

Clay Hill School

Clay Hill, Lyndhurst, Hampshire SO43 7DE

Inspection dates

21–23 November 2017

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 headteacher's resolute leadership has driven the school forward at a good pace. Leaders are intensely focused on their aim of providing a first-rate education.
- The school has continued to improve. Although leaders readily identify the school's priorities, work to evaluate the difference that leaders' actions make could be strengthened.
- Staff are well attuned to the needs of each pupil. This helps them to guide pupils to make good progress. Thorough monitoring and support are enabling teaching and learning to go from strength to strength.
- The majority of pupils, including those in the sixth form and those who attend the child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) unit make good progress. Many go on to achieve external awards, including in English and mathematics, up to GCSE level.
- The learning environment is calm and purposeful and some pupils show real delight in learning well. However, pupils' appreciation and enjoyment of reading is less well developed.
- The school's curriculum meets pupils' needs well. Nevertheless, pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is less well promoted.
- The school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that the work of the multidisciplinary team is effectively entwined within pupils' education plans. Pupils behave well and are well cared for.
- The school's sixth-form provision provides students with good support and bespoke programmes of learning. Students make good progress although the range of accredited qualifications and the complexity of careers guidance could be extended further.
- Safeguarding procedures are of the highest calibre. The curriculum is used well to enhance pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Keeping pupils safe is at the top of everyone's priorities.
- Those with responsibility for governance fulfil their duties well. All share in the highest level of commitment to promoting ongoing improvement.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 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?

- Further strengthen the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the school's action plans include measurable milestones so that leaders are able to evaluate the impact of their actions on promoting ongoing school improvement
 - ensuring that assessment information gathered is accurate
 - enhancing pupils' understanding of modern British values
 - making greater use of subject leaders' action planning so that it aligns more strongly with the overall aims of the school.
- Strengthen the school's curriculum, particularly in the sixth form, by:
 - further extending the range of accreditations on offer to meet pupils' needs
 - ensuring that careers guidance fully supports and promotes pupils' aspirations.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher leads with purpose, taking a prominent role in ensuring that the school develops highly effective systems, including those that track how well pupils are progressing. He is determined to craft a provision where the focus is firmly centred on high-quality teaching and learning. Since the previous inspection, and following an increase in numbers, the school has continued to improve. Together, leaders are building firm foundations on which the school can continue to thrive. All the independent school standards, as at the last inspection, continue to be met.
- The school's SENCo promotes strong communication between pupils' many placing authorities and the school. She also takes a lead role in monitoring the quality of pupils' learning experiences. Key to the school's success is ensuring that all pupils' therapy needs are understood and promoted effectively during their learning times. The SENCo provides knowledgeable and high-quality support to leaders, holding pupils' best interests firmly at the centre of her work.
- Leaders set appropriate priorities for improvement, including for the CAMHS unit. However, leaders' intended outcomes are not precise enough. This impedes leaders' capacity to fully evaluate the difference that they are making to pupils' learning and development.
- Middle leadership has begun to strengthen since the previous inspection. More staff now hold greater responsibility for the school's development. Nevertheless, although there are insightful action plans for subject development, such as for reading, leaders are yet to align key actions from these with the school's overall aims.
- The headteacher has developed an effective performance management system that supports improvements to teaching and outcomes for pupils. Leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning, providing knowledgeable and useful feedback to staff. Staff are highly committed to their ongoing professional development and are well prepared for the demands of their roles. The school's work is enhanced by a terrific team spirit where everyone is dedicated to playing their part.
- The curriculum is carefully planned. Pupils follow individualised programmes of learning that are tailored to their specific needs. As well as the core subjects of English and mathematics, pupils study a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programme. Work to develop more fully the range of accredited courses available in the sixth form is under way. For example, pupils will soon be able to access a greater range of vocational pathways.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is well thought through so that both pupils' individual needs and their enjoyment of learning are promoted well. Therapeutic support, such as occupational therapy, is carefully woven into the weekly curriculum. Pupils take part in a range of appealing additional activities off-site, including trampolining and swimming. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of appropriate activities and meets pupils' individual needs well.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' personal development is promoted well by the opportunities available. Leaders have

successfully created a culture where equal opportunity is the norm. Weekly assemblies are used well to celebrate achievement but also to consider special days such as the international Peace Day.

