



Prior's Court

Transforming the future for autistic young people with complex needs



2024/25 School Prospectus

This is **Me**. This is **Us**. This is **Our** Future.

Contents

- 3** Our services - what we do
- 4** Key elements of our approach
- 18** The school environment
- 20** Residential accommodation
- 22** Staff
- 24** Our policies and procedures
- 26** Admissions



“Prior’s Court is an exceptional school that serves some very special pupils outstandingly well. Through its intensive support, the school gives a voice to its pupils, many of whom have struggled for years to be heard.”

Ofsted Education report, 2022





Our services – what we do

Prior's Court Foundation (usually referred to as Prior's Court) is a registered charity based in Berkshire. Prior's Court provides education and residential care for autistic young people with complex needs aged 5-25 and helping them to be healthy, happy, more independent and have the opportunity to access the world of work.

The Foundation manages:

- **Prior's Court School** – an independent special school for autistic children and young people with complex needs aged from 5 to 20 years. The young people are autistic, have moderate to severe learning disabilities and complex needs. Most of the young people are non-verbal, pre-verbal or have limited language. Many young people have additional diagnoses and exhibit behaviours that challenge. Day, weekly and termly placements are available over 38, 44 or 52 weeks of the year.
- **Prior's Court Young Adult Provision (YAP)** – 52-week supported living and learning for autistic young adults with complex needs aged 19 to 25 years, designed to provide a transitional step towards a more independent life.

For further details about the YAP, a separate prospectus is available. Please contact the Admissions or Transitions teams to request a copy.

- **Prior's Court Learning & Development Centre** – Providing specialist training, and consultancy.



Our purpose

– why we exist

To transform the lives of autistic young people with complex needs, helping them to build a brighter, more independent future.

Our ambition

– what we strive for

To be a global leader for autistic young people with complex needs.

Our philosophy

– how we achieve this

Prior's Court is here to transform the lives of the autistic young people with complex needs supported by Prior's Court in our care; to help them achieve the impossible and give their families the magic moments they never thought they would have.

We understand that the little things are actually the big things for an autistic young person, and we celebrate them as major milestones. A daily life skill gained or an anxiety conquered today is a stepping stone towards tomorrow's work placement, or a shared special occasion with family.

Prior's Court never stays still. We are ambitious for the young people we support and aspire to be a global leader for autistic young people with complex needs. We want to deliver outcomes for them beyond our imagination; to help transform the lives of even more autistic young people and develop practice improvements which we can share across the world.





Our approach to learning

A specialist approach

The Prior Approach is based on autism best practice and has been developed from the expertise and successful practices at Prior's Court. It is shaped to suit the specialist needs of autistic individuals and empower staff to support their physical, intellectual, and emotional wellbeing.

Applied across all settings with consistency, our approach provides a toolkit of skills which enables autistic individuals with complex needs to make sense of the world around them and support them through their life.

The Prior Approach focuses on supporting behaviours, physical exercise, sensory differences and communication. It is underpinned by its Structured Teaching approach and some of the key areas look at community opportunities, working in partnership with others and ensuring all young people lead a happy and healthy life.

Emphasis is placed on creating meaningful and functional learning opportunities which build on each individual's strengths and interests to provide a person-centred approach applied across all settings with consistency throughout their Extended Day.



Structured teaching

Prior's Court uses the Structured Teaching system in every setting to support young people's independence and understanding with structure in the organisation of the day and the layout of classroom and living spaces. The structured approach is personalised to support each individual's needs as to enhance their development.

The Structured Teaching approach was developed by TEACCH with five main principles:

- Understanding the learning styles of autistic individuals and how to use strategies that build upon learning strengths.
- Developing an individualised person and family centred plan for each individual, rather than using a standard curriculum.
- Structuring the physical environment to make its purpose as clear as possible.
- Using visual supports to make individual tasks more understandable, implementing assessment and strategies to build on skills

Studies have shown that the Structured Teaching approach provides one of the most positive outcomes for autistic individuals, helping them to understand the events in their day, reduce anxieties, aid learning, and facilitate independence.





"Pupils here achieve things of which they and their parents and carers could previously only have dreamed."

Ofsted Education report, 2022

Total communication approach

Prior's Court adopts the Total Communication approach to help young people to form connections, ensure meaningful interactions and support exchanges of information.

Total Communication honours and accepts all forms of communication and we support a combination of methods so that communication can be individualised for each young person.

Modes of communication that are included in the Total Communication Approach at Prior's Court include 'Primary Systems' (Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)) and 'Supporting Methods'. Each young person is assessed by our Speech and Language Therapists to determine the most appropriate and robust 'primary system' to support any other method of communication.

