

# Primrose Cottage

Independent school inspection report

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DCSF registration number	351/6013
Unique Reference Number (URN)	131379
URN for social care	SC 065096
Inspection number	346003
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Saleem Hussain
Social care inspector	Monica Hargreaves

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## Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A<sup>1</sup> of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005<sup>2</sup>, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

An inspection of the care provision was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 having regard to the national minimum standards for children's homes. This inspection took place at the same time but the full report is published separately on Ofsted's website and should be read in conjunction with this report which covers the educational registration of the school.

## Information about the school

Primrose Cottage School caters for girls aged between 11 and 16 who are residents at Primrose Cottage children's home in Lancashire. There are four students on roll at present who are all looked after by the local authority. A small number of students have a statement of special educational needs. The school opened in 2006. Students have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties and have a history of rejecting formal education and often display extremely challenging behaviour. The school aims to provide its students with an education that enables them to achieve GCSE or vocational qualifications and, where possible, access work experience placements. The school's last inspection of education was in June 2007. The social care provision was last inspected in August 2009. This is the school's first joint inspection of education and boarding provision.

## Evaluation of the school

The quality of education is good. The school meets its aims well. Students make good progress because of effective teaching. Strong leadership from the headteacher and the company's education manager has improved the school's educational provision from satisfactory to good since the last inspection. All regulatory requirements are met. The curriculum is good and meets students' individual learning needs and interests closely. As a result, students enjoy their educational experiences. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding and this results in outstanding attitudes, behaviour and self-belief. Provision for care is outstanding, as is the overall effectiveness of boarding. Welfare, health and safety arrangements are outstanding and safeguarding and child protection arrangements are implemented effectively.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga\\_20020032\\_en\\_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162)

<sup>2</sup> [www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga\\_20050018\\_en\\_15#sch8](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8)

## Quality of education

The quality of education is good. The curriculum is good. It is planned well and meets the learning needs of students effectively. The curriculum is broad and well balanced. It provides experiences in all the required areas of learning and provides good opportunities for students to learn and make progress. The school carefully develops its schemes of work and customises them to meet the individual needs of students, for example, in matching work with the requirements of statements of special educational needs. Good planning ensures that the key skills relating to literacy and numeracy are carefully built into the whole curriculum and lesson plans. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well throughout students' learning. The school offers many GCSE subjects for study, including Entry level options, although students are unable to undertake a nationally recognised qualification in ICT.

The school places much emphasis on enabling students to gain vocational skills and have work-related experiences. There are strong links with local colleges where students study accredited courses such as hairdressing, childcare or office skills. First aid and fire safety courses are popular with students and they do well in gaining qualifications in these areas. The school has excellent provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and this promotes students' personal development very effectively; the school also works effectively with the Connexions service to support their careers education.

The curriculum is supported well through a good number of enrichment and extra-curricular activities; these are further enhanced by a good range of activities provided by social care staff. Educational visits are plentiful and include art galleries, theatres and museums. After school activities are based on personal interests, for example, students take part in activities such as horse riding, swimming or dancing at local venues.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good and, as a result, students make good progress. Characteristic of this teaching is the good attention to developing basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This is a key factor in the good progress students make in these areas of learning. Lower attaining students make outstanding progress in reading because teachers provide them with encouragement and plenty of opportunities to read in every subject. Learning resources are used well to support learning. The pace of work is good and time is managed wisely enabling students to develop their concentration over sustained periods. Adults manage behaviour very effectively using excellent strategies to encourage students to work hard and act responsibly. Care staff often support lessons and this makes a significant contribution to learning.

Students are assessed shortly after admission through tests in English, mathematics and science. Students are then tested again in these subjects at the end of each term and the school's records provide evidence that they are making good progress overall from their starting points. There is a good system to monitor and record the

progress of students after each lesson. Senior managers evaluate the performance of individual students effectively. However, an overview of progress in subjects by all students is not maintained. This makes it difficult to identify overall trends upon which further improvement to provision can be based. The quality of marking is good. This ensures that students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

## Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students

The school has made excellent improvements in this area of its work since the last inspection. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now outstanding. As a result, students develop excellent levels of confidence and self-esteem. Students develop a great sense of personal responsibility and very positive attitudes because of the school's clear and consistent expectations. Students' behaviour is outstanding because they are very well motivated by the adults in school through frequent praise, encouragement and reward. They like the points system which results in treats and prizes. Students say they enjoy their learning and this is reflected in good rates of attendance. Moral development is provided for through the consideration of moral dilemmas in PSHCE lessons. Students consider topics such as human and animal rights, justice and equality. Social awareness is promoted effectively through opportunities in lessons to work together on tasks and through many opportunities to interact with others during educational visits.

