



Office for Standards
in Education

The Old Priory School

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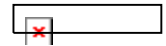
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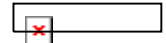
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Introduction and summary

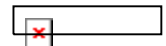


Purpose and scope of the inspection



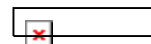
This inspection was carried out by the Office for Standards in Education under Section 163 of the Education Act 2002 in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Skills about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school



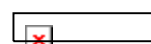
The Old Priory School is an independent day special school for up to 25 boys between 11 and 16 years of age who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most of the boys have experienced a disrupted education, with many being out of school for some time prior to their placement at The Old Priory. The school was developed by Ethelbert Specialist Homes to facilitate the educational placement of their residential children and young people and was given Final Registration status by the DfES in November 2002. Situated near to the sea front in Ramsgate, the school offers a broad curriculum, which is differentiated to meet the needs of the pupils. There is close liaison between the school and the different Local Authorities and Social Service departments who have responsibility for the pupils.

Summary of main findings



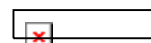
The school has made good progress in the last two years and the curriculum now covers a wide range of subjects. A comprehensive school development plan identifies most of the areas which need improvement. Pupils are making progress in their education and in managing their behaviour. Their attendance at school is also improving. A number of the pupils are able to successfully take their place in the world of college or work through the support provided by the school.

What the school does well



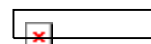
- Pupils make good progress in literacy;
- learning is well supported through a range of excellent displays around the school;
- relationships between the staff and pupils, and between the pupils themselves are generally good;
- pupils show considerable respect for the school environment and the premises are maintained to a high standard; and
- the level of supervision is good and the school procedures provide well for pupils welfare and safety.

What the school must do in order to comply with the regulations

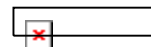


- Develop schemes of work for all subjects to guide teachers' plans and enable pupils to make progress;
- develop teachers' subject knowledge and understanding so that it is adequate for all the subjects which they teach;
- improve the range of resources in those subjects where they are currently inadequate;
- improve the school's assessment framework and the consistency with which it is applied to plan lessons more effectively and enable pupils to make progress;
- encourage pupils to accept greater responsibility for their behaviour and show initiative;
- provide pupils with the opportunity to acquire a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England;
- have regard to the DfES guidance on Health and Safety in relation to the use of tools in the craft room;
- fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act; and
- provide to local authorities (and on request to the Secretary of State) an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of each pupil they fund.

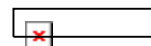
Compliance with the regulations for registration



1. The quality of education provided by the school



The quality of the curriculum



The school aims to raise pupils' self-esteem and develop fully their academic and sporting potential. In accordance with this aim, the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which takes close account of the National Curriculum. The curriculum satisfies the requirements of pupils' statements of special educational need. The timetable is well organized and provides appropriate and supervised, teaching time each week.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum includes topics to help pupils develop their self-esteem and form positive social relationships. There is also a strong focus on healthy living, and the citizenship curriculum contains a suitable range of topics to help pupils become responsible adults. Geography and history are taught on a rotating termly basis and art is taught by a visiting specialist. The planning for music is at an early stage and in science, facilities limit the range of topics that can be taught. As part of the information and communication curriculum (ICT), all pupils have timetabled use of an ICT suite, which provides each pupil with individual access to a computer. Planning for the use of ICT to support other subjects is under-developed, although the school is currently installing internet access which will enable pupils to retrieve information and develop research techniques. The design and technology (D&T) curriculum enables pupils to use a range of tools and equipment in a designated craft room, where they make models, picture frames and masks. Planning for pupils to vary the choice of materials and evaluate their products needs further development. There are no on-site facilities for physical education, but the school makes good use of a local sports hall, swimming pool and playing fields. Provision for the teaching of literacy is well planned with pupils being withdrawn regularly to work on an individual. As a consequence, pupils make significant progress with their reading. In mathematics, the different year groups follow similar topics with tasks which are differentiated appropriately; however planning for progression is limited.

