ensure that pupils are safe and secure.

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 teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers' questioning is effective in securing knowledge and deepening pupils' understanding, especially for the most able
 - ensuring that medium- to long-term plans show precisely what pupils will learn.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders find out the effect that teaching and therapies have on the progress of groups of pupils, including most-able pupils, within the areas for which they are responsible.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have improved the school substantially. All areas for improvement in the last inspection have been addressed. All independent school standards have been met.
- The headteacher, in post for 18 months, has provided determined and inspirational leadership. In particular, her ambitious vision to enable pupils to become successful learners, and make progress towards independent living, is at the heart of the school's work. The headteacher and senior leaders model well the consistent approach needed to reassure pupils and get the best out of them.
- Staff morale is high. Staff support each other extremely well to ensure that pupils' needs are met. Staff enjoy working at the school. All adults say that they feel valued and they have a high regard for the headteacher and senior leaders. One teacher, expressing the view of many, said, 'I'm inspired and enthused, so consequently my pupils are enthused.'
- The headteacher has developed a positive learning environment for staff, as well as pupils. All staff are trained well in understanding the needs of pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. Adults' skills are developed so that they can provide the best support possible to pupils. A number of teachers have trained at the school, previously being teaching assistants. In this way, the school has a stable staff and teacher succession is planned well.
- The headteacher has developed a comprehensive tracking system so that staff consistently and regularly monitor individuals' progress. The headteacher keeps a close eye on the progress of groups of pupils, such as those that are disadvantaged. Other leaders are beginning to analyse progress of groups of pupils, but this is not yet fully in place.
- Leaders have developed an appropriate curriculum focused on improving pupils' skills and providing academic opportunities. Each pupil's individual needs are matched to an appropriate curriculum. A focus on improving pupils' social and communication skills is at the forefront of all activities. As pupils move through the school, more emphasis is placed on pupils becoming independent. The academic curriculum covers a broad range of subject areas to interest pupils. In addition, regular trips, including to the local community and further afield, help pupils to understand life beyond the classroom.
- Pupils' experiences in the curriculum are greatly enhanced by expert therapeutic services. Education psychologists, an art therapist, an occupational therapist and others form a homogeneous team to support pupils. While there is no doubt that therapies enable individual pupils to make substantial progress, leaders have not yet compared or analysed the effectiveness of different therapeutic services on the improving rates of progress of pupil groups.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to think of others and develop cultural awareness, empathy and moral responsibility. The school participates in many charity events. Pupils often take the lead in developing ideas for such fund-raising activities. In this way, pupils' leadership and social skills are being developed effectively.

- Leaders implement systems for managing the performance of staff well. Staff are supported to improve their practice, should it fall short of the usual high standards across the school.
- All parents who responded to the online questionnaire say the school is well led and managed. The vast majority would recommend the school to other parents. One parent said, 'The school works hard to help my child do the best they can and deal with situations they may face going into adult life.' Another confirmed their satisfaction with the school by saying, 'My young person now has a new life and loves coming to school.'

Governance

- Governance, consisting of personnel from the proprietors, is strong. Those responsible for governance, including the chair of governors, are experienced, knowledgeable and skilled. Governors are committed to supporting the school to secure further improvement.
- Governors know the school well. They regularly visit in order to see the work of the school first hand. They provide helpful support and challenge to the headteacher.
- The proprietors ensure that the headteacher has support from other professionals across their schools. Regular meetings, and visits to other schools, enable the headteacher and other leaders to share expertise and ideas for improvement. The proprietors support the school effectively.
- Governors monitor the effectiveness of spending extra funding for pupils who are disadvantaged. They ensure that it is spent wisely to benefit disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a very strong safeguarding culture in the school. The school's safeguarding policy complies with the latest government legislation and is published on the school's website. Leaders and governors place much emphasis on safeguarding procedures and practices.
- Risk assessments are extremely thorough and take into account controls needed to keep pupils safe. Staff anticipate any likely issues, especially related to pupils' special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, which may affect the safety of individuals. Staff strive to provide opportunities for pupils to become independent, such as visits to swimming pools, while ensuring that pupils stay safe. Excellent communication between staff also contributes to keeping pupils safe.
- The school site is secure. Entry is controlled via a secure gate and the perimeter is fenced. Reception staff check the identity of all visitors. Helpful information is provided to visitors about safeguarding procedures and expectations.
- Leaders ensure that thorough checks are made, prior to employment, on the suitability of staff. All records of checks are meticulously kept in a computerised register.
- The designated safeguarding lead keeps comprehensive records about safeguarding concerns. Leaders' timely communication records, with details of other professionals and agencies, are kept in chronological order. As a result, leaders have a full picture of safeguarding issues and have a complete overview of individual pupils.
- Staff receive regular and comprehensive safeguarding training and engage with up-to-

