

Prism Independent School

Walker Drive, Girlington, Bradford BD8 9ES

Inspection dates

5–7 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and trustees have not ensured that all of the independent school standards have been met.
- Facilities for caring for the needs of sick pupils are not well appointed and levels of cleanliness are poor in one of the medical rooms.
- While the school has a first-aid policy, records kept of incidents lack detail and organisation.
- School leaders have carried out all of the required pre-employment checks for current staff. However, a small number of staff previously employed by a local college have not yet been re-checked for their right to work in the UK. Leaders are aware that these checks are needed and are carrying out the checks currently.
- School leaders have not ensured that external lighting on the farm site is in working order.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not yet consistently good. Where teaching is strongest, pupils make good progress. Where it is weaker, pupils make slow progress.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance are not yet good. Lower attendance affects the progress that pupils make in the classroom.
- Senior leaders are currently developing and extending the curriculum offered to pupils, particularly in key stage 3. However, their plans are not yet fully implemented and outcomes for pupils are not yet good.

The school has the following strengths

- Staff understand pupils' needs well and are skilled at developing trusting relationships with them.
- The school's trustees are supporting the new leadership team to bring about improvement.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management in order that all the independent school standards are met, by:
 - ensuring that facilities for caring for sick pupils are well appointed and are regularly cleaned, particularly on the farm site
 - making sure that the details of accidents requiring first aid are effectively recorded
 - ensuring that all pre-employment checks are carried out by the school, including checks on staff previously employed by other organisations who were checked by other agencies
 - replacing the previously installed showers so that pupils may take a shower after physical education (PE)
 - ensuring that the outside lighting on the farm building is in working order
 - making sure that the destination of all leavers is recorded in the admissions register.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management and governance, by:
 - increasing the role trustees play in supporting and challenging the new leadership team
 - completing planned changes to the key stage 3 curriculum to increase the amount of time spent on developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics
 - increasing the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in order to bring about improvement in pupils' outcomes at a faster pace
 - relentlessly continuing to pursue and increase pupils' attendance, by further strengthening relationships with hard-to-reach parents.
- Increase the consistency of teaching and learning and improve outcomes for pupils, by:
 - improving the knowledge of a small number of staff so that they are able to plan learning which accurately meets the needs of individual pupils
 - increase training opportunities for teaching assistants in order to improve support for pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- At the time of the inspection, the co-headteacher and deputy headteacher had been in post for two weeks. Although both had been middle leaders previously, many of the planned actions for improvement had yet to take place.
- Several of the independent school standards were unmet and leaders were not fully prepared for the inspection. For example, outside lights had not been tested and the medical rooms on both school sites were not fit for purpose.
- School leaders were misinformed about the need for showers in a secondary provision where PE is taught and, as a result, showers previously in place were no longer available for use.
- The admissions register was incomplete, as the destinations of several past pupils had not been entered. Information on the whereabouts of the pupils was available, and staff were aware of where pupils had moved to; however, there was insufficient time to check on pupils and complete the register during the inspection.
- A school development plan and self-evaluation were available at the start of the inspection. However, they represented the previous leadership's view of the school. Current leaders are aware that they need to improve the accuracy of these documents so that they reflect the school's current position.
- At the time of the inspection, several key members of staff were not present due to long-term absence. Leaders have worked hard to minimise the effect of this on the curriculum. However, the quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was inconsistent and, as a result, outcomes for pupils required improvement overall.
- The curriculum in key stage 4 is innovative and enables most pupils to make successful transitions to college after gaining relevant accreditation. The curriculum at key stage 3 is not as well organised and pupils do not spend sufficient time practising basic skills such as mathematics and English. As a result, pupils' low literacy and numeracy skills are not sufficiently well addressed and this affects their progress overall.
- Senior leaders are enthusiastic and ambitious and have a vision of where they want the school to be in the future. They understand the needs of pupils and their families well and are clear about which pupils are likely to benefit from what the school is able to offer. They are beginning to develop an understanding of how to achieve their goals and are impatient to make the school their own.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural levels of understanding are enhanced by their access to a bespoke personal, social and health education programme. The programme includes sex and relationship education and very clear messages about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Pupils also regularly meet with community police officers, who help them gain an understanding of local issues such as county lines (the use of children to traffic drugs).
- Trips to a range of different locations, including expeditions to local moorland to increase pupils' survival and orienteering skills, develop pupils' self-esteem and self-worth and help prepare them for the next stages in their education and life.