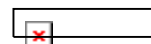
At Key Stage 4, the well organized work-experience placements and college link courses are valued by pupils and prepare them well for their transition to adult life. In Year 10 the school arranges for pupils to attend 'taster' vocational courses at the local college in construction trades, mechanics and catering. Most pupils in Year 11 progress to full-time college attendance, with weekly monitoring and support from the school. Last year, two pupils successfully completed the Vocational Access Course (entry level), one pupil an 'Academic and Vocational Skills' course, and another completed the 'Towards Independence' course. In both Years 10 and 11, pupils complete work-experience placements. These currently include working in a garage, car wash, newsagent and hotel. Pupils keep a log of their attendance and are pleased with their achievements. There are appropriate links with the Connexions Service, which provides advice to pupils on their future careers.

There are curriculum policy statements for all subjects except modern foreign language (MFL) and staff have compiled schemes of work in varying detail for all subjects.

The management of the curriculum is unsatisfactory, and is recognised as an area for development in the school's development plan. Planning a curriculum to meet the needs of pupils who may only attend the school for a short period of time alongside others who may attend for several years presents a challenge for the school. In most subjects planning does not provide sufficiently for progression as pupils move up the school, nor does it contain sufficient detail to meet the widely

differing levels of pupils' ability. Schemes of work do not contain sufficient support for teachers operating outside their subject expertise. The curriculum is recognised as an area for further development in the school's development plan. Homework is not set regularly and although there are close pastoral links, curriculum links with the residential homes are under-developed.

The quality of the teaching and assessment



The quality of the teaching was generally satisfactory. In the twenty-three lessons seen six were good, thirteen were satisfactory and in four the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory.

The quality of teaching was good in those lessons where the teachers had secure subject knowledge, delivered the lesson in a quiet, focussed manner and at a steady pace. High expectations were set and inappropriate behaviour managed calmly and effectively. Where teaching was less successful, the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject was insecure and the pace was too slow, with low levels of disruptive language and behaviour being tolerated for too long.

The system of tutor groups for the initial lesson each day is effective. It produces a calm start to the day, eases pupils into a readiness to work and allows opportunity for issues to be resolved before subject lessons commence.

Lessons are planned to a consistent framework and are informed by the academic and special educational needs of the pupils. Lesson and break times are observed and teachers remind pupils of the passage of time during lessons. Teachers and learning support assistants work well together, and support for pupils is generally good, although in some lessons the support role was unclear. A range of teaching approaches are used. Pupils attend school regularly. Specific literacy classes are available for those who need particular help and pupils are making good progress in literacy. Individual support is also available for pupils who have English as an additional language.

Teaching and learning is effectively supported by a wide range of subject display boards around the school which provide learning aids and stimuli, and celebrate pupils' work. The school makes appropriate use of the schools' library service for borrowing artefacts and the school's own range of resources is developing, with generous availability of videos and television. However, in some subject areas, for example music, there are insufficient resources to support teaching and learning adequately. In addition, computers are under utilised.

A range of assessments are used to assess pupils' progress. Pupils' literacy skills are assessed on entry to the school and every six months thereafter. Some pupil progress records refer to National Curriculum levels of achievement and progress made over a given period. Pupils' annual reports make reference to teacher assessed National Curriculum levels of achievement. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) also refer to pupils' progress. Older pupils are encouraged to undertake external accreditation and a number do, very successfully, through the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) system. Overall however, the assessment framework lacks coherence and it is not used consistently across the school or to best effect in planning. There is also some weakness in teachers' own understanding of assessment, its relevance to lesson planning and of the National Curriculum attainment levels.