date guidance. All adults understand how to keep pupils safe, for example from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

- Pupils say they feel safe. Teachers and parents agree that pupils are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers know their pupils very well. Classes each have about five pupils with a wide range of needs. Teachers adjust learning activities well to match each pupil's ability. As a result of good teaching, pupils receive a highly consistent experience and make good progress.
- Teachers support pupils well when pupils first come to the school. Often leaders and teachers will visit pupils before they join the school to find out about their needs and win their trust. As a result, staff make sure that pupils' first learning experiences are positive and pupils achieve initial success. Pupils settle in quickly once they join the school.
- Teaching assistants work effectively to meet pupils' needs. They make a valuable contribution to pupils' successes. They quickly refocus pupils on their learning tasks, should the need arise.
- Good teaching in the primary phase ensures that pupils engage well. Teachers and teaching assistants have provided a calm learning environment with appropriately stimulating displays.
- Teachers are aware of pupils' anxieties, and carefully guide them so they become more confident. Because of constant reinforcement and instant verbal feedback by teachers and teaching assistants, pupils make steady and sometimes rapid progress.
- Teachers plan activities pitched appropriately to pupils' needs and abilities. Daily planning builds on pupils' previous learning. Teachers are adept at changing plans as a result of previous success or lack of progress. However, medium- to longer-term plans are not yet sufficiently detailed to help teachers plan towards longer-term goals. Leaders have rightly identified this aspect of teaching and learning for improvement.
- Teachers' questioning is effective in finding out whether pupils have understood the learning intention. Pupils respond eagerly to teachers, using symbols or signs should it be necessary. Teachers' questioning has not yet been fully extended to deepen most-able pupils' learning. Leaders are aware of this and have already planned an investigation into the effectiveness of teacher questioning on pupils' progress.
- The teaching of writing in English provides opportunity for pupils to practise skills in real-life scenarios. For example, older pupils wrote a letter to persuade the headteacher to develop their ideas. Pupils considered well the language required, skilfully supported by the teacher and teaching assistants. Pupils have less opportunity to write sentences and paragraphs in other subjects.
- Pupils are encouraged to read widely. Often a topic of work is planned around a particular text. In one class, pupils were studying 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' and listened closely to the teacher. A well-stocked library provides a range of reading material, and pupils read often.
- The teaching of mathematics provides structured experiences to help pupils understand number, measurement and shape. Teachers provide equipment and aids, such as number

lines and counters, to help pupils grasp mathematical concepts. As a result, pupils make steady progress in mathematics.

