

Inspection of Prism Independent School

Walker Drive, Girdlington, Bradford BD8 9ES

Inspection dates: 5 to 7 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement
Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Prism is a school where pupils learn well as they are supported to grow into assertive young people. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are keen to share their opinions. They are confident that their voice is important. The school council enables pupils to share views in a structured forum. The pupils like being part of the school's decisions. For example, pupils enjoyed being part of a process that allowed them to choose which activities are on offer at lunch and break times. The staff and pupils work closely together. Pupils feel supported and able to share any worries they may have.

The school offers a diverse curriculum. It has a site called 'the farm' which enables the pupils to apply practical skills. Pupils use what they learn in construction lessons to build facilities for the animals. Pupils and staff work together to care for a range of small and large animals at the farm. The interaction with animals is something the pupils talk about with enthusiasm and confidence.

The school has high ambition for all pupils. Teaching is flexible and involves a learning offer that is available on site, as outreach learning, and online learning. When pupils are struggling to attend school in person, the school personalises its learning offer to enable pupils to continue to learn in a range of environments. This helps pupils to find a pathway back into the school environment. It helps leaders ensure that pupils access learning whenever possible.

At times, pupils struggle to behave appropriately. Staff are quick to support and help pupils to 'reset' their behaviour so they can continue to connect with learning. The school rewards pupils for positive behaviours. Pupils respond well to this approach. They enjoy 'banking' rewards and saving up to select a more highly prized reward.

Attendance is a consistent focus for the school. Improvements in attendance for individual pupils are noteworthy. School leaders can demonstrate the significant improvements in the attendance of pupils. However, attendance still remains lower than leaders would like it to be and there is room for further improvement.

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

The school has in place a curriculum that is broad and balanced. Opportunities to develop life skills are woven through the subject curriculum. The introduction of work skills and development of curriculum thinking are already helping the pupils to understand the purpose of learning. The school's vision of 'unique opportunities for unique young people' is evident. In lessons, staff use real-life examples to show how subject content is important, for example applying mathematics principles to the changing of a car tyre.

After a period of substantial staff change, the school now has a stable workforce in place. This has allowed leaders to work together to make purposeful changes to the curriculum. These changes have been carefully considered to ensure that the

school's curriculum supports pupils to build on prior learning and be well prepared for the next stage in their education. The changes are supporting the pupils to understand more in lessons and make informed choices about their future. However, the school is aware that it must continue to carefully manage how the school's curriculum is implemented to ensure that these changes are embedded well.

Assessment, both in the moment and at the end of a block of work, feeds into the personalised support offer that pupils receive. One-to-one support enables a bespoke curriculum offer that is carefully planned in order to meet the needs of the pupil. This is helping pupils to know and remember more. Pupils can recall, when prompted, learning from earlier in the year. However, remembering learning from previous years is not consistently secure.

Overarching curriculum thinking is clear and understood well by staff at all levels. However, the school has not identified subject-specific vocabulary as part of their learning offer. This limits class discussion, as pupils do not always have the language to support what they wish to explain. This lack of clarity also means more challenging subject content is less accessible to pupils.

Reading is part of the everyday offer for pupils. The school library is welcoming and has a stock of fiction and nonfiction books. The books are accessible and engaging. The chosen phonics programme supports effectively pupils who are in the early stages of reading. Pupils are positive about reading. They are supported to develop a strong love of reading.

The school has a strong culture of staff professional development. Weekly meetings are an open forum where staff share ideas, provide feedback on important priorities, and help shape the future of the school. Leaders support staff to attend external training and gain additional qualifications that will allow them to fulfil their roles more effectively in school.

Prism has a high pupil turnover. On average, pupils remain at the school for around three to six terms. Pupils join the school at various points throughout the year. Staff are quick to check on the pupils and offer them a curriculum that is suitable and accessible, beginning from their personal starting point. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well known to the staff. Staff work with external agencies to ensure that pupils receive carefully targeted support for any identified needs. Where appropriate, the school makes any necessary adaptations to a pupil's learning offer and develops staff understanding through training on specific needs. This allows the school to provide appropriate support and care for pupils.

Personal development is a golden thread that runs through the school. Links to pupils' personal development are built into the learning offer within each subject. In addition, pupils have separate personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. The taught PSHE curriculum is comprehensive and based on the needs of pupils who attend the school. Pupils learn about healthy relationships, healthy eating and the benefits of being physically active. As part of the school's personal development

work in preparing pupils to be active citizens, there is an expectation at Prisms that pupils will make their lunch each day. This involves planning the ingredients, purchasing them and then cooking. While on site, inspectors saw one pupil make salmon, mashed potatoes and vegetables for himself and his friends. This meal was a success! Extra-curricular clubs and team-building activities are part of the school day. The school ensures that these activities link to pupils' interests and to the characteristics pupils need to develop in the wider world. This ranges from celebrating different festivals throughout the year to supporting charitable causes.

The governing committee is supportive and has values that align with the vision of the school. The school is currently working to increase the number of members in the governing committee. School leaders and the proprietor have ensured that all the independent school standards are met. The school is compliant with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Subject-specific vocabulary is not identified in curriculum documents and therefore not consistently taught. This means that the pupils are limited in their ability to discuss, debate and understand the curriculum in depth. The school should identify the important vocabulary that each subject requires pupils to know and build this into the school's curriculum.
- While attendance improves on arrival at Prism, whole school attendance continues to fluctuate. Some pupils have higher absence rates and miss too much learning. The school should move with pace to employ the strategies that it knows are successful, employing these consistently with all pupils and families as soon as they join the school.
- Improvements to the curriculum that support high ambition are new and still being embedded. This means that while the initial impact has been seen, this is not yet sustained. The school should continue to support the positive steps taken, so that these become well embedded allowing pupils to recall what they have learned over time.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	137785
DfE registration number	380/6001
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	10299216
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	46
Number of part-time pupils	12
Proprietor	Katie Corfield
Headteacher	Katie Corfield
Annual fees (day pupils)	£105
Telephone number	01274487633
Website	www.prismindependentschool.co.uk
Email address	katie.corfield@prismyouthproject.org
Date of previous inspection	9 to 11 March 2022

Information about this school

- This school last received a full inspection on 9 to 11 March 2022. This was a standard inspection carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. At this inspection, the school was graded requires improvement for overall effectiveness.
- The school subsequently received two progress monitoring inspections on 4 November 2022 and 6 July 2023. This was at the request of the registration authority for independent schools. The purpose of the inspection was to monitor the progress the school had made towards meeting the standards. The school did not meet all the standards that were checked during the inspections.
- The school operates on two sites that are a short walk away from each other: the main site, known as the 'club', and the second site, known as the 'farm'. Courses in construction, land-based studies and animal care are held at the 'farm'.
- Most of the pupils are single registered at the school. These pupils are placed at the school by their local authority. In almost all cases, this is Bradford local authority.
- Most pupils who are single registered at the school have an EHC plan. In most cases, this is for social, emotional, and mental health needs.
- The school is registered to take pupils up to the age of 19. Currently, there is one student registered in the sixth form.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.

- Inspectors completed deep dives in English, mathematics and art. Inspectors reviewed curriculum plans, talked to pupils about their work, visited lessons and spoke to staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders, including the headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector had a tour of the school site to check compliance with the independent school standards for premises.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and

considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- Inspectors considered the views of members of staff, pupils and parents who responded to Ofsted's inspection surveys.

Inspection team

Richard Jones, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Bernard Clark

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024