- A good range of information about the school is provided for both prospective and current parents through the regularly updated website. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and the school's activities through detailed termly reports, the headteacher's termly newsletter and the annual yearbook produced for parents by pupils. Pupils' reporting in the yearbook is of high quality. One parent commented that: 'Communication is outstanding. I am informed of the work and how the days go, not just from the staff but from my son too.'
- Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were positive in their praise of the school. For example, one parent commented: 'After struggling in mainstream education for several years, our son moved into Clay Hill and it totally transformed our lives. Our son is happier, in school full time, and making progress academically, socially and emotionally.' Most parents said they would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is highly effective. Those responsible for governance hold leaders to account rigorously. This means that the quality of education is sustaining an upward trajectory since the school opened. Governors and members of the Priory Group are clear on their roles and responsibilities and offer a high level of scrutiny. Leaders and governors work together well. There is a shared and impressive level of motivation to improve the school further.
- The proprietor monitors the school's performance in a number of ways. Systems to evaluate the school's effectiveness are fully understood and comprehensive. For example, regular quality assurance is undertaken by experienced professionals. The work of the proprietor and those responsible for governance has an excellent impact on improving all aspects of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school complies with all elements of the independent school standards regarding the safety of pupils, including publishing a suitable safeguarding policy on its website. A comprehensive suite of policies and procedures for safeguarding and health and safety are routinely reviewed and updated.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance are exceptionally rigorous in the recruitment of staff. For example, they are all determined that staff do not take up their roles until all checks are completed and fully in place. All staff receive regular and thorough training. As a result, staff implement the school's safeguarding procedures confidently and knowledgeably. Expectations are clearly understood.
- The school's regional designated lead for safeguarding makes a significant contribution to the development of a culture in which the well-being of pupils is paramount. There are robust procedures in place to oversee all aspects. Senior staff, including those from the therapy team, meet on a weekly basis to review the school's approaches. As a result, any issues or concerns are kept at the forefront of everyone's work.

- Pupils are taught to stay safe. Leaders and school staff recognise the vulnerability of their pupils and understand the importance of ensuring that the PSHE curriculum for pupils' personal health and safety education meets pupils' needs well. For example, local uniformed police officers regularly eat lunch with pupils, building positive relationships. During the inspection, in a PSHE session, older pupils were able to explore the packaging of different medicines and learn about the importance of taking medication safely.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Expectations are high. Staff understand pupils' learning and emotional needs, all sharing a strong determination that pupils achieve well. There is excellent teamwork in all classes. Learning is planned effectively, with all staff using their knowledge of each pupil very well. This personalised approach to learning enables pupils to make good progress.
- Activities are planned well to cater for the mixed-age groups and pupils' individual learning, communication and social development needs. Tasks are appropriately adapted and broken down into small steps so that pupils can access and complete work that matches their levels of understanding. Teachers provide a variety of approaches and tailor resources to promote independence, motivating and engaging pupils well.
- Staff offer meaningful praise when pupils experience success, using comments such as 'Good effort' and 'Well done, that was tricky.' Abundant encouragement helps pupils to establish their good behaviour and work habits, so that learning activities promote pupils' strong progress across the curriculum.
- The school's induction and training programme supports staff well. Consequently, teachers have developed appropriate skills and expertise to meet the needs of pupils with autism and complex learning issues. Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively together to provide well-judged support to enable pupils to achieve their best.
- Teachers place appropriate emphasis on the development of pupils' literacy, communication and numeracy skills. Staff seize on opportunities to make meaningful links to other subjects. For example, in a food technology lesson, pupils were encouraged to weigh and measure out ingredients carefully. As a result, their understanding of number and measure also developed well.
- Pupils feel confident in the adults who care for them. In some lessons, moments of shared humour pepper the atmosphere. This is particularly the case in primary, where the youngest pupils are already building a very strong relationship with adults, even able to confidently share a joke appropriately. Teachers strike just the right balance between learning well and having fun.
- Teaching assistants make a helpful contribution to pupils' success. They know pupils well and therefore are adept at redirecting pupils should the need arise. They know when to prompt or support and when to allow time for pupils to process information to support their own learning.
- The teaching of phonics and early reading skills in the primary department is effective. However, opportunities to promote a love of reading more widely are less well developed, including for older pupils. The school has plans to develop a library but this is at a very early stage. Consequently, the range of reading material available to pupils is too limited.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff understand pupils' needs well and give them excellent care and support. All activities, both in and out of school, are well planned with full and detailed risk assessments. This means that staff are highly alert to pupils' individual needs, and keeping pupils safe is kept at the forefront of everybody's work.
- The school site is managed carefully. Leaders' safety expectations are shared habitually with all visitors. Staff watchfully supervise pupils while also encouraging their independence, particularly at playtimes. Levels of vigilance are adapted appropriately should the need arise. Pupils play together well, sharing resources amicably.
- Pupils integrate well with one another and some form significant friendships. Although there are some instances of bullying, these are logged carefully, the issues fully explored and then effectively resolved.
- The majority of parents are highly satisfied with the level of care received by their children. Several comment on the marked improvement in their child's experience of education after joining Clay Hill School.
- Pupils have a strong voice through the school council. Pupils are listened to and their views are taken into account when discussing key issues. They make decisions about how to use their funding allocation and are adept at considering the views of others.
- Nevertheless, pupils' understanding of fundamental British values is at an early stage. Pupils recently gained some insight into the value of democracy, participating in school councillor elections. However, pupils' understanding of other modern values current in British society are less well developed.
- Pupils who attend off-site provision such as Sparsholt College and the CAMHS unit are able to follow a full range of appropriate courses. Staff work closely with alternative providers to enable these pupils to succeed and to check that they are safe. However, work to ensure that pupils receive independent careers advice about possible future pathways is at an early stage.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils typically demonstrate high levels of focus and concentration in lesson times. Many gain a high level of personal satisfaction when learning about new things or mastering a new skill. For example, in a lesson about Norman castles, older pupils were fascinated to find out more about the key features of castles, such as the keep. Their enthusiasm for the topic was infectious.
- Attendance has risen since the previous year and most pupils attend regularly. However, occasionally pupils' attendance is affected by their highly complex social and emotional needs. Leaders work diligently to improve pupils' participation in education, and for many there is a marked improvement. Nevertheless, from time to time, strategies to re-engage a minority of pupils are less successful.

