

Prestwood Lodge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110577
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	310351
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Ward
Headteacher	Mr Michael MacCourt
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	Nairdwood Lane Prestwood Great Missenden HP16 0QQ
Telephone number	01494 863514
Fax number	01494 866154

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Prestwood Lodge provides for boys with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). Students are admitted at various times during the year, often from mainstream schools from which they have been excluded. Students are mainly of White British heritage, with a small number of students from different minority ethnic groups. The school offers boarding provision and students are given the opportunity to take part in an extended day.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which the students' personal development is outstanding. All the students achieve well in their studies and some make excellent progress. Students enjoy coming to school and parents are very happy for their children to attend, knowing they will be safe and happy and that the school has high expectations of their success. One parent's comment was typical; 'We value and support the school, wholeheartedly.' Students' achievements are underpinned by the excellent progress they make in their behaviour and their attitudes to learning.

The students enjoy their lessons and respond by trying their best. The teaching is good because lessons are interesting and well managed. The classroom staff know students' attainment very well and this enables them to work productively with students to enhance their learning. However, inconsistencies in the assessment and recording of students' progress means that individual targets are not always clear enough and as a result, learning sometimes slows down. The provision is enriched by the many opportunities which the students have to interact with the community, by good programmes in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT), and in a growing range of work related learning for older students. Where necessary, the students receive appropriate support in reading.

The quality of care and support is exemplary and as a result the pupils make outstanding development in their personal skills. The social and moral development of students is excellent. They feel very secure and well supported. They learn to remain healthy, to keep safe and to behave extremely well. They value the school and this is evident through the good relationships they have with staff and the good attendance of most students. They are well prepared for moving on to the next stage in their lives, whether it is through further education, employment or training. Inconsistencies in the assessment of their academic progress occasionally restrict the effectiveness of educational support and guidance.

The good leadership and management have driven the good provision made. The headteacher and senior staff have been effective in monitoring and improving standards, particularly in the exemplary procedures for managing the students' behaviour. The governors offer strong support and leadership to the school. The school evaluates its own work accurately. School managers are aware, for instance, of the need to improve the quality of assessment of students' learning steps. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and there is a good capacity to continue this improvement.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Boarding provision is of a very high standard. Regular inspections show that standards of care are outstanding and that the provision gives excellent support to the students' learning. The provision is well above the National Minimum Standards for residential special schools. There are very good links between the care staff and teachers, and with the students' parents. The students take part in a wide range of activities, which encourage them to remain healthy and to visit community facilities. This encourages them to behave responsibly. The provision is very well managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the consistency of the assessment and recording of the students' learning.
- Improve the sharpness and focus of learning targets so that they always show students clearly how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

All the students achieve well and some make outstanding progress. Although many students enter the school with lower than average levels of attainment, most of them catch up well and gain levels of GCSE and other accreditation, in Year 11, which are only a little below those expected of students in mainstream schools. This represents good progress. There is little evidence to suggest that any group of students performs differently from others or that progress varies between subjects. The rate of progress is slightly better amongst students in Years 10 and 11.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students make outstanding progress in meeting the high expectations of their general conduct and behaviour. The school's procedures for managing the students' behaviour are exemplary and the students' progress is exceptionally well monitored.

The students' excellent progress in most aspects of their personal development, including their moral and social development, reflects the school's strong management of behaviour and the emphasis on moral and social values. This is the significant strength of the school and has a major positive impact on pupils' improving attitudes to school and on their good achievement. The students' spiritual and cultural understanding is also outstanding, for instance, in sensitive writing about the impact of Martin Luther King and the celebration of Aztec art and culture. Students gradually develop an increasingly strong awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles through the many opportunities to take part in physical activity. They make excellent gains in their social skills and their ability to collaborate with others because teachers provide many structured opportunities for them to work together. They develop skills relevant to their futures extremely well. Students feel safe and confident, and know what is expected from them within the school's calm and supportive atmosphere. They told the inspector that occasional bullying by other boys was dealt with quickly and effectively.