- Parents are provided with timely information and detailed written reports twice a year as part of the assessments towards the pupils' education, health and care plans. Records show regular weekly communication between staff and parents by email or telephone.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are cared for exceptionally well. All adults are kind, compassionate and totally committed to ensuring that pupils are safe and secure.
- Leaders understand the unique nature of each pupil's needs. They organise effective strategies to support pupils who may need a different level of care. For example, pupils new to the school may need an individual secure space. Other pupils may need a mobile classroom as they cannot settle into a particular area. All pupils' welfare needs are met exceptionally well.
- Staff go to great lengths to ensure that they can communicate effectively with pupils. Use of symbols and signs enables pupils to understand others and, in turn, others to understand them. For some pupils, this may be the first time in a place of learning that they have thrived. Consequently, pupils feel secure in the knowledge that should they have a problem, they can make themselves heard.
- Leaders take great care to develop pupils' independent living skills. They have carefully balanced wraparound support with encouraging pupils to think for themselves. A skilled, independent advocate helps pupils to consider their futures well. Outside speakers, such as police community support officers, come to visit to help pupils understand life outside school.
- Staff, parents and pupils report that bullying is rare. Staff tackle bullying behaviour well, should it occur. Records of incidents are kept, including details of how bullying incidents are resolved.
- As a result of the excellent standards of care and welfare, the school is a peaceful and calm haven. Pupils thrive in this positive learning environment. Parents comment that their children are well looked after and happy at school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They behave exceptionally well because expectations are clear.
- Staff think carefully about helping pupils to be ready to learn. As a consequence, pupils are keen to learn and have a go at learning activities. Adults use rewards and sanctions well to encourage excellent standards of pupil behaviour.
- Most pupils join the school with complex behavioural needs. Over their time at the school, pupils make significant progress in managing their behaviour.

- Adults manage pupils' occasional extreme behaviours linked to their SEN and/or disabilities very effectively. Strategies to manage each pupil are well known by staff, so that consistent and calm action is taken to dissipate incidents. As a consequence, peace is quickly restored and there is no negative impact on other pupils' learning.
- Pupils rarely miss a day at school. Attendance is exceedingly high, well above the national average for all schools.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enter the school at different ages. Many pupils join the school having had fragmented educational experiences in the past. All pupils are diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder and many also have complex learning needs.
- Pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge and skills on entry to the school. Leaders carry out meticulous assessment procedures so that the exact needs of the pupils are thoroughly understood. Classes are organised by academic and verbal capabilities. Leaders focus on pupils' needs, and excellent transition arrangements mean that pupils settle in quickly.
- Pupils, including those that are disadvantaged, make rapid progress, especially in their social and communication skills, from when they first join the school.
- Teachers carry out frequent assessments to check progress. The headteacher stated, 'We concentrate on making sure the pupils are successful with making small steps, so they add up to bigger ones.' Should a pupil fall behind, teachers plan to revisit learning for them. Teachers make sure that pupils' learning is secure. As a result, over time, pupils make good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans.
- Leaders have concentrated on improving pupils' literacy skills. A strategic reading programme has helped to improve pupils' reading and comprehension skills. Teachers implement well alternative strategies for those pupils that are not able to link sounds of letters to their symbol. As a result, pupils make at least good progress in reading.
- Progress in mathematics overall is good. Pupils have the opportunity to learn and apply mathematical concepts to real-life problems. Pupils' problem-solving skills are developed appropriately.
- Pupils' writing in English across the year groups shows good progress. They have opportunities to write for a variety of purposes. Pupils at key stage 2 develop literacy skills well. The most able pupils develop extended writing for a variety of purposes, such as writing to persuade.
- In other subjects, pupils' writing is less well developed. Most-able pupils do not produce extended pieces of writing consistently across the curriculum. Therefore, most-able pupils do not make quite the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils are prepared well for their next stages of education. Most pupils stay on to the sixth form at the school.