- Leaders keep detailed records of pupils' behaviour. Since the previous inspection, there has been a reduction in the number of serious incidents. The relaxed ethos throughout the school epitomises this accomplishment. For example, breaktimes are calm and sociable occasions. Adults and pupils chat openly, enjoying one another's company beyond the classroom.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- When pupils arrive at the school, most have experienced difficulties in their learning, behaviour and attendance. All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. Many have not accessed education for extensive periods of time. As a result, they join the school with lower than typical literacy and numeracy levels.
- When joining the school, pupils are quickly offered support from a range of sources, including that of experienced therapists. As a result, pupils are able to access learning activities successfully and make good and sustained progress from their starting points in English, mathematics and other subjects such as history and food technology.
- Pupils quickly get to grips with each next step and make good gains in a range of subjects. The majority of pupils, including those who attend the CAMHS unit, go on to achieve accreditations. Some gain GCSE qualifications by the end of Year 11, including in mathematics and English. This represents strong progress from pupils' starting points.
- At key stage 2, younger pupils are all making good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. They demonstrate good attitudes to learning and tackle each task with infectious enthusiasm. They listen well in class and respond effectively to staff instructions and guidance. There are no pupils in key stage 1 currently.
- Pupils who attend the CAMHS unit are registered with their home school. Nevertheless, leaders track their achievement closely. Some achieve well, including obtaining a range of GCSE qualifications. The deputy headteacher keeps a close eye, ensuring that despite these pupils' complex medical difficulties all are supported to achieve well.
- Leaders and staff track pupils' outcomes carefully. Small numbers of pupils mean that every individual is monitored closely, both academically and socially. However, work to check the accuracy of the information gathered is at an early stage. Leaders have plans in place to strengthen this aspect.
- Some pupils, depending on their interests, follow a vocational route, studying courses like small animal handling at a local college. Pupils are prepared well for their next steps because of the quality of systems for transition from the school to colleges or the sixth form provision. Pupils would benefit from even more ambitious careers advice.
- Over time, pupils make excellent progress in the development of their social skills. This is because pupils quickly develop confidence in the adults who care for them. Learning time is often punctuated with appropriate moments of humour because pupils and adults are perfectly at home in each other's company. Moments of interruption are rare because the number of serious incidents has reduced dramatically since the previous inspection.

