

Sketchley Horizon

Manor Way, Sketchley, Burbage, LE10 3HT

Inspection dates 15–17 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Pupils' achievement	Outstanding	1
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Quality of curriculum	Outstanding	1
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This school is outstanding because

- The outstanding and inspirational leadership provided by the headteacher, with very effective support from the proprietor, has resulted in excellent outcomes for the students and overall improvement since the last inspection, including improved teaching and learning.
- The students make exceptional academic progress, particularly as many of them have had very disturbed experiences in their previous school placements.
- The valuable and very effective use of qualified therapists supports the development of students' learning outstandingly well.
- Students make rapid improvements in their behaviour and personal development. The school's excellent provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins their outstanding behaviour, increased confidence in themselves and their very positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers' expert subject knowledge and thorough understanding of autistic spectrum disorders enables students to overcome their barriers to learning.
- The excellent range of resources available matches the needs of the students extremely well.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with a day's notice. The inspector observed seven lessons taught by six different teachers, looked at students' work, and held meetings with the proprietor, staff and students. He also met with some parents and carers.
- The inspector looked at the school's documentation including schemes of work, teachers' planning, records of students' progress, monitoring reports of teaching and learning, and staff training records.
- The views of 10 parents who had responded to Parent View were taken into account together with correspondence received from two parents and carers and three local authority representatives during the inspection.
- Twenty seven questionnaire responses from staff were evaluated. No students had responded to the online Ofsted questionnaire.

Inspection team

John Gush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sketchley Horizon is an independent special day school which was registered with the Department for Education early in 2007 and opened in April of that year. It is owned by The Priory Group. The school operates from a former manor house with its own grounds in a village location.
- The school has provision for up to 30 students aged between eight and 19 years, all of whom have autistic spectrum disorders. There are currently 30 male and female students on roll aged between 10 and 19 years, all of whom have statements of special educational needs.
- Local authorities place pupils at Sketchley Horizon, often following disrupted educational experiences in mainstream school.
- The school's aim is to 'raise standards in the education of young people with autistic spectrum disorders and help them to lead meaningful, fulfilling and happy lives'.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school was previously inspected in July 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to extend the range of work experience and college placements for older students so that they have even better opportunities to develop their learning and skills.
- Continue to develop the school's procedures for ensuring the accurate assessment of students' achievements by involving other schools in the moderation process.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Outstanding

Students' achievement is outstanding as a result of the highly effective teaching and the successful efforts made by staff to enable the students to overcome the effect of their autistic spectrum disorders and to engage with education. Many students rapidly make up ground lost due to their previous disrupted education. As a result of the teachers' excellent efforts and the responsive and interesting curriculum, all students have developed very positive attitudes to learning. The students learn exceptionally well and acquire a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding in all of the subjects taught, particularly literacy and numeracy. Students' communicate very well. Their ability to understand and articulate the impact that autism has on their lives and the way they learn is particularly impressive.

Students report that they enjoy their lessons. This is reflected not only in the excellent engagement they demonstrate in class but also in the pride that they take in their work. Students' acquisition of basic skills and the very effective way they develop personal qualities equip them well for their next stage of their education and adult life.

The outstanding progress that students make in academic subjects represents a significant achievement, given the difficulties they experience and the very low starting points many of them present on entry to the school. Students do well in nationally recognised accredited courses. They have gained vocational awards, including those in information and communication technology (ICT) and work skills. The first group to take GCSEs has recently achieved very good results in mathematics with excellent predicted grades for English.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Students' behaviour is outstanding. While at the school, students develop a very good understanding of the difficulties and frustrations associated with their conditions. They are very effectively supported by staff to devise and carry out strategies to reduce the frequency and limit the impact of any outbursts and incidents. The application of very effective and consistent behaviour management strategies help students to become aware of the effect that their behaviour has on their own learning and that of others. This mostly results in a calm and business-like learning environment in classrooms and around the school. When incidents occur, these are very well managed to ensure minimum disruption to the school's learning atmosphere. They are carefully reviewed to help the student concerned to develop strategies for the future. Detailed analysis of data shows a decline in the amount of disruptive behaviour overall and that the severity of incidents for individual students reduces markedly during their time at the school.

