

Inspection of Ticehurst Hospital School

Ticehurst House, Ticehurst, Wadhurst, East Sussex TN5 7HU

Inspection dates: 11–13 March 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

Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely well cared for in this school. Staff create a calm atmosphere for pupils and treat them with respect. Pupils are kind and supportive of each other. Bullying is very rare. Staff skilfully de-escalate any outbursts pupils have due to the nature of their illness or special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

When pupils arrive at the hospital, they are in crisis. Some are often unable to keep themselves safe. Initially, many are not able to engage in education. Adults' tremendously sensitive and nurturing approach ensures that pupils feel they are in a place of safety. This helps pupils to re-engage with education. Their attendance improves greatly over time. Pupils say they like attending the school because 'it stops me thinking about being ill'.

The curriculum is expertly tailored to meet each individual's interests and needs. Some pupils keep up with work provided by their school. Others study alternative courses that better suit their current needs. Throughout, there is an exceptionally strong focus on helping pupils to understand themselves and the world they live in. Over time, this helps pupils grow in confidence and start to think more positively about their lives. This is an impressive feat.

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

Teachers' extremely patient and flexible approach to re-engaging pupils in learning and life is outstanding. Teachers make sure that they get to know every aspect of pupils' different needs, interests and past achievements. They use this knowledge to plan bespoke activities that build pupils' learning in small steps. Each activity is adapted daily based on pupils' medical needs. Often, tasks have practical or tactile outcomes. For example, in science pupils made their own pizzas to show how cells are made up. In citizenship, pupils made colourful tissue-paper flowers as they learned about the Hindu festival of Holi. As pupils start to join in, they experience success as they learn. Teachers know that this is vitally important, because this sense of achievement helps pupils to become more confident. Over time, pupils feel able to participate more in planning what they want to learn and how, which is a real sign that the curriculum is working.

The attention teachers pay to pupils' personal development is exceptional. Adults have high expectations of pupils. Much of the curriculum is focused on developing communication skills. Pupils' anxieties mean that most find talking to others extremely difficult. Teachers expertly help pupils to learn to talk to each other during lessons. For example, in English pupils are encouraged to present to the class on a topic of interest. In citizenship, pupils learn how to discuss issues as part of a group. As pupils' confidence grows, they are helped to re-engage with the community, for example by going to have a hair-cut or visiting the supermarket. For most, these are huge achievements.

When they join the school, pupils are often unable to imagine a positive or long-term future for themselves. Teachers encourage all pupils, especially those in the sixth form, to start to think constructively about their futures and next stages. This is done with immense sensitivity and in manageable steps. Visitors who talk about different career paths help broaden pupils' thinking. Leaders provide bespoke work experience opportunities. They adapt the curriculum, so pupils can gain qualifications in the career pathway they are interested in. Pupils are able to attend careers fayres and university taster days, and they receive help with job and university applications.

As pupils reach the end of their time in the school, staff skilfully prepare them for what will happen next. For some, this might be moving to a different type of provision. For others, it might mean going back into the community and returning to their school. Much time is devoted to making sure that pupils are able to cope with this. In particular, staff ensure that pupils have a range of strategies to keep themselves safe. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education contributes strongly to this stage of pupils' journey.

School leaders and staff are dedicated to improving pupils' lives. All staff show resilience and are very flexible. They are constantly seeking to improve their professional skills, including those necessary to broaden even further the range of the curriculum, for example, with additional vocational qualifications for pupils such as first aid and childcare.

Leaders from the Priory group are knowledgeable about the school. Governance is steadfastly focused on what is in the best interests of the pupils. Leaders provide high-quality training and support for teachers. This helps teachers adapt the curriculum to meet the increasingly complex needs of pupils. Staff value being able to draw on the expertise of a wide network of similar schools in the group.

Leaders work closely with medical teams, who are full of praise for the school. Staff liaise regularly with home schools and local authorities. Parents appreciate the regular communication they have from pupils' link tutors about what their child is learning and achieving.

Leaders make sure that the independent school standards are met. This involves regular audits of the school's work. They also liaise with the hospital to make sure that health and safety requirements are up to date and the premises well maintained.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe is the school's top priority. Staff undertake specialist training to ensure that they understand pupils' needs and vulnerabilities. They understand the procedures to follow should they have a concern about a pupil's safety. Constant information-sharing between staff, and between school and hospital, contributes

strongly to pupils' well-being and safety. This includes continuous updates to pupils' personal risk assessments. The school refers relevant issues to the appropriate authorities. Recruitment procedures for staff in the school are rigorous. All relevant checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are completed. Pupils say that they feel 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	142925
DfE registration number	845/6062
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10123990
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	13
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	3
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Priory Education Services Limited
Chair	Andrew Cobby
Headteacher	Lianne Watson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£33,250
Telephone number	01580 200391
Website	www.priorychildrensservices.co.uk
Email address	TicehurstHospitalSchool@priorygroup.com
Date of previous inspection	25–27 April 2017

Information about this school

- Ticehurst Hospital School is an independent day school, which provides the education provision for pupils attending The Priory Hospital Ticehurst House. The school is attached to two wards in the hospital's child and adolescent mental health services unit, which provide psychiatric assessment and treatment for 11- to 18-year olds.
- At the previous inspection, Upper Court ward was a high dependency unit. In June 2019, the service it provided changed to a Tier 4 general adolescent unit. It provides assessment and treatment for children and young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties. It caters for girls only.
- Keystone is a new ward, opened in May 2019. It provides psychiatric intensive care for boys and girls.
- The school caters for pupils with SEND, specifically pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils access the education provision through being admitted to the hospital as in-patients. The number of pupils on roll fluctuates weekly. Most pupils attend the school for a 12-week programme. Some attend for longer or shorter periods of time, depending on their needs.
- Most pupils are dual registered. They remain on the roll of their main school while being educated at the hospital school. Some students have missed considerable periods of education.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age groups. There is no separate sixth form. All pupils from Upper Court ward attend classes together. Similarly, all pupils from Keystone ward attend classes together. Each class accesses a suite of classrooms attached to the ward in which they are patients.
- The hospital and school are owned and run by the Priory Group.
- The executive headteacher was in post at the previous inspection. She is also responsible for five other Priory Group schools. The school has a headteacher, who is responsible for the day-to-day leadership of the school. The current headteacher was appointed in March 2019.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- This was the school's second standard inspection. The previous standard inspection was on 25 April 2017, when the school's overall effectiveness was judged to be good.

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, science, art, and personal, social and health education. We met with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils and looked at pupils' work in these subjects. We visited classrooms and spoke with pupils and staff about different aspects of the school.
- We spoke with the headteacher, the executive headteacher and other staff in the school. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone to a subject leader and three parents. She also spoke on the telephone to the operational director and the managing director of the Priory group, who provide governance for the school.
- We scrutinised a range of information from the school, including leaders' self-evaluation, the school's development plan, subject plans, risk assessments, governance records and behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records. We spoke to the designated safeguarding leads of the hospital and the school. We also spoke to pupils and staff 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 one response to the parental free-text survey, as well as six responses from staff who completed Ofsted's survey of staff's views. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Bzikot

Ofsted Inspector

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