

The Old Priory School

Priory Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT11 9PG

Inspection dates

5–7 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have pupils' very best interests at heart. They ensure that pupils receive effective care and support to help them achieve success.
- Teaching is typically good throughout the school. Additionally, strong and trusting relationships with staff help most pupils become successful learners.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It meets pupils' academic needs, and their social, emotional and welfare requirements.
- Vocational learning is of a good quality. Pupils practise many different work-place skills while they attend Old Priory School.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This is because staff know pupils very well and plan meticulously for their individual social and emotional needs.
- Most pupils demonstrate high levels of tolerance and respect. Many demonstrate unswerving levels of empathy towards the individual liberties of others.
- Good-quality careers guidance helps pupils prepare well for life after school.
- Pupils are supported effectively to behave appropriately. Staff uphold high expectations of what is, and is not, acceptable.
- Safeguarding is highly effective. There is a culture of vigilance throughout Old Priory School.
- Many pupils achieve well in their GCSE examinations. Last year, most Year 11 pupils gained worthwhile accredited qualifications in English, mathematics, science and citizenship.
- Pupils' artistic abilities are particularly strong. Many demonstrate determination and passion for producing artwork of a high standard.
- Occasionally, learning activities and resources do not engage pupils well enough. When this occurs, pupils are not inspired to work as hard as they do typically.
- Some teaching does not yet routinely take into account pupils' targets from, for instance, their education, health and care plans. Leaders are addressing this but work is in its early stages.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Educational (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, by:
 - ensuring that learning activities and resources are planned effectively to engage and inspire each pupil to learn
 - ensuring that learning takes greater account of targets identified in pupils' education, health and care plans.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership at Old Priory School. She has created successfully an ethos that places pupils' well-being and happiness at the heart of the school's work. Similarly, she has raised expectations of what pupils can and should achieve academically. Her incisive leadership ensures that the school goes from strength to strength.
- Senior leaders support the headteacher ably in improving outcomes for pupils. The school's special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and assistant and deputy headteachers are committed to making sure that pupils receive the support, care and guidance they need to be successful learners. Many pupils respond positively to this and develop essential skills that enable them to engage successfully in education.
- Leaders know the strengths of the school well and are ambitious to improve it further. Leaders' accurate self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness informs appropriately their rigorous and ambitious action-planning. Leaders' tenacity to drive further improvement is palpable.
- Leaders have refined the school's assessment system to provide precise measures of pupils' developing skills and attributes. This information is used well by leaders to monitor the progress that pupils make from their starting points, and to assist teachers with their planning. Additionally, leaders use this information confidently to inform their broader evaluations of the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
- Leaders support staff well. Effective professional development and appraisal systems ensure that staff feel valued and motivated. Staff state that the highly relevant training opportunities they receive help them improve their practice. Staff are proud to work at Old Priory School and are committed passionately to provide the best achievable outcomes for its pupils.
- Leaders have designed and implemented an appropriate, broad and balanced curriculum. Careful consideration is given to providing learning opportunities that develop pupils' academic ability, support social and welfare requirements, and encourage future employability. Ultimately, the curriculum provides a learning framework that can improve considerably pupils' life chances for when they leave Old Priory School.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Well-planned learning ensures, for example, that pupils' understanding of equality, and the protected characteristics is strong. The growing tolerance and respect that most pupils demonstrate makes sure they are well placed to succeed in life in modern Britain.
- Leaders provide good-quality careers guidance for pupils. Additionally, pupils are supported to complete work experience in different settings in line with, where possible, their interests and aspirations. Pupils participate wholeheartedly in these placements and state that they help prepare them for adulthood.
- The vast majority of pupils live either in residential care or with foster parents. Overwhelmingly, those carers who responded to Ofsted's survey, Parent View, hold Old Priory School in high regard. Many praised the staff's commitment to pupils' emotional and well-being needs. Others remarked positively about the good communication

provided by the school. One comment, typical of many, stated, 'The team at Old Priory School are understanding and supportive. They work really well to support the individual needs of the young people.'

