

Inspection of North West Priory School

100 Wilmslow Road, Cheadle, Cheshire SK8 3DG

Inspection dates: 3–5 December 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Outstanding**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

Does the school meet the independent school standards? **Yes**

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive their education as part of their stay in hospital. Clinical, therapy and school staff work together closely. This means that pupils' education contributes to the improvement in their health. School staff expect pupils to continue their studies while they are at the school. Sometimes this is hard because of pupils' health. However, teachers organise work in the classrooms or for pupils while on their wards depending on their needs.

The school helps pupils to rebuild their self-confidence and ability to stick at tasks. This is a strong feature. In addition, teachers help pupils to achieve, either at this school, or back at their school or college at home. Staff and pupils get along together well.

Staff make sure that pupils are safe while they are at school. Staff assess the educational needs and other needs of each pupil. When needed, healthcare staff work with pupils while at school to look after them.

Pupils respect each other. They told us that there is no bullying. Pupils' behaviour in school is very good.

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

Teachers are flexible in how they organise the curriculum. This is because pupils often stay at the school for relatively short periods of time. In addition, teachers have to match what pupils learn to the work pupils are studying at their school at home. This is a feature of teaching in both English and mathematics. Teachers have overall plans for what they will teach pupils. These are organised to make sure that pupils can continue to build up their knowledge. Teachers prepare individual plans for each pupil to make sure that this happens. Some teachers are very skilled at doing this, as in art. Pupils' portfolios of art work convincingly show how their knowledge and skills grow over time. However, other teachers do not link pupils' individual plans as well as possible to the school's overall curriculum plans.

Leaders make sure that the school offers a wide range of subjects. The separate classes on each ward have pupils of all ages, including sixth-form students. Even though these are led by a teacher in one subject, pupils may also be learning another subject. This arrangement means that pupils can study the subjects they need. If teachers do not have the specialist subject knowledge they need to help all their pupils, leaders provide specialist input. They employ tutors or provide online learning programmes. This happens more often for sixth-form students, for example if they are studying subjects such as psychology, and for the teaching of modern languages. The school helps pupils to achieve well in qualifications such as GCSE, functional skills and A levels.

Pupils behave very well towards other people while they are in school. Some pupils find it hard to engage with their learning, particularly at the earlier stages of their

stay as an inpatient in the hospitals. When this happens, they may only take part in education for short periods of time. As for other aspects of their education, school staff work closely with hospital staff to make sure that pupils are able to cope with what is expected of them.

The school makes very strong contributions to pupils' personal development and also to their health recovery. Some of this is a formal part of the curriculum. One example is a structured programme by which pupils learn about a wide range of topics, for example personal finance. Leaders provide similar broad opportunities for post-16 students in their extended project course. Students study in depth a broad topic that interests them.

The curriculum also includes a well-planned programme for personal, social and health education. The hospital wards are closed, apart from for patients, staff and essential visitors. This means that it is hard for leaders to provide wide experiences for pupils outside the school's own activities. However, this does not diminish the care staff take to make sure that pupils' knowledge of themselves, others and the wider world is as strong as possible. We saw examples of this in how the school helps pupils to build their self-esteem, accept different people and consider diversity. Pupils contribute to half-termly ward magazines. These cover things such as Black History Month and the importance of accepting people with different gender identities. Leaders make sure that pupils have a voice in the school. One example of this is in the regular ward community meetings that allow pupils as a group to discuss their education and health care.

Sometimes, pupils are not able to make as much as possible of the education provided because they do not attend education activities as much as possible. This is often because other things, such as therapy, take place in school time.

All pupils in the school have significant social, emotional and mental health needs. Staff receive training to make sure that they are confident in their work with pupils with such needs. Some pupils also have other special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders recently appointed a member of staff as special education needs coordinator to make sure that all staff understand how best to meet pupils' wider SEND.

Leaders make sure that staff are well supported. This includes making sure that formal assessment of pupils learning is manageable. Staff say that they are confident in the work of leaders. There is a positive feeling in the staff team.