Sixth form provision

Good

- The school's sixth form provision is good. This year, for the first time, students are following a programme of activities overseen by a neighbouring Priory Group school, Coxlease School. Many of the school's broader strengths apply equally to this department. This includes leadership and management, and the quality of teaching and learning, which are all highly effective.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form, including those who attend the CAMHS unit. Sixth form students work towards a range of vocational and life skills qualifications. All students continue to develop their English and mathematics skills at whatever level is appropriate to them. Students behave well and their attendance is excellent.
- The breadth of the curriculum available to students in the sixth form is kept under constant review. School leaders have set expansion of the curriculum offer, including vocational strands such as beauty and hairdressing, as a key priority for improvement. This approach is well judged.
- Students follow a range of externally accredited awards, including independent living skills and work-related courses, such as construction. These are suitable topics for most students. However, there are currently not sufficient opportunities for some pupils to broaden their areas of study. As a result, future pathways remain relatively narrow.
- The school ensures that all pupils receive good support for their transition to the next stage of education, provision or training. During the inspection, staff accompanied pupils to potential college placements to take part in taster afternoons. They helped students to become familiar with potential future settings and begin to engage in making appropriate choices for their futures. The school is successful in enabling students to gain entry to college courses, including in the sixth form.

School details

Unique reference number	140046
DfE registration number	850/6090
Inspection number	10033963

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	25
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	7
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Priory Education Services Ltd
Chair	Simon Coles
Headteacher	Daniel Goldstraw
Annual fees (day pupils)	£64,000
Telephone number	02380 283 633
Website	www.priorychildrensservices.co.uk/find-a-location/clay-hill-school-hampshire
Email address	danielgoldstraw@priorygroup.com
Date of previous inspection	3–4 June 2014

Information about this school

- Clay Hill School is an independent, co-educational special school and is part of Priory Education Services, within the wider Priory Group.
- It opened in April 2014. It is registered to provide full-time education for up to 46 pupils, aged from five to 19, who have autistic spectrum conditions, attachment disorder and

associated complex needs. The headteacher is also the headteacher of Home Farm School, a different school also belonging to the Priory Group.

- The school was last inspected in June 2014 when it met all the independent school standards. The headteacher joined in September 2015, having previously worked in a different role for the Priory Group. The deputy headteacher took up the substantive role in March 2017.
- Since the previous inspection, on two separate occasions, the school has applied for a material change to increase its numbers. In 2015, the school increased its numbers from 25 to 41. This was because the school became responsible for education at a 16-bed CAMHS unit, which forms part of the Priory Hospital, Southampton. In May 2017, the school further increased its numbers from 41 to 46 after making adaptations to the main school building to allow for more pupils.
- Up to 14 of the pupils can be accommodated weekly, termly or for 52 weeks a year in the Priory Group's residential accommodation.
- The school is situated in extensive National Trust grounds in the New Forest. The sixth form provision is delivered by Coxlease School, which caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. This is also owned by the Priory Group.
- All pupils have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education, and some have had considerable periods when they have not been in school, prior to attending Clay Hill School. Many have been placed by their local authority. Approximately 13 local authorities place pupils at the school.
- The school aims to 'provide a warm and welcoming, yet structured environment, which encourages children and young people to develop the social, educational and practical skills they require to enjoy and achieve'.
- The majority of pupils are White British.
- The school uses a number of alternative providers including Sparsholt College, Coxlease School, Noadswood School and King Edward VI School. School leaders have also worked collaboratively with Upper Shirley High (USH) School in Southampton to develop the school's assessment systems.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out a number of classroom visits during the inspection, all accompanied by either the headteacher or deputy headteacher. During classroom visits, the inspector assessed pupils' work and talked to some pupils about the progress they were making.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, representatives of the proprietor, including those responsible for governance, and other staff with significant responsibilities.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, at playtime and lunchtime, and as they moved around the school. The inspector also observed a school council meeting.
- The inspector looked at a range of pupils' work and records of achievement.
- The inspector considered five responses to Parent View, and four narrative comments. The inspector also spoke to a parent via telephone.
- The inspector analysed 30 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of school documents and policies, including those regarding safeguarding and other aspects of the independent school standards, and reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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