Individuals' improved self-worth and self-confidence have a very good impact on their progress and achievement. One student said that the school had 'changed his life around' and another reported not being willing to leave the house prior to attending this school. Students say that they feel safe and secure in school and that bullying is rare. When incidents of bullying occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students' attendance is only slightly lower than the national average for all schools and they are consistently punctual for their lessons. This is an impressive improvement on their past attendance in other settings.

The school makes outstanding provision for students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Staff promote the ethos of mutual understanding and respect very well, and students are aware of what this means in their own lives and how it impacts on the lives of others. Regular whole-day multi-cultural activities, such as the recent visit to a nearby Hindu temple, are arranged to promote students' awareness of other cultures and to help them develop an attitude of tolerance. Students are effectively taught about British institutions and services

through the personal, social and health education course as well as through regular visits, such as to the local police station. Students develop very good relations with the local community through their use of facilities such as shops, library and the leisure centre and in their fund-raising activities for Children in Need and Sport Relief. The school is vigilant in ensuring that balanced political messages are promoted.

Daily records are maintained of students' effort and attainment. Every week a 'student of the week' and 'class of the week' are announced. These, together with other rewards, help them to be more aware of their personal successes and areas for development. This provides a valuable incentive for further academic and personal development. Twice each term representatives elected by each class meet with the headteacher for the school council. This provides good opportunities for students to learn to express their views, to take responsibility, and be involved in decision making in school.

Quality of teaching

Outstanding

The quality of teaching is outstanding and it enables students to make exceptional gains in learning in lessons and over time. Teachers have high expectations as to what students can achieve, and plan lessons carefully and in detail. They address the requirements of students' statements of special educational needs very well in respect of students' personal and academic needs. They use their expert knowledge of autistic spectrum disorders to ensure that all students have maximum opportunities to learn to the best of their ability. In addition, they use their subject knowledge extremely well to enthuse students, and they make excellent use of a wide range of resources to produce stimulating and well-paced lessons that retain students' interest and engagement.

Teachers use on-going assessment very effectively. They know the abilities and learning targets of individual students well and plan lessons to specifically meet their differing needs. Students' progress is measured against National Curriculum levels and the accuracy of the teachers' assessments is ensured by effective moderation by other staff. The school acknowledges that it can increase the effectiveness of this process this by including other schools in its moderation arrangements. Students' work is consistently well marked in a manner that takes account of students' effort, suggests strategies to bring about improvement and encourages further progress.

The school's occupational therapist and speech and language therapist provide thorough and detailed initial assessments and regular reviews of students' progress. These provide excellent support the teachers and teaching assistants by identifying strategies that help to minimise the impact of the students' conditions on their opportunities to learn and make progress. Music therapy enables some students find a new form of self-expression. This has a marked impact on their learning and personal development.

Teachers make excellent use of enthusiastic teaching assistants, whose tasks are effectively directed in lesson plans. Teaching assistants often take valuable initiatives and help to move students' learning on at a rapid rate.

Quality of curriculum

Outstanding

The school has developed an outstanding curriculum that supports students' learning extremely well and enables them to make the most of their potential. It is based on the National Curriculum and covers all of the required areas of learning, including religious education. Very careful use of assessment information, together with very small class sizes, allows the curriculum to be planned and delivered in an individualised manner, appropriate to the learning and emotional needs of each student.

The school has recently introduced an excellent extended range of GCSE courses so that students

can follow subjects of particular interest to them. These currently include art, home economics, ancient history and computing in addition to English, mathematics and science. Very effective whole-school modern foreign language theme days have recently enabled students to enjoy becoming acquainted with the language and culture of China and France.

Physical education and swimming both take place weekly in the school's own very high quality facilities and are very popular with the students. These are supplemented by the weekly football practice which is organised by the therapy department. In addition to practising ball skills and developing co-ordination and stamina, students make very good use of excellent opportunities to extend their personal and social interaction skills.