Making use of data

The complex nature of the young people at Prior's Court means information needs to be collected on every aspect of their lives - information that enables us to track the progress they make and informs us about ways in which we can improve this progress and the outcomes they achieve.

To get the most from this data, there is a whole organisational digital recording and reporting system called Prior Insight. Harnessing the power of modern digital technology to store and interrogate large amounts of data, the system provides insights into the complexities of autism, enabling a better understanding and mapping of autistic behaviours. Through a better understanding, more effective predictions of behaviour can be made and successful interventions where required.

The Extended Day

Learning takes place throughout the entire Extended Day and in all settings, including education, residential homes, and within the wider community.

Consistency is achieved through having a shared approach, careful planning and a focus on ensuring expertise for all staff. Education, care and therapy teams work together with specialists and parents/carers to ensure consistency. This way, each young person has the opportunity to make progress in all Areas of Learning.





Physical exercise

Regular exercise is a vital part of each day and a core principle of the Prior Approach. Physical exercise helps autistic individuals to manage their energy levels and develop their fine and gross motor skills.

We recognise exercise helps regulation - it improves attention and sleep patterns, releases excess energy, provides opportunities to play and for social interaction, and can help to calm when stressed or struggling to engage.

Young people enjoy a wide range of activities both in groups and individually. This includes walking, running, cycling, swimming, individual training programmes, trampolining, physical exercise sessions, ball games, posture exercises, and a range of outdoor sports.

Facilities to support physical exercise include approximately 50 acres of extensive grounds, outdoor gym equipment, running track, gymnasium, trampolines, a multi-sensory suite, swings, bicycles, tricycles, scooters, and an indoor sensory swimming pool.

Community facilities such as swimming pools, trampoline parks, ice rinks, gymnasiums, climbing walls, sailing clubs and leisure centres are also accessed to further support our programme of activities.

Positive Behaviour Support

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) aims to enhance young people's quality of life and ensure they lead full, enriched, and productive lives with opportunities and choice.

Prior's Court emphasises positive relationships between staff and young people as they are an essential platform for young people to feel safe and secure, to be happy and make progress. We use a range of strategies to support young people to learn to self-regulate and develop skills.

All behaviour has a purpose. Sometimes it tells us what is wrong, or is used as a way of ensuring needs get met. Young people may behave in a way that challenges us and this can have a negative impact on the young person, and those around them. If young people's needs are met and they lead satisfying lives, the occurrences of behaviours that challenge will reduce.

Assessing the functions of behaviours that challenge allows us to develop individualised, person-centred strategies and interventions that proactively meet the young person's needs, making these behaviours redundant. Each young person has a PBS Plan detailing proactive, active, and reactive support. These are written and regularly reviewed by our PBS Learning Specialists, with strategies carefully considered by all supporting a young person, including staff and parents.





This Is Me Plans

Each young person has their own This Is Me plan. This Is Me plans are a single, dynamic, digital location for all of an individual's care and learning documents.

This Is Me plans identify care delivery needs which are linked to daily diaries allowing for live tracking, celebrating progress and learning development across all settings throughout the Waking Day via our I Can statement system of progress measurement.

This Is Me plans consist of items such as key persons in the individual's Circle of Support, individual care and learning plans, Positive Behaviour Support plans, protocols, and risk assessments. These are reviewed by specialist, experienced staff across our multi-disciplinary teams. This is to ensure a young person's learning targets are appropriate and their achievements celebrated.

This Is Me plans are hosted on the Prior Insight platform.

Therapy and multi-disciplinary provision

The PBS and Therapies teams at Prior's Court delivers support through the Wave Model and PBS Framework, respectively. (both available to [view on our website](#)).

Our specialists provide individualised support as needed to upskill staff in their understanding and implementation of these processes. All staff are responsible for universal support to embed consistent use of strategies and skills across everything young people do.

Specialist teams available include:

- Speech and Language Therapists and Assistants
- Occupational Therapists and Assistants
- Positive Behaviour Support Learning Specialists
- Physiotherapist
- Sensory Integration Therapists
- Music Therapist
- Nurses
- Keeping Me Safe Learning Specialist
- Healthiness Learning Specialist and Learning Facilitators

All therapists and PBS workers receive relevant clinical supervision, and additional therapists can be brought in as required to provide therapy to meet young people's identified needs.

"We are grateful to Prior's Court for all they have done to support our child and family."

Parent of young person at Prior's Court School





Areas of Learning across the Extended Day

Our vision for all our young people is for them to be healthy, happy, more independent and have access to the world of work. The Prior's Court Learning Framework helps us to work towards our vision.

