

Inspection of Chelmsford Hospital School

Stump Lane, Springfield Green, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 7SJ

Inspection dates: 14–16 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff support pupils outstandingly well. Many pupils initially refuse to attend education as they see this as a contributory factor to their state of mind. Over time, pupils attend very well. The vast majority now attend most of the time. These are immense achievements.

Pupils are often unable to keep themselves safe. Some are a danger to others. The exceptional care, attention and supervision that staff provide keeps everyone safe. Teachers understand pupils' conditions but instil a 'take responsibility for your actions' ethos. This approach helps pupils to manage their anxieties and to live with others more easily.

Staff painstakingly build relationships with pupils, which develops trust and increases pupils' involvement in education. Teachers plan activities linked to pupils' needs and interests, so that pupils quickly grow in confidence and start to establish routines.

Pupils study the work they need to so that they can either start to catch up or at least not fall further behind. Pupils regain confidence and learn how to learn again. They flourish in the supportive and nurturing environment. It helps them emerge from a dark place and start to rebuild their lives. They are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their recovery.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

On arrival, pupils' crippling anxieties have reached crisis point. Often unable to function socially and emotionally, many have fallen way behind academically. Admissions are not planned. Leaders have to make sure the curriculum is incredibly flexible to meet pupils' needs – it is.

Staff provide different learning programmes. The 'Return to Learn' or 'Recovery through Art' pathways are designed specifically for pupils exhibiting the riskiest behaviours. Other programmes are linked to what pupils have previously studied. Teachers adapt programmes daily, based on the latest medical feedback. They have high standards and encourage pupils to take part.

Initially, staff spend time encouraging pupils to come out of their room. This develops into longer conversations to uncover pupils' interests. Teachers gradually plan individual projects based on what pupils like. Previous activities linked to Star Wars or table tennis, for example, have helped to build pupils' engagement. Staff show remarkable patience, resilience and flexibility to help pupils overcome their unwillingness to learn.

Pupils' average length of stay is about seven weeks. Staff continually assess pupils' work and collate this with information received from handovers and ward rounds.

Pupils' progress is updated daily and confirmed through weekly checks. Staff use the information exceptionally well.

As pupils become more confident, staff work closely with home schools and parents to keep work relevant. The focus moves to establishing clear routines that provide pupils with further stability. Pupils learn useful life skills, including budgeting, cooking and how to keep fit. Alongside individual careers advice, the skills prepare pupils extremely well for when they leave. Staff skilfully guide, support and encourage pupils back into education that is more formal. Teachers' ability to continually evaluate and adapt the curriculum is a key feature in aiding pupils' swift recovery. In a short space of time, pupils successfully go back into the community. Crucially, the service also helps pupils to keep themselves safe. This is exceptional work.

Staff expect a lot of pupils. Pupils learn to meet the high standards of behaviour expected of them. In lessons, pupils are focused, listen attentively and work hard. The strong relationships with staff are rooted in respect and trust. Staff embody a culture of 'no excuses'. Courtesy and respect are non-negotiable.

Leaders demonstrate determination and adaptability. They respond quickly to the ever-changing cohorts and to the needs of pupils within those cohorts. Leaders are on a journey of continuous improvement. Staff are trained well so that they are equipped with the skills and qualities they need to meet pupils' needs. The school's accessibility plan shows how leaders ensure that pupils have equality of opportunity. This is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Leaders have created an environment where staff feel valued, respected and part of a team.

Leaders forge close links with the medical teams, home schools, colleges, parents and the community. All are fulsome in their praise for the provision. Parents feel reassured by the high quality of the provision and see the changes to their children's lives. Parents highlight the efficiency and regular communication of staff that keeps them fully involved in the process.

Governors are knowledgeable about the provision. They bring a range of essential qualities and experiences to the role. The group provides valuable support through their wide network of schools. Governors monitor the school's effectiveness closely through their challenge activity schedule. Any shortfalls are addressed quickly. Regular audits ensure the school continues to meet all of the independent school standards.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Recruitment processes are comprehensive and rigorous. All relevant checks are made for adults' suitability to work with pupils.

Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and fulfil them meticulously. Safeguarding issues are shared in a timely manner and referred onwards where appropriate. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of pupils' needs, their circumstances and any potential dangers to their safety. Highly effective measures are in place to continually update pupils' risk assessments, and, as a result, pupils remain safe.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the provider and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	142537
DfE registration number	881/6065
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10125220
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Priory Education Services Limited
Chair	Andy Cobley
Headteacher	Clare Drury
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,250
Telephone number	01245 345 345
Website	www.priorychildrensservices.co.uk
Email address	ChelmsfordHospitalSchool@PrioryGroup.com
Date of previous inspection	7–9 March 2017

Information about this school

- The school is based at the Priory Hospital in Chelmsford. It is attached to a ward in the hospital's child and adolescent mental health services unit, which provides psychiatric assessment and treatment for 11- to 18-year-olds.
- The school opened on 1 January 2015. On 3 February 2016, the school was registered with the Department for Education. The school is registered to provide full-time education for 17 pupils aged 11 to 18 years.

- The school caters for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, specifically pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have an educational, health and care plan.
- Pupils access the educational provision through being admitted to the hospital as inpatients, often under The Mental Health Act 1983.
- The hospital and school are owned and run by the Priory Group.
- The headteacher in post at the time of the previous inspection is now the executive headteacher and is also a member of the local governing body.
- The current headteacher was appointed at Easter 2017.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There is no separate sixth form. Pupils of all ages are taught together in two large classrooms. All pupils have individual learning programmes.
- Inspection history: Ofsted conducted a pre-registration inspection on 19 January 2016, and the school was inspected by Ofsted in March 2017. At that time, all of the independent school standards were met and the school was judged to be outstanding.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We did deep dives in English, mathematics, science, and personal, social, and health education. We met with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils, and looked at pupils' work in these subjects. We also spoke with pupils and staff about different aspects of the school.
- We spoke with the headteacher, the executive headteacher, three members of the governing body, and other staff in the school. One inspector held a telephone conversation with the managing director of the group.
- We spoke by telephone to parents, representatives from local authorities, and home-school staff, who work closely with staff from the provision.
- We scrutinised a range of information from the school, including leaders' self-evaluations, the school's development plan, and their behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records. We spoke to pupils, staff and the designated safeguarding lead about procedures to keep pupils safe.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for inspectors to consider. We took note of the four responses to the parental

free-text facility, as well as the four responses from staff who completed Ofsted's survey of staff's views. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey.

Inspection team

John Randall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Cox

Ofsted Inspector

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