- Pupils value the school and its staff. Particularly, they rate highly the positive relationships they form with the teachers and teaching assistants. One pupil commented, 'Everyone is amazing. Staff give us their all, to the very best of their ability.'

Governance

- Support from Ethelbert Children's Services, including that of the area manager who line-manages the headteacher, is effective. They monitor closely the actions of the headteacher, and challenge and support her well to lead improvements at Old Priory School. They are fiercely ambitious for all to achieve well and work tirelessly to combat the barriers to learning pupils face.
- Ethelbert Children's Services provides important professional development opportunities for staff. For instance, they actively encourage staff to complete additional qualifications to improve their ability to serve pupils well. Their commitment to strengthening teaching and learning capacity at Old Priory School is commendable.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture of vigilance at Old Priory School. Relevant and timely training opportunities for staff ensure that everyone knows what actions to take to keep children safe. For instance, recent training regarding female genital mutilation and the 'Prevent' duty ensures that staff members' safeguarding knowledge is current and robust.
- Leaders work effectively with other care workers and child protection professionals. Daily communication between pupils and their home settings keeps everyone informed of pupils' well-being. Other strong ties with, for example, social workers and the local police secure wraparound care that protects pupils from harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and support staff provide willingly high levels of commitment to help pupils achieve academically. They set pupils high expectations and provide further support, such as mentoring and extra teaching, that strengthens learning. As a result, staff develop strong and supportive relationships that help pupils achieve well from their starting points.
- Learning is good. Typically, teachers check frequently in lessons what pupils know and understand. They use clear and precise explanations to help deepen pupils' knowledge. In one lesson, the class teacher used questioning and prompting successfully to enable pupils to identify the many services provided by the government, for example. Teaching ensures that pupils embed more thoroughly what they know, and provokes them to think harder to extend their knowledge.

