

# Priory School

Mount Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 7BH

Residential provision inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this residential special school

This is a co-educational residential special academy for students with complex/moderate learning difficulties. It caters for students aged between five and 18 from Suffolk and neighbouring authorities. The school provides a 24-hour curriculum to support cognitive, social and independence skills programmes. The school has 203 students on roll. A maximum of 23 children access the residential provision between Monday and Thursday each week. The residential accommodation is in two boarding houses on the school site.

The residential manager has been in post since April 2022 and is suitably qualified and experienced.

The inspector only inspected the social care provision at this school.

### Inspection dates: 12 to 14 September 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account**      **good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected      good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers      requires improvement to be good

The residential special school provides effective services that meet the requirements for good.

**Date of previous inspection:** 5 May 2021

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: good**

Children enjoy their time at the residential provision. Social activities provide opportunities for learning and development. The staff help children to develop their independence skills, such as bed making and food preparation. Children's life skills improve because of being in residence.

Children experience well-organised moves to the residential provision. Introductions are planned at a pace that is right for the child. These lead up to an overnight stay when the child is confident in the residential setting. As a result, these introductions are consistently successful.

Children who have moved on from the residential provision have left with memory folders and photo diaries which capture their achievements and enjoyable times during their stay in residence. The staff ensure that the children experience positive endings by planning trips and celebration meals.

School attendance for children who stay in residence is good. The communication between education and residential staff is highly effective. Handovers at the start and end of each day provide continuity of care for the children. School staff also work in the residential setting. This collaborative working ensures that children are provided with consistency and stability.

Children are encouraged to be as independent as possible with their medication. Staff help the children to know the name of their medication and the reason why they take it. Staff are experienced and competent in the dispensation of medication. As a result, medication errors do not occur.

Good-quality sleeping accommodation is provided for the children. New carpets have been laid throughout. The residential manager ensures that room allocation is thoroughly risk assessed and considers the children's gender, age and any individual needs. However, in one bedroom, the window cannot be easily opened and requires staff to use a ladder. This does not enable the room to be easily ventilated.

Children enjoy going to the local park and visiting charity shops. However, the online activity planning and approval system that the school uses requires community activities to be planned in advance. As a result of this system, spontaneous outings and opportunities for children to experience a variety of social settings outside of the school have been restricted. Community engagement is often limited to local walks and trips to the supermarket.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: good**

Children feel safe in the residential provision. They know who to talk to when they are worried. Parents are positive and complimentary about the care that their

children receive. They have confidence in the staff and know that their children are safely supervised and cared for.

Children do not go missing from the school and bullying is not an issue in residence. Restraint is not required because staff are skilled at helping children to manage their feelings and behaviours. Staff use their knowledge and strength of their relationships with the children to encourage preferred behaviours.

Children receive guidance from staff that enables them to increase their understanding about how to keep themselves safe. Risk assessments contain appropriate measures to reduce risk. The risk assessments are written in conjunction with the school staff and are regularly updated. As a result of this integrated approach, children's safety is increased.

Safeguarding children remains a high priority at the school and in the residential provision. Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and follow procedures for responding to concerns about children's safety. The school's designated safeguarding team works closely with the safeguarding lead for the trust to ensure that there is good oversight and management of safeguarding concerns.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good**

There are positive aspects in the leadership and management of the residential provision. However, senior leaders and managers have failed to action several shortfalls listed as priorities in the school's fire risk assessment. This risk assessment was undertaken by an independent company in March 2022. Several fire doors around the school are identified in the fire risk assessment as non-compliant and require replacing. Two replacement fire doors were ordered for the wider school during the inspection. Fixed electrical installation testing has been deemed unsatisfactory in February 2017 and again in October 2021. This was further highlighted as priority action in the May 2022 fire risk assessment. Although some of the issues identified have been rectified, the hard wiring requires extensive work to bring this to a satisfactory rating. This has been identified as a concern in the fire risk assessment. These serious shortfalls have the potential to compromise children's safety.

Because of the new carpets, two doors in the residential provision that are each identified as fire doors do not close properly. Weekly fire alarm checks do not check whether fire doors close properly. The school took action to rectify this shortfall during the inspection and routine fire door closure checks were added to the weekly monitoring of the residence

Staff have access to a range of training courses. All staff have undertaken training in safeguarding. However, leaders and managers have failed to provide staff with training to support children with ligature risks.

Leaders and managers regularly spend time with children. Children are relaxed and at ease in their company. They are confident to raise issues with the head of school. Independent listeners make regular visits to residence. However, the contact details for the independent listeners are not on display. Therefore, children are unable to contact them between visits to talk about any concerns that they may have.

The residential manager uses her knowledge of the children to provide a range of on-site activities that the children engage in. She listens to their feedback and responds to the children's questions. The children make use of the 'Shall we have a chat?' programme and 'I want you to know' forms. Children feel listened to and that their voices are heard.

Leaders and managers have a visible presence in residence, which enables them to readily monitor staff practice. Good monitoring systems are in place to ensure that children's records are up to date and that children are getting the services and level of care that they need.

New staff benefit from a thorough induction. All staff receive regular supervision. Annual appraisals ensure continued professional development. Staff say that they feel supported and well guided. Good induction, support and training help staff to meet the children's needs and provide continuity of care.

## **What does the residential special school need to do to improve?**

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for residential special schools**

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for residential special schools:

- The school complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and ensures that alerting systems are accessible and there are clear evacuation plans for all children, subject to their needs. In particular, ensure that fire doors close and that actions are taken in response to the fire risk assessment. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 15.2)
- Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children resident in the school. Staff are well trained and up to date with professional, legal and practice developments and the policies and legal obligations of the school. In particular, ensure that staff are trained in ligature removal. ('Residential special schools: national minimum standards', 26.1)

### **Points for improvement**

- School leaders should ensure that children experience more community-based activities.
- School leaders should ensure that all rooms are appropriately ventilated.
- School leaders should ensure that photos and contact details of the independent person are on display in residence for children.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the social care common inspection framework. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Residential special school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC024610

**Executive headteacher:** Lawrence Chapman

**Type of school:** Residential special school

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## **Inspector**

Rachel Watkinson, Social Care Inspector

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