- Parents spoken to by the inspection team spoke positively about the school's provision for their children. Comments included, 'My child has never been so happy at school. Leaders and staff are approachable and really understand my child's needs.'

Governance

- The chair of the board of trustees of the charity which is run alongside the school is also the proprietor. She has been involved with the running of the school since it was registered in 2010. As a result, the proprietor has a clear understanding of the school's financial situation.
- The board of trustees act as governors for the school. They come from a range of different backgrounds and include a retired youth offending team (YOT) manager and the current deputy headteacher of a secondary school that was recently judged good by Ofsted.
- Minutes from past trustee meetings show that trustees have offered challenge and support to the previous leadership team.
- Trustees were initially slow to take action to support the very newly appointed senior leaders. However, by the end of the inspection, trustees had offered senior leaders leadership training alongside staff in the secondary school in which one of the trustees is deputy headteacher.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding policy meets current legislative requirements as laid out in paragraph 7 of the independent school standards.
- The school does not currently have a website. Parents spoken to confirmed that the school's safeguarding policy has been made available to them in the interim until the new website is launched.
- Minor adjustments were needed to the school's single central record to ensure that it was compliant. It was not possible to carry out during the inspection re-checks on the right to work in the UK of a small number of staff previously employed elsewhere. Evidence provided by the headteacher after the inspection shows the checks have now been completed.
- School leaders are clear about the need to protect and safeguard the very vulnerable pupils who attend the school. Staff training and knowledge reflect leaders' vigilance in ensuring that safeguarding training updates take place regularly.
- The local police community support officers are regular visitors to the school. They undertake a range of different roles. For example, they engage in training and visits to pupils' homes to improve attendance and safeguarding. They also attend drop-ins when they visit at breaktime for a drink and a chat with pupils.
- Record keeping is effective overall. Documentation shows that school leaders regularly attend child protection conferences and work closely within multidisciplinary teams. Files are stored appropriately, but occasionally lack a basic chronology.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent across the school. Where teaching and learning are of a good quality and staff are confident, pupils are engaged and keen to learn. Where staff's subject knowledge and understanding are less strong, pupils are less engaged and are more likely to demonstrate difficult behaviour.
- Most staff use their knowledge of pupils' past performance to inform planned learning. However, a minority of staff do not plan learning which accurately meets the needs of individual pupils. Where this happens, the most able pupils are not sufficiently stretched and less able pupils struggle, slowing progress overall.
- Teaching assistants support pupils across the school. Some are paid members of staff and others are volunteers. This leads to some inconsistency of approach. For example, some teaching assistants were observed offering too much support to pupils, suggesting their own ideas and giving direction about what to do next. When this happens, pupils begin to rely too heavily on support and this slows their learning.
- Work in pupils' books shows that pupils spend too little time on improving basic skills. School leaders are aware of this and plan to rebalance the curriculum next term. However, these actions have not yet taken place.
- Staff form strong relationships with pupils. They have an in-depth knowledge of pupils' needs and anxieties. They use a variety of different approaches to improve pupils' confidence in the classroom. For example, pupils were observed learning how to use a compass in the play area. Staff took time to ensure that all pupils could plot a course using the compass, making sure all could carry out the task to a good level of competence. They later explained to pupils that one of the tasks on their BTEC Public Services qualification requires them to navigate back to base from an unknown moorland place, using just a compass. Pupils' responses were positive because of the confidence gained in using a compass.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff constantly focus on developing pupils' self-confidence. They work hard and successfully at convincing pupils that they can become successful learners despite pupils' previous experiences.
- Most pupils who attend the school have low self-esteem due to social, emotional and mental health needs. Staff listen to pupils and encourage them to talk about their feelings. As a result, pupils begin to feel secure in school and start to want to learn.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection confirmed that they feel safe and secure in school. They confidently explained that staff are there to talk to 'no matter how bad we feel'. Comments made by pupils such as: 'School has given me hope for the future,' and, 'School has helped me through a really bad time' were typical of the feelings of pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Most pupils arrive in school having spent long periods of time away from the classroom. While they do settle into the caring and nurturing atmosphere in school, it often takes time for their behaviour and attendance to improve.
- Pupils spoken to commented on how long it had taken for them to learn to trust adults. However, pupils said that they now feel happy and valued and enjoy school. They felt that this had helped their behaviour to improve.
- The work of the newly appointed behaviour leaders has also contributed to a reduction in the number of serious behavioural incidents. Their knowledge of pupils' needs and how to avoid the triggers which cause pupils to misbehave has reduced pupils' difficult behaviour, particularly in lessons.
- Although pupils' attendance remains lower than it should be, it has improved significantly from last year and is continuing to rise overall. However, attendance remains lower than that of special schools nationally despite the whole raft of systems and actions currently in place. These include wake-up reminders from staff, visits to homes to collect pupils and taxis for pupils from further afield. School leaders recognise the need to continue to work closely with parents to increase pupils' attendance further overall.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils often arrive at school late in key stage 4. Many arrive in Year 11, sometimes having missed considerable amounts of school.
- Pupils complete an assessment when they arrive in school. This enables staff and leaders to develop a pathway for pupils during their time in school.
- For the first time this year, staff have developed a system for tracking pupils' progress and effort made in lessons. Staff monitor pupils' progress at the end of each lesson and use this to inform the progress made by each pupil at the end of each term.
- In 2016/17, most pupils in key stage 4 in both parts of the school gained accreditations in a range of subjects including ASDAN short courses in sex and relationship education, enterprise, activities and peer tutoring, and BTEC courses in sports and active leisure, health and social care, land-based studies, construction and animal care, as well as mathematics and English.
- In 2017/18, standards dropped due to a large number of pupils who joined the school as part of a local authority contract with a local pupil referral unit. School leaders realised that they could not meet the needs of this group of pupils; however, they remained on roll until the end of the academic year. Few of this group left with effective levels of accreditation.
- This year, key stage 4 pupils are on track to produce similar results to those seen in 2016/17.
- Key stage 3 pupils are currently not spending sufficient time improving their basic skills in mathematics and English. Leaders recognise this and plans are in place to increase pupils' access to extra lessons focused on reading, writing and mathematics. However, these