- Pupils are enthused to learn. For example, in one English class the teacher provided a range of sensory prompts to spark pupils' imaginations. Pupils engaged well in this learning, and produced good-quality sentences that enriched their writing.
- Vocational training broadens pupils' skills and attributes. For instance, practical lessons develop pupils' abilities in a range of professional skills such as carpentry and plastering. Pupils develop significantly their confidence and self-esteem while learning useful trade skills.
- Occasionally, learning is not well planned to ensure that pupils make strong progress. For example, learning resources, such as some worksheets that teachers use in lessons, do not match closely enough pupils' needs and their different starting points. When this is the case, pupils' attention and behaviour drift and they do not achieve well.
- Some learning, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, does not take into account their individual targets, such as those identified in their education, health and care plans. Leaders know that teaching and learning can be improved further by ensuring that lessons are tailored more precisely still to pupils' individual needs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Many pupils join Old Priory School having, in the past, had negative experiences in school. However, staff are relentless in supporting pupils to start afresh and participate effectively in learning once more. The success that they achieve is evident in the manner in which most pupils participate positively and enthusiastically in lessons and wider learning opportunities.
- Pupils learn successfully how to keep themselves safe. For instance, they know that when gaming online people might not be who they say they are. Pupils understand the risks presented by social media and know to protect their identities when using the internet.
- Most pupils develop excellent attitudes that prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Staff are particularly determined to ensure that pupils learn that discrimination, in all its forms, is wrong. The positive impact of this work is significant. For example, pupils showed clear abhorrence that some in society are victimised for their sexuality or religious beliefs.
- Many pupils' social and moral development is strong. For example, during a whole-school assembly pupils voiced sincerely their empathy for homeless people. Pupils demonstrated clear sympathy for others in sharing what they would do to support the homeless.
- Pupils' general welfare is supported by highly effective communication between the school and residential care staff. For instance, daily staff meetings held in the mornings are used to share any worries or concerns that have arisen overnight. Staff use this knowledge well to better support pupils during the course of the school day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour is well managed by staff. High expectations, alongside clear boundaries of what is and is not acceptable, are understood by everyone at Old Priory School. Leaders' determined actions to ensure that pupils' behaviour improves over time has led to a fall in number of the most severe behavioural incidents.
- Most pupils contribute well in lessons and work hard. Pupils frequently take pride in what they do, and celebrate keenly with staff both their own and others' achievements.
- Pupils are supported to attend regularly. Staff work diligently with pupils' residential settings to encourage and achieve good levels of attendance.
- Pupils state that they feel safe at school. They say that bullying sometimes occurs, but that staff 'deal with it instantly'. They trust staff to look after them and know there is always someone to talk to if they have a worry or a concern.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils frequently join the school at different stages and year groups. Their prior progress and attainment is often much lower than is typical for their age. Many pupils join the school with significant gaps in their schooling and education.
- Leaders have raised successfully expectations of what pupils can achieve academically. As a result, more pupils now achieve GCSE and other accredited qualifications than have in the past.
- Last year, most pupils in Year 11 achieved GCSE examination results in English, mathematics and science. Others achieved nationally accredited qualifications in functional skills and citizenship. When leaving Old Priory School, many pupils are supported and encouraged to go on to further education.
- Successful interventions and support ensure that pupils come on in leaps and bounds in their social, emotional and behavioural learning. For example, mentoring helps pupils understand what makes them cross and, importantly, provides them with useful strategies to control their anger. Pupils report that as they become increasingly adept at controlling their emotions they learn more successfully.
- Throughout the school, most pupils achieve well from their starting points in a range of subjects. Work produced by pupils, much of which is proudly displayed in their classrooms, demonstrates good progress over time.
- Pupils' achievements in the creative arts are particularly strong. Learning ensures that pupils work across a range of artistic disciplines, for instance in sculpture. Pupils' dramatic 'cave paintings', and their plaster-cast Greek mythology figures were of a particularly high standard and demonstrated a good grasp of different artistic techniques.
- Pupils make rapid progress in their vocational-skills learning. For example, pupils demonstrated confidence as they worked collaboratively in constructing kitchen cabinets, and stud-partitioned walls. Over time, pupils successfully complete a range of recycling and repairing projects that extend both their practical, and problem-solving abilities.

School details

Unique reference number	131422
DfE registration number	886/6076
Inspection number	10047019

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Ethelbert Children's Services
Chair	Mr Gordon Shaw
Headteacher	Ms Julie Bartlett
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,500–£33,500
Telephone number	01843 599322
Website	www.ethelbertonline.co.uk
Email address	topsoffice@ethelbert.net
Date of previous inspection	23 June 2015

Information about this school

- Pupils are placed at Old Priory School as a result of their complex emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Many have experienced significant disruption to their previous education.
- The Old Priory School was previously inspected in June 2015.
- The Old Priory School is owned and run by Ethelbert Children's Services.
- An additional site at Park Lane is used to provide vocational education and training.
- The majority of pupils live in residential accommodation or with foster parents.

- There are currently 30 full-time pupils, aged 11 to 17 years, on roll. The school does not operate a sixth form.
- Two-thirds of pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed pupils' learning in a wide range of lessons across all year groups. Observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. The lead inspector also scrutinised pupils' work in their books and folders.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the area manager for Ethelbert Children's Services, other senior leaders, including the SENCos, and a company director representing the proprietor.
- The lead inspector took into account 13 responses, including free-text responses, to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers, Parent View. The lead inspector also spoke to a foster carer on the telephone.
- The lead inspector spoke with pupils both formally and informally during lessons and around school.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including information available on the school's website and records relating to pupils' attainment, progress, attendance and behaviour. Information on governance, including minutes of meetings, was also examined. The school's self-evaluation summary and school-improvement plan were also scrutinised, along with records of the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Dom Cook, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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