

Inspection of Hurworth House School

Westfield Drive, Hurworth-on-Tees, Darlington, County Durham DL2 2AD

Inspection dates: 13 to 15 October 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Outstanding**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

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 happy and feel safe. Adults know every pupil well. They know their individual stories and adapt what they do to meet individual needs. Consequently, the attendance and behaviour of pupils improve dramatically. Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful to each other and to the adults they encounter. Staff use appropriate de-escalation techniques to manage behaviour so that pupils can quickly return to learning. The learning environment is calm and supportive. Routines are quickly embedded to ensure that pupils gain confidence in their abilities. This reduces anxieties while also keeping pupils safe. Pupils take an active role in supporting good behaviour across the school. For example, they consider accessibility issues and are involved in staff recruitment. Following the outcome of the government's review of sexual abuse and harassment, pupils have discussed issues of safety and speaking out. Leaders plan the curriculum around pupils' interests to give them the opportunity to succeed. There are few barriers to what pupils can take part in and learn about.

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

Staff put pupils' welfare and personal development at the heart of every day. This is a strength of the school and, in turn, supports pupils in managing their own behaviour. Staff give pupils the opportunity to learn about the world around them through interaction with visitors such as the police, through visits to museums and through a carefully planned curriculum. Staff have developed links with local businesses, such as a local café, to help pupils develop life skills and to take part in work experience. The majority (99%) of pupils who leave this school carry on to further education or join apprenticeship schemes. This is a magnificent achievement for these pupils, most of whom have been persistent non-attendees at their previous school.

External alternative providers are used to enhance the curriculum. They are used to meet very individual needs and interests. Leaders check the safety and suitability of these providers and communicate with them every day.

Staff have ensured that the planned curriculum and the relationships they build with pupils enable pupils to return to learning. Staff give pupils the opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge to develop personal and emotional skills so that they become valuable British citizens. Timetables have been planned to encourage pupils to discuss global topics, different cultures, beliefs and personal issues. Pupils are encouraged to voice their opinion appropriately and to know the difference between right and wrong. Pupils confidently spoke to inspectors, telling them about their aspirations and how they now value the education they are receiving. Independent careers advice has enabled pupils to consider a range of pathways.

A core curriculum is taught well so that pupils learn basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics alongside other subjects such as art and food technology. This curriculum is well planned. Teachers focus on pupils gaining new knowledge and

recapping on previous learning. Teachers build into the school day different ways to check that pupils are remembering what they have learned. Teachers know their subjects well. Some middle leaders confidently demonstrate how their subject is planned and how they evaluate the quality of the curriculum. Not all middle leaders have the knowledge to do this and at times are over reliant on senior leaders.

Pupils learn to read well and reading is prioritised across the curriculum. Teachers encourage a love of reading through class texts and, in some classrooms, a phonic-rich environment. Not all teachers have up-to-date phonic training and this limits their ability to teach phonics as well as they could. All teachers are very creative in planning activities that will encourage pupils to re-engage in lessons. However, at times, activities miss the learning objective. Therefore, pupils are not improving their phonic knowledge as planned. Not all pupils who need it learn phonics every day.

Senior leaders and directors of Priory Education Services Ltd work well together. There is a shared vision of the values they wish to develop in every pupil and member of staff. There are high expectations. All staff intend that pupils will leave the school having greater self-worth, greater knowledge and greater aspirations for what they can achieve. They achieve this well. Clear accountability streams and monitoring of all aspects of school life mean that this school continues to improve. Leaders continue to ensure that all the independent school standards are consistently met. All staff spoken to were complimentary about senior leaders, speaking of how they support them in their professional development and limit their workload. The majority of parents and carers who expressed views during the inspection were very happy with the work the school does.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Adults take every step to make pupils as safe as they can be. Pupils are extremely well supervised and study a curriculum that encourages them to learn how to keep themselves safe. Individual risk assessments are in place for every child and are linked to their needs as identified in their education, health and care (EHC) plans. Senior leaders ensure that policies are comprehensive and that appropriate checks are made when recruiting new staff. Senior leaders take all complaints received very seriously. Every complaint is investigated, including those that are anonymous and where outcomes are therefore unable to be fed back to the complainant. School leaders work with external agencies well. Other professionals note how communication with the school is open, honest and professional.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- The approach to reading is not consistent across the school. Therefore, a minority of pupils do not learn to read as quickly as they could. Some teachers focus more on the activity being planned than the phonics being learned. Leaders need to

ensure that all teachers who teach phonics have the requisite knowledge and training.

- Some middle leaders do not have sufficient knowledge and confidence to develop, review and evaluate the quality of their curriculum subject. Consequently, it is not clear that the curriculum is planned to ensure that pupils know more and remember more and that prior learning helps pupils do this. Senior leaders need to build the expertise of middle leaders so that there is less reliance on senior leaders and so that middle leaders are more able support improvement in their subjects.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	137511
DfE registration number	841/6006
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10198608
Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	5 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Proprietor	Priory Education Services Ltd
Chair	Chris Strong
Headteacher	Claire Blackett
Annual fees (day pupils)	£64,997 to £98,121
Telephone number	01325 729080
Website	www.aspriscs.co.uk
Email address	HurworthHouse@priorygroup.com
Date of previous inspection	20 to 22 November 2018

Information about this school

- Hurworth House School has the capacity to accept up to 80 pupils between the ages of five and 19 years. It specialises in meeting the needs of pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- All pupils attending the school have an EHC plan.
- The school currently uses five alternative providers: Right Trax, Darlington College, Outdoor Ambition, St John's College and Martin Gray Football Academy. Three of these providers are unregistered.
- The chair of the proprietor board has recently changed. The Department for Education (DfE) has been informed. The DfE had been informed, prior to this inspection, of the change of school name from Priory Hurworth House School to Hurworth House School.
- Priory Education Services Ltd has recently moved to the brand name of Aspris.
- The school received an unannounced emergency inspection on 8 October 2020 and a material change inspection on 13 March 2019. All the independent school standards remained met at these inspections.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors 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.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- This full standard inspection was brought forward by the DfE due to complaints received around pupil safety and welfare.
- The inspectors met with all members of the senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with the managing director and operations director, who were representing the proprietor body.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in reading, personal, social and health education, food technology and art. They met with middle leaders who lead these curriculum subject areas. They spoke to pupils and teachers, looked at planning and pupils' books, and observed lessons.

- The lead inspector visited two of the unregistered alternative providers that the school is currently using. She considered quality assurance checks made on these providers.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils and staff throughout the inspection. At least 10 of these discussions were held on a one-to-one basis.
- The lead inspector spoke to some parents. She also spoke to members of some of the placing local authorities. Ten parents responded to Ofsted's online survey for parents.
- Inspectors studied documents that relate to safeguarding and to complaints received by the school. Inspectors considered how senior leaders investigated and processed complaints received. A team inspector looked at the checks the school has made when recruiting staff.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents to consider whether the school continues to meet the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynda Florence

Ofsted Inspector

Gill Wild

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