The proprietorial body is part of the leadership structure set by the wider Priory Group (PG). Day-to-day governance is undertaken by governors who also have other roles within PG. Governors are knowledgeable about the school and its context. Their routine checks have contributed to the school successfully meeting the independent school standards and ensuring that an accessibility plan is in place. PG provides a helpful framework of policies for the school's leaders to put in place. PG also makes sure that aspects such as health and safety, maintenance and provision of resources are all strengths.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding of pupils is fully embedded into all aspects of the school. Leaders and other staff recognise the absolute importance of making sure that they act to protect pupils with significant vulnerability. The school's safeguarding approaches are built into those in operation in the hospitals and other services operated by PG.

Staff receive regular training about safeguarding, including about the particular circumstances that pupils may face.

The procedures for ensuring that adults who work in the school are suitable are rigorous. Records about safeguarding and managing potential risk to pupils are meticulous.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Subject-specialist teachers use schemes of work that give an overall framework for how the curriculum will be taught. However, teachers in different subjects use these to variable effect in how they plan for the teaching of different pupils. Leaders should ensure that teachers use their schemes of work to provide structure to pupils' individual learning plans and, by doing so, more precisely determine how pupils will build up their knowledge.
- Pupils' overall attendance has improved, and their unauthorised absence has reduced. In contrast, their authorised absence remains high. Some of this is unavoidable, for example when pupils are not well enough to attend school, need to attend therapy or have home leave. However, any absence means that pupils miss out on the education provided. Leaders should continue their work with other members of hospital staff and pupils to find ways to reduce authorised absence.

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 Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education (DfE) has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

School details

Unique reference number	142524
DfE registration number	356/6006
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	10092586
Type of school	Hospital school linked to child and adolescent mental health inpatient provision
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	22
Number of part-time pupils	22
Proprietor	Priory Education and Children's Services
Chair	Andy Cobley
Headteacher	Michael Melbourne
Annual fees (day pupils)	£32,500
Telephone number	0161 428 9511
Website	None
Email address	michaelmelbourne@priorygroup.com
Date of previous inspection	11–13 October 2016

Information about this school

- The school operates on two sites. These are located within the Priory Hospital Cheadle Royal, 100 Wilmslow Road, Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 3DG and the Priory Hospital Altrincham, Rappax Road, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 0NU.
- The school previously had a third site in a treatment unit in Warrington. This site no longer operates.
- A new headteacher was appointed shortly after the previous standard inspection.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes attached to separate hospital wards. Pupils are inpatients at the hospitals for different lengths of time. The average length of stay is around 10 weeks.
- The name of the school's proprietor is not listed on 'Get information about schools', the DfE's public record of schools' details.

Information about this inspection

We 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.

- On the first two days of the inspection, we looked closely at how the curriculum is provided in ASDAN courses, art, English and mathematics. We talked with the headteacher, assistant headteachers, teachers and pupils. We looked at plans for the curriculum. We visited lessons and examined pupils' books and other work.
- On the final day, we sought further evidence about English and mathematics, and considered physical education and personal and social education to test our ideas about the quality of education in the school.
- We gathered evidence about pupils' behaviour and attitudes, their personal development, and the leadership and management of the school throughout the inspection. We met with leaders to discuss these topics, held a discussion with two representatives of the proprietor and talked with pupils.
- We checked the school's compliance with the independent school standards. As part of this, we completed a tour of the school premises on both sites, accompanied by the headteacher.
- We looked closely at the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. To do this, we met with leaders, talked to other staff and checked with pupils that they felt safe. We looked at documents such as the school's record of safeguarding checks, made when staff are appointed, and the safeguarding policy.

- We reviewed responses to Ofsted’s online surveys for pupils and staff. We spoke by telephone to representatives of the mainstream schools that some pupils have attended and expect to return to in the future. We spoke with other members of staff in the hospitals involved in pupils’ therapy and care.
- We examined other documents, including the school’s policies, details of risk assessments, summaries of pupils’ success in external examinations and other information used by leaders and governors in their work.

Inspection team

David Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Will Smith

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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