Students learn how to keep safe and to recognise threats and dangers through the very well designed personal, social and health education (PHSE) programme. To supplement this, the school has recently introduced a very effective life skills course, designed in conjunction with students and their parents and carers. This helps students of all ages to develop and practise the skills they need for everyday life. Issues covered include, for example, personal hygiene, laundry, budgeting and cooking, and the safe use of public transport. The importance of a healthy diet is emphasised in the curriculum for both science and PHSE curriculum, and students are provided with an excellent example of in the high quality lunches provided in the school's dining room every day.

Excellent careers advice is provided for all, and older students make very good use of visits from their careers adviser. Students are engaged in work experience placements around the school as well as in the catering industry, at a furniture-recycling depot and at an animal sanctuary. The school is currently developing arrangements to extend the range of work experience and trial college placements.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

The school makes outstanding provision for the welfare, health and safety of its students. All the requirements of the independent school regulations are met for this standard. A strong focus on care and support pervades all interactions between staff members and students throughout the school. Robust safeguarding arrangements include regular training for all staff in child protection, physical intervention, fire safety and health and safety. The three designated child protection officers have received the required advanced training and senior staff members are trained in safer recruitment procedures. All the teachers and teaching assistants are trained in first aid. Policies for safeguarding, fire safety and first aid meet requirements and are effectively implemented. The school implements clear and effective policies to support appropriate behaviour and to counter bullying that make clear the school's approach and its range of intervention strategies and support mechanisms. Awareness of bullying is usefully raised in assemblies, in lessons and in the meetings of the school council. Very effective cross curricular links are demonstrated when cyber-bullying and the potential dangers of social network sites are highlighted during ICT lessons. Students are confident in the teachers' ability to deal effectively with bullying. Students are very well supervised at all times.

Risk assessments are carried out for all the venues visited by students and every trip that is planned is considered and signed-off by a senior staff member. Effective regular health and safety checks are made on vehicles, school property and equipment, and risk assessments are carried out for all the places and facilities where and with which students work.

Leadership and management

Outstanding

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding and this has led to improvement in all areas of the school's provision since the last inspection. The headteacher and senior leadership team receive valuable support from the school's parent company, and work very effectively together to provide inspirational leadership and very effective day-to-day management. This

delivers the high quality school outcomes and ensures that all the standards for independent schools are met. Their commitment, dedication and ambition provide excellent role models for all staff members. They monitor provision effectively and consistently drive improvement, and they value the contribution that staff make to ensuring students' outstanding achievement. Their leadership of teaching and learning has been key to the school's success. Self-evaluation is fair and accurate because thorough, regular audits are carried out to evaluate provision and its impact. Good attention is paid to ensuring school documents are current, informative and useful. Consistently productive and beneficial meetings take place with local authorities and parents and carers. The principal educational psychologist from one local authority praised the way the school uses its expert knowledge of autistic spectrum disorders to ensure the safety of some very challenging individuals and commented that 'the quality of education they receive is of a very high standard'.

The proprietor has provided high quality accommodation. The school buildings and grounds have appropriate and very effective security arrangements and contain a wide range of facilities. Very well resourced classrooms and specialist teaching areas are all provided with excellent ICT resources. Suitable facilities for any student who is unwell are provided alongside the therapy department.

All of the required information is provided or is made available to parents, carers and others through the school's website, its brochures and the extensive parent information pack. The complaints procedures meet regulatory requirements and are correctly implemented. Detailed and effective records have been maintained of all complaints that have been received and of the manner in which they have been satisfactorily resolved.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	135217
Inspection number	422787
DfE registration number	855/6026

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Special school for students with autistic spectrum disorders
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	8 to 19 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part time pupils	1
Proprietor	The Priory Group
Chair	Mike Jeffries
Headteacher	Sarah-Jane Astbury
Date of previous school inspection	July 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£67,980–£93,981
Telephone number	01455 890023
Email address	sarahjaneastbury@priorygroup.com

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