Sixth form provision

Outstanding

- Leaders have developed a highly effective sixth form where pupils thrive. Sixth-form leaders, teachers and support staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The curriculum is uniquely developed. Students follow a vocational and life skills-based pathway, including English, mathematics, and information and communication technology. Many pupils remain in the sixth form for three years to consolidate learning. As a result of a well-planned curriculum, pupils develop skills and knowledge to prepare them exceptionally well for their next stage of education.
- All pupils gain externally accredited qualifications, including ASDAN (a curriculum development organisation and awarding body) certificates. Pupils experience success in functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology.
- The numbers of awards pupils achieve have been increasing in recent years. However, due to the small number of pupils, comparisons to national figures cannot be meaningfully made.
- Teaching is highly effective. Teachers plan precisely, with clear links between short-term goals and longer-term standards required by examination boards. Consequently, learning activities flow very well, providing rich evidence for accredited awards.
- Teachers know exactly what is required to help pupils learn. Teaching provides the right combination of challenge, encouragement and support. Teaching of English and mathematics focuses on the acquisition of basic skills and applying of them effectively to real-life scenarios. Pupils respond very positively and learn well. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. Staff work with unfailing care to provide excellent support. Pupils have very positive working relationships with each other and staff. Adults understand well the importance of pupils developing independence. They successfully encourage pupils to become more resilient.
- The senior leader goes to great lengths to ensure that all pupils have a voice in order to improve provision. Staff collect pupils' views through discussion and online questionnaires. For pupils that need it, staff provide a picture version of the questionnaire, so all views are captured well. As a result, 'pupil voice' is considered well by leaders so they can improve provision further.
- Retention rates are extremely high, with almost all pupils staying on to post-16 provision. Most pupils do not leave during the sixth form.
- The sixth-form bespoke area is well designed with pupils' next steps in mind. A common room, complete with social and games area, provides an effective experience similar to the environment in other post-16 colleges. A kitchen and dining area, similar to one in a small flat, helps pupils to practise cooking skills. Leaders have thoughtfully provided an environment that prepares pupils well for life after they leave school.
- Leaders manage pupils' transition out of the school exceptionally well. Depending on pupils' needs, discussions are held with independent careers advisers and other professionals to find the most appropriate future placement. Staff accompany pupils to visits and interviews, prior to the new placement, to provide reassuring additional

support. If needed, staff go with the pupils when they start the new placement, ensuring successful transition for all pupils.

- Pupils typically move on to further education specialist colleges, work placements, or to supported living with, or without, a work placement.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 131531 |
| DfE registration number | 850/6085 |
| Inspection number | 10025981 |

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.

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| 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 | 44 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 20 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Priory Education Services Ltd |
| Chair | Phil Jonas |
| Headteacher | Lesley Walkden |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £67,350 to £95,000 |
| Telephone number | 01189 817 720 |
| Website | www.priorychildrensservices.co.uk/find-a-location/tadley-court-school-hampshire/ |
| Email address | tadleyschool@priorygroup.com |
| Date of previous inspection | 1 July 2014 |

Information about this school

- Tadley Court School is owned by Priory Education and Children's Services.
- Tadley Court School is an independent special school providing education for young people between five and 19 years who have autistic spectrum disorders with highly complex behavioural, learning, physiological and psychological difficulties and disabilities.

All pupils have education, health and care plans.

- The school was registered as an independent residential special school. It now operates as a day school.
- Around half of the pupils live in residential accommodation provided by Priory Group. There are six children's homes attached to the school, four of which are situated on the school site. Around a third of pupils are children looked after by the local authority.
- The headteacher, in recent times, has restructured the school. Pupils aged five to 16 are settled in the main part of the school. The post-16 pupils reside in a bespoke sixth-form area, apart from a small number who need specialist sensory support.
- The last integrated inspection of education and welfare took place in November 2013 and was judged as inadequate. A monitoring inspection in July 2014 reported the school was making good progress in implementing the action plan.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders. The inspector also considered 37 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and one other governor.
- The inspector met with an education psychologist about therapies.
- A meeting was held with the designated safeguarding lead, the school business manager and the compliance manager.
- The inspector met with a parent and considered 12 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning in around 18 learning sessions. The headteacher accompanied the inspector during all observations.
- The inspector carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work across the year groups and subjects. The inspector spoke with a number of pupils during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents, including: the school self-evaluation and improvement plan; analysis of the school's performance information; information relating to the behaviour and attendance of pupils; safeguarding and child protection records; and minutes from governors' meetings.

Inspection team

Sue Child, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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