There are seven Areas of Learning in the Learning Framework which stretch across education, residential care and in the community settings:

- Communication
- Positive Behaviour Support
- Healthiness
- Daily Living Skills
- Vocational Learning
- Functional Academics
- Keeping Me Safe

Each young person has a personalised programme of learning (with both group and individual activities) structured throughout their Extended Day.

Plans for all young people link to their Education Health and Care Plan or are part of their Person-Centred Review. By looking at each young person's needs, strengths and interests, learning programmes are agreed and targets are set to teach key skills.



"My son has made great progress since he has been at Prior's Court. He can now go out in the community, have a snack and go out to a restaurant, something he never did beforehand. The staff have been absolutely wonderful, and my son is a much happier person because of the time he spends there."

Parent of a young person at Prior's Court School





Areas of Learning

The seven Areas of Learning were identified to ensure young people learn skills that will support them now and in preparation for adulthood. Each Area of Learning is made up of Learning Programmes that identify the skills a young person will gain, and the support they need.

Progress is tracked using our 'I Can' statement system.

Work is individualised to meet the strengths and interests of each young person and to help them develop in areas where they are challenged.

The seven Areas of Learning are:

Functional Academics concentrates specifically on providing young people with the necessary fundamental skills that they can apply to meaningful settings. The focus is on learning functional skills that can be generalised and applied outside of the classroom.

- **Communication** is about supporting young people to learn to communicate by an appropriate means including expressive and receptive language – both verbal and non-verbal – and identifying and developing communication tools best suited to the individual. An emphasis is placed on the learning of social skills and how different 'rules' apply in everyday situations.
- **Daily Living Skills** is a major focus within the Extended Day learning programme. These include learning to acquire appropriate toileting skills; developing personal care routines and appropriate mealtime behaviour; building the understanding and ability to shop for, prepare and serve food with increasing levels of independence; undertaking household chores such as using washing machines and dishwashers, sorting laundry and tidying bedrooms; learning to share; taking responsibility for personal belongings; and developing a sense of family and community.

- **Vocational Learning** focuses on preparing young people for the world of work and teaching them readiness to work skills such as wearing PPE, turning up to work on time, and interacting with peers in a professional way. Young people focus on learning vocational skills in different areas such as housekeeping or land-based, depending on their individual skills and interests. The focus here is on learning the skills and then being able to apply them into work experiences and placements, both on and off site.
- **Healthiness** focuses on young people learning skills to keep them healthy including sleeping; eating and drinking; health and hygiene; first aid; and exercise.
- **Positive Behaviour Support** focuses on giving young people the skills they need to self-manage their behaviour, considering their sensory needs, mental wellbeing and support with relationships.
- **Keeping Me Safe** is about learning the skills needed to stay safe in all aspects of life, from crossing roads to developing an awareness of what privacy means. Many of our individualised relationship education programmes are taught under this area. A strong emphasis is placed on safe use of technology.





“Older students benefit greatly from the extensive and considered vocational opportunities the school provides.”

Ofsted Education report, 2022

Focus on vocational skills

Our ambition for young people in post-16 is to give them the skills they need to enter the world of work. Our ultimate goal is to provide opportunities for work within the community or as part of the Foundation.

We recognise that due to the challenges that many of the young people at Prior's Court face, this may be an experience or work placement within the organisation rather than the community, but we still ensure this has purpose and meaning.

Our Vocational Learning Area of Learning contains key programmes of skill acquisition, each focused on employment sectors, in which young people develop skills and experiences based on their pre-existing skillsets and interests. Young people will have the opportunity to access both the land-based and hospitality learning programmes, as well as all of their sub-programmes. A team of specialist staff ensure all young people access a range of experiences, on-site and off-site, to practice and develop their skills.

The two key programmes of skill acquisition are:

Landbased

- **Orchard** – Young people are involved in nurturing and growing our apple trees. They will learn to weed, compost, prune and water our trees.
- **Grounds maintenance** – Young people learn skills such as pressure washing patios and paths, laying bark chip paths, and painting outdoor sheds and fences.





- **Grounds gardening** – Learning gardening skills such as lawn mowing, strimming, leaf blowing and hedge trimming alongside weeding, litter picking etc. This prepares young people for possible off-site placements in the future.
- **Nursery** – Using our on-site polytunnels young people will be planting and potting on plants for use across site. Young people will also learn how to grow plants including fruit, flowers and vegetables and all associated tasks such as washing and filling pots, watering, and pest control.