Relationships between adults and pupils, and pupils themselves are good and pupils are encouraged to behave responsibly. Individual behaviour targets linked to a points reward system are used for every lesson. Pupils however are not involved in monitoring their own behaviour and the targets are not always specific enough. The school is aware of this and is about to introduce a more appropriate system for the use of targets and management of pupil behaviour. Overall, pupils make good progress in managing their behaviour, with the result that in Years 10 and 11 they are able to successfully take their place in college and work place settings. The school has a clear

behaviour management framework in place and regular training is provided for new staff, however there is some lack of consistency in application across the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

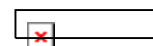
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- support the curriculum policy with appropriate plans and schemes of work for all subjects (paragraph 1(2));
- develop teachers' subject knowledge and understanding so that it is adequate for all subjects which they teach (paragraph 1(3)(e));
- improve the range of resources to support all subjects of the curriculum (paragraph 1(3)(f)); and
- review and develop the assessment framework to ensure greater coherence between the different aspects and enable it to be used more effectively to plan teaching and enable pupils to make progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

2. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



The school encourages pupils' spiritual development effectively. A short prayer is shared by staff and pupils at the start of each day. In religious education (RE) the major faiths are studied and pupils are encouraged to discuss their own emotions and beliefs.

There is an appropriate emphasis on pupils developing their self-confidence and self-esteem. Trophies, certificates and small rewards are given for sporting and academic achievements and good behaviour. These are presented at termly assemblies, and achievements are recorded in photographs on display around the school.

Pupils' moral education is supported effectively by the positive school ethos. Staff routinely discuss with pupils the consequences of their behaviour and help them to distinguish right from wrong. There is a high level of trust between pupils and adults, and pupils show respect for the school environment and each other's possessions. Issues relating to drugs, smoking and alcohol abuse are included in the PSHE curriculum, and in English pupils discuss moral issues such as capital punishment and abortion. The school has a clear policy on the use of tobacco and a no smoking policy is successfully implemented throughout the site.

A central aim of the school is for pupils to develop good inter-personal relationships. This is reinforced through the school's PSHE curriculum where pupils discuss how to form positive relationships and combat bullying. These themes are reflected in the attractive displays which emphasise `community rules' and that the school is a `Racist and bully-free zone'. At lunchtime pupils eat their packed lunches in family groups around tables. This is a very positive feature which encourages relaxed conversation and the development of social skills. Although one pupil travels to school independently and pupils in Key Stage 4 participate in work-experience, there are too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and exercise initiative within the school.

The school provides a suitable range of visits outside the school where pupils can demonstrate their social skills and understand what is expected in the community. These include visits to a swimming pool, local power station and factory. A very positive development is the way in which the school has involved local residents in the school. They were initially invited to a well-attended open day

and consequently two neighbours now visit the school regularly and know pupils by name. The school is developing the citizenship curriculum, but this does not yet support pupils in developing their knowledge of public institutions and services.

Pupils generally behave well around the school and show courtesy and respect towards visitors. However, in a small number of lessons inappropriate language is used which is not always quickly corrected by staff.

There is satisfactory provision for pupils' cultural development. This is supported in several subjects, such as in art by pupils studying masks from Africa and New Zealand and using them to inform their own work; in French by learning about different meals, whilst in citizenship pupils discuss the links between different countries in the European Union.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

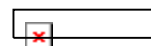
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and understand how they can contribute to community life (paragraph 2(c)); and
- provide pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England paragraph 2(d)).

3. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils



The school has good arrangements for promoting the health, safety and welfare of pupils. Parents and carers feel that their children are treated fairly and with respect and pupils feel they can turn to a responsible adult if they have a personal problem.

There is good communication between the residential homes and school with significant information being faxed between the two sites each day. Additionally, a report showing pupils' progress in work and behaviour is sent home by the school at the end of each week. Pupils' attendance is good and often shows a marked improvement when compared with attendance at their previous educational placements. Admissions and attendance registers are kept up to date and completed in the required form.

There are appropriate policies and procedures in place relating to child protection, prevention of bullying, managing pupils' behaviour and rewards and sanctions. The school has a first aid policy and several staff are qualified in first aid. Medicines are safely stored and records kept of their administration. Incidents and accidents are properly recorded and, on the few occasions when pupils abscond, proper procedures are followed to notify the residential homes, social services and the parent company.

There are clear guidelines and procedures for handling pupils' behaviour and sanctions are rarely used. Staff receive appropriate training in managing pupils' behaviour, including physical restraint, although this is rarely used, and consistently follow the agreed procedures.