The programme for PSHCE is outstanding. It is very effective in developing citizenship skills and an understanding of how to make a worthwhile contribution to the community. The start of each day includes an excellent opportunity in the dining room to sit with staff, receive information about the day's events and discuss learning targets. There are plenty of opportunities to develop a broad knowledge of public institutions and services including educational, political and social. Provision for students to develop knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures is excellent. There are many opportunities to consider in depth the beliefs, values and traditions of others. Consequently, students develop outstanding appreciation for diversity and the importance of racial and cultural harmony in our society. Students say that they valued greatly meeting a survivor of the holocaust recently as part of their PSHCE programme. As a result of the excellent guidance and range of learning experiences, both within the school and through their care support, students are extremely well prepared for their future lives and economic well-being.

## Welfare, health and safety of the students

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school has made many very good improvements since the last inspection. Parents confirm that they value highly the strong family and caring ethos of the school as is evident in correspondence with teachers. Students feel very safe in school and within the boarding provision. Discussions and records concerning behaviour and sanctions provide evidence that bullying is not a significant issue. Students say that they feel very well supported by adults if they have any worries or concerns. Students know

what they should do in order to lead a healthy lifestyle. They practice their understanding of what it means to be healthy by taking regular part in opportunities for exercise and sport.

The school runs very smoothly and it has all the required policies and procedures in place. The school has devised appropriate welfare, health and general safety policies. These include procedures to assess and manage safety risks related to learning activities in and away from school. Child protection and fire safety procedures are in place and staff training is fully up to date. The school has a clear statement relating to access that meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

### Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school's recruitment procedures are rigorous. Careful attention is given to ensuring that all the required safeguarding checks are carried out on everyone. The school meets all regulations regarding staff checks and the maintenance of the single central register.

### School's premises and accommodation

The accommodation is very comfortable and homely. It enables safe and effective learning and meets students' needs well. Boarding facilities are excellent and fully meet the care standards required. The school accommodation meets all the requirements for independent school registration, including with respect to issues relating to access and fire evacuation. The school has suitable facilities for students who become unwell. Outdoor provision includes a small recreation area and garden. The whole premises are very well maintained. The school has one spacious classroom. In addition, students have access to a kitchen, dining and lounge areas which are also used for activities and lessons. The teaching and learning areas include many displays of students' work and educational information which stimulate learning effectively.

### Provision of information for parents, carers and others

All the required information, relating to the care and education provision is available for parents, carers and local authorities. It is up-to-date and is provided in a clear and accessible form through the school prospectus and other available documentation. Reports relating to students' academic and personal progress are helpful and informative.

### Procedures for handling complaints

The school has an appropriate and comprehensive process for handling complaints. All the requirements are met. No complaints have proceeded to the formal stage of the complaints procedure since the school opened.

## Effectiveness of the boarding provision

The care provision was judged to be outstanding, and national minimum standards were met. A full report on the care provision is available on Ofsted's website and should be viewed in conjunction with this report.

## Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ('the Regulations').

## What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- Introduce a recognised form of national accreditation for ICT skills.
- Summarise students' progress information so that senior managers can use this as a tool for evaluation and further improvement.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	Good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of students		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of students' needs		✓		
How well students make progress in their learning		✓		

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of students	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of students

The overall welfare, health and safety of students	✓			
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The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision	✓			
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## School details

Name of school	Primrose Cottage	
DCSF number	351/6013	
Unique reference number (URN)	131379	
Type of school	Special	
Status	Independent	
Date school opened	June 2006	
Age range of students	11-16	
Gender of students	Female	
Number on roll (full-time students)	Girls: 4	Total: 4
Number of boarders	Girls: 4	Total: 4
Number of students with a statement of special educational need	Girls: 2	Total: 2
Number of students who are looked after	Girls: 4	Total: 4
Annual fees (boarders)	£154,596	
Telephone number	01253 316160 (Company office)	
Email address	primrose.education@northern-care.co.uk	
Headteacher	Mrs Valerie Gardener	
Proprietor	Whistledon Ltd; trading as Northern Care	
Reporting inspector	Mr Saleem Hussain	
Dates of inspection	16-17 March 2010	