Hospitality

- **Customer service including reception and retail** – Learning customer service skills, such as how to meet and greet a visitor or customer, and to offer and provide help. Young people will also learn how to serve a retail customer whilst managing stock, how to handle payments, and account for takings.
- **Housekeeping including commercial laundry** – Being involved in the upkeep of various environments across site, learning to clean rooms, window clean and use industrial floor cleaners. Young people will also learn how to operate the machines in our main laundry room, and washing, drying and folding items of laundry.
- **Conference services including room set up and portorage** – Setting up meeting and training rooms in accordance with the booking requirements, ensuring furniture, consumables and refreshments are in place. Young people also provide a portorage service across site, delivering packages and other items as required.
- **Food and beverage incorporating our bakery, a café and barista training** – Our food and beverage training will equip young people to prepare drinks and simple meals, and host and serve customers within our café area. Young people will learn barista skills, such as being able to prepare and serve a range of hot and cold drinks. Some young people will also work in Bread & Beyond, our on-site industry standard equipped bakery, learning how to follow recipes and learn other techniques needed to make bread and other baked goods.

All young people regardless of which vocational pathway they follow will also be taught Readiness to Work skills to prepare them for entering the world of work. These are skills such as manual handling, wearing PPE, focus and productivity among other topics.





Onsite vocational facilities

The Countryside Learning Centre

The Countryside Learning Centre (CLC) promotes independence and vocational opportunities enabling young people to learn horticulture, animal care and countryside stewardship skills through an individualised programme of learning.

The stable yard and series of paddocks enable young people to feed and care for a range of farmyard animals. Within the outdoor classroom, life processes can be studied with projects including incubating chicks, hatching butterflies and looking after stick insects.

The activities undertaken serve to enrich many areas of the curriculum; measuring feed provides concrete methods for teaching maths and science; cleaning out the stables, sweeping the stable yard or taking manure in a wheelbarrow help to build gross motor skills.

Bakery

Our on-site bakery provides training and work opportunities for our young people. Working to industry standards, young people learn about baking, food preparation, health and safety, hygiene, and customer service. Young people are taught under the guidance of specialist, industry-trained members of staff.

Baking is an activity which suits the strengths and skills of people with autism. It is not only practical, it has an end product which is rewarding and motivating.

Horticulture

A thriving horticulture project has been built up at the School to support the focus on developing vocational skills.

A large kitchen garden and all-weather polytunnel provide structured areas for growing and harvesting fruit and vegetables, for flower and plant cultivation. It also provides opportunities to work alongside staff on the management of school grounds.

An outdoor horticulture classroom ensures young people can access the horticulture area throughout the year.

An orchard is being grown on-site to provide opportunities for nurturing the apple trees, as part of horticulture-based learning.





"The children are understood and well cared for by staff, and relationships between staff and the children are positive."

Ofsted Care report, 2023

Hospitality training area

Our hospitality learning areas provide our young people with a safe environment in which to learn a range of skills.

Our housekeeping room is designed to teach skills such as cleaning and bed making.

Customer service learners have a class with a shop set up in which young people can practise stock management skills as well as learn about customer service.

We also have a classroom set up as a café, complete with working kitchen where learners will develop their back-of-house food preparation skills, learn to be baristas or serve customers front-of-house at their tables.

These young people not only benefit in later life by having these skills, but allowing them to practise them in a professional setting will prepare them for potentially entering the world of work.

Careers service

Our aim is to provide a full and comprehensive careers service for our young people.

We will equip our young people to be able to make decisions that will lead to engaging in vocational learning with the potential for employment or further study, during their time at Prior's Court and beyond.

Careers and the world of work are embedded within the learning being delivered to young people at every age and, by providing meaningful work experience and placement encounters with employers, both on and off-site, we can provide our young people with an awareness of the world of work.

By integrating the Gatsby Benchmark into all areas of education, we can create a service benefiting every one of our young people.

Our annual Careers Day enables our young people to meet representatives from as many different professions as possible. We look to give our young people as many opportunities as possible to engage with members of the local community and from the world of work.

Our Careers Strategic Plan for 2024-27 is available on our website.





“Staff enthusiastically celebrate the children’s individualities and value their achievements.”

Ofsted Care report, 2023

Choice-making

Choice-making is an important skill that often needs to be taught. Young people are encouraged to make choices in everyday situations such as what to wear and selecting preferred leisure activities, or through the ‘choice’ options within their schedules.

An Independent Visitor visits every month to observe different aspects of the young people’s lives including to ensure their choices are supported throughout the Extended Day.

Young people have access to an independent advocate who can provide support on bigger life choices.

We aim to ensure young people are able to make informed choices and a range of communication strategies are employed to help young people communicate their views.

Some young people are able to attend their Looked After Child or Annual Review for a short time. If they are unable to do so their presence is represented via photos and/or videos of their work and achievements.

Prior Insight

Prior Insight is our big data platform which we believe can fundamentally alter care and education provision for autistic individuals. This is through