There are good levels of supervision throughout the day. Pupils' behaviour and academic progress is reinforced through a positive system of points and rewards. The promotion of good health and

safety is also supported through the excellent range of displays around the school.

The school has arranged inspections by the Fire Officer to ensure the building is a safe environment. Fire exits are clearly signed and there are extinguishers accessible in key locations. Equipment is checked and fire practices are held regularly and recorded.

Arrangements for the safe use of tools and equipment in the craft room are unsatisfactory. Power to a mounted drill and band saw is currently not isolated and some other tools are too easily accessible for pupils to use without permission. The school is aware of this issue and is planning to make the necessary modifications.

The school does not have in place a plan setting out how it proposes to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

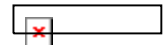
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

In order to comply with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- have regard to the DfES guidance on "Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers" (DfES/0803/2001) (paragraph 3(4)); and
- fulfil its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

4. The suitability of the proprietor and staff

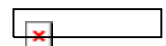


Prior to confirmation of appointment a comprehensive check is carried out on all members of staff at the school with regard to identity, medical fitness, references and previous employment. All staff have received clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

5. The suitability of the premises and accommodation



The premises are safe and secure and maintained to a high standard. There are an adequate number of administrative rooms, classrooms, toilets and a small room for pupils who are ill. The kitchen is clean and appropriately equipped.

The accommodation is bright, cheerful and well decorated. Pupils respect the quality of the accommodation and display boards and there is no evidence of mistreatment.

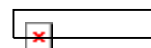
There is a small outside, hard core play area which allows pupils to play small scale outdoor games, but it is generally an uninspiring area. This is augmented by judicious use of local leisure and

recreation facilities for sports and physical education. The nearby beach is used in good weather.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

6. The quality of information for parents and other partners



The school provides satisfactory information to parents and other partners. All parents and carers of newly admitted pupils receive a copy of the school prospectus. This is a very clear document and sets out the school's ethos and aims, curriculum provision, behaviour policy and admission arrangements. A parental 'entitlement' statement contained in the prospectus lists other useful documents that the school will provide on request, such as policies on health and safety, bullying and child protection, and the school's complaints procedure.

Parents and carers are invited to attend annual reviews of pupils' progress, although not all are able to attend. The school produces detailed reports on each pupil's academic and behavioural progress, and provides information for the statutory review for those with a statement of special educational need.

In responding to the parental questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection, all parents or carers felt they were well informed about pupils' progress and all felt comfortable about approaching the school with questions, suggestions or a problem.

The school has not yet made arrangements to inform local authorities of the income received and expenditure incurred for each of the pupils they fund at the school.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

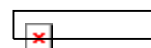
No.

What does the school need to do to comply with the regulations?

The school meets all except one of the requirements. In order to comply in full with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003 the school should:

- provide to local authorities (and on request to the Secretary of State) an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of each pupil they fund (paragraph 6(7)).

7. The effectiveness of the school's procedures for handling complaints

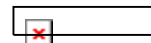


The school has recently revised its procedures for handling complaints and the school brochure makes it clear to parents and carers how and where the complaints procedure can be obtained. The procedures are clearly laid out in a user-friendly format and comply with all regulations.

Does the school meet the requirements for registration?

Yes.

School details



Name of school:	The Old Priory School		
DfES ref number:	886/6076		
Type of school:	Special		
Status:	Independent		
Age range of pupils:	11-15		
Gender of pupils:	Boys		
Number on roll (full-time pupils):	Boys 23,	Girls 0,	Total 23
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:	Boys 16,	Girls 0,	Total 16
Annual fees (day pupils):	£30,940 pa (Pan London Agreement)		
E-mail address:	-		
Telephone number:	01843 599322		
Fax number:	01843 599333		
Headteacher:	Mrs M G Flaherty		
Proprietor:	Ethelbert Specialist Homes Ltd		
Lead Inspector:	Ms Morag Bowden		
Dates of inspection:	24 - 27 May 2004		

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