plans have not yet been implemented.

School details

Unique reference number	137785
DfE registration number	380/6001
Inspection number	10061273

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	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Rachel Court
Chair	Rachel Court
Headteacher	Katie Corfield
Annual fees (day pupils)	£65 per day
Telephone number	01274 487633
Website	Currently no website
Email address	info@prismyouthproject.org
Date of previous inspection	15–17 March 2016

Information about this school

- The previous standard inspection took place on 15 to 16 March 2016.
- The school is currently situated on two sites approximately 0.2 miles apart.
- The farm site is based on the former site of Bradford City Farm. The second site, referred to as the Youth Centre, is based in a school building further down the same road.
- Pupils attend one site or the other but not both. The accreditations offered at the farm site include rural studies and animal care. The accreditation offered at the Youth Centre site is based around BTEC accreditation in sports and leisure.

- Two new leaders, a co-headteacher and a deputy headteacher took up post in February 2019 after the departure of the headteacher in September 2018. The previous deputy headteacher was asked to take on a co-headteacher role to support the new leadership team.
- At the time of the inspection, the previous deputy headteacher was not present in school, due to unforeseen circumstances.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team met with senior leaders, pupils, staff, the proprietor and two other members of the board of trustees and the head of the special educational needs (SEN) team at Bradford local authority.
- The inspection team analysed a range of documents, including curriculum documentation, documents related to safeguarding, minutes from trustees' meetings and work in pupils' books.
- Because too few parent responses were gathered on the Ofsted questionnaire (Parent View), the lead inspector spoke by telephone to five parents in order to gain their views of the school's provision.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Fiona Dixon

Ofsted Inspector

Annex. Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must meet the following independent school standards

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 13 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that first aid is administered in a timely and competent manner by the drawing up and effective implementation of a written first aid policy.
- 15 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that an admission and attendance register is maintained in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006[13].

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 18(2) The standard in this paragraph is met if-
 - 18(2)(c) the proprietor carries out appropriate checks to confirm in respect of each such person-
 - 18(2)(c)(iii) the person's right to work in the United Kingdom; and
- 21(1) The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor keeps a register which shows such of the information referred to in sub-paragraphs (3) to (7) as is applicable to the school in question.
- 21(3) The information referred to in this sub-paragraph is-
 - 21(3)(a) in relation to each member of staff ("S") appointed on or after 1st May 2007, whether-
 - 21(3)(a)(vii) a check of S's right to work in the United Kingdom was made.

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 34(1) The standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school-
 - 34(1)(a) demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently;
 - 34(1)(b) fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently; and
 - 34(1)(c) actively promote the well-being of pupils.

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