Parents confirm that their children enjoy their learning. As one parent wrote, 'My son regularly comes home talking excitedly about activities he has taken part in.' This is reflected in the students' good attendance and very positive attitudes to school. Those parents who returned questionnaires generally had high praise for the school and its effect on their children's lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers have a good understanding of their students' overall ability and this, together with the well-directed support from other staff, enables them to work effectively with small groups or individuals. Students thus receive a high level of support and this has a positive impact on their progress. Planning for lessons is generally good, because teachers work from clear schemes

of work, although they do not always efficiently record each student's progress. As a result, their learning targets are sometimes less well focused. Students like their teachers, and so respond very well in lessons. Teachers motivate students effectively through interesting and well-paced activities. They make good use of interactive whiteboards to enliven lessons and keep the students' attention. Students become confident in answering questions and taking a full part in the activities. The management of behaviour throughout the school is excellent. Students understand and respond well to the clear routines, and this assists in keeping a strong focus on learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets requirements and is based firmly on National Curriculum programmes. It is enriched by frequent trips and events, and by a varied programme of after-school activities in the extended day provision. This adds considerably to the students' enjoyment of school. Programmes in personal and social education underpin much of the school's work and these have a significant impact on students' achievement in their personal skills, their knowledge about the advantages of a healthy lifestyle and about their own safety. There are well-managed and effective programmes in basic skills, especially where teachers add rigour to their planning by making good use of the national subject strategies. Learning activities and targets, however, are sometimes not adapted clearly enough to the ability and needs of individual students. The arrangements for vocational and work related learning are good. Students are encouraged to take part in a well-organised work experience programme and the success of this is reflected in the levels of continuing further education, employment or training when students leave school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The physical and emotional care of students is outstanding. There are rigorous safeguarding procedures, which help to ensure the school is a safe and happy place. Parents find this reassuring and students greatly appreciate it. Students have a clear understanding of how to improve their behaviour. As a result, they make excellent progress in their social skills and in developing their ability to work and socialise with others. This is an outstanding aspect of the school's provision. The school counsellor and the home-school liaison worker provide strong support to students and their families.

Students have very good relationships with staff and look to them as trusted providers of guidance and support. The students receive a high level of support in lessons and through this are helped to do their best. However, whilst the students are usually aware of the National Curriculum levels they have reached, they are not clearly informed how to improve their work further. The tracking of students' progress in the acquisition of basic skills is very good and this has a positive effect on their continuing achievement. Levels of support, for instance in individual reading lessons, are appropriately adjusted to address identified underachievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior staff have successfully led a staff team, which helps all students to thrive equally and achieve well. Managers at all levels have a good grasp of the school's strengths and where there needs to be improvement. They are aware, for instance, that assessment of the students' work should be more consistent to promote clearer target setting. There are very good arrangements for tracking the students' behaviour and overall academic progress. This gives senior staff a good overview of the school's effectiveness.

Communication within the school is excellent. The staff feel fully consulted, involved and valued. There are excellent procedures to support new staff and the quality of professional training is good. This makes a significant contribution to sustaining consistency in the good quality of teaching and, in turn, students' good achievement. Resources are used well and the school gives good value for money, particularly in the flexible deployment of staff to support students when necessary. Governors provide good support to the school, accompanied by effective levels of monitoring and challenge to the school's management. This too has had a positive impact on students' achievements because of the consistent focus on securing improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

17 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Prestwood Lodge School, Great Missenden, HP16 0QQ

Not long ago I came to your school to see how you were getting on and whether I could suggest anything to make the school better. You made me very welcome and I enjoyed meeting some of you in the classroom and in the dining room. Thank you and well done.

I was only with you for two days. That was long enough for me to realise that you go to a good school. I could see that you all enjoy school and that your behaviour has improved rapidly. These are the main strengths of the school.

- You work hard and make good progress in your work and excellent progress in your behaviour and personal development.
- You have a good range of activities, including those that help you become independent, make choices, and prepare you for when you leave school.
- Your teachers and other people at the school look after your safety very well.
- Lessons are interesting and you are well taught. This means you enjoy learning and do your best.
- Your school is well run.

I think the school could improve further if the staff were to write down more carefully how well you have made progress. This would help them to give you appropriate targets to aim for which you understood better. You can help yourselves too, by working as hard on improving your behaviour and your work as you have been doing.

Please thank your parents for the helpful comments they made on the questionnaires.

Best wishes to you all.

Mel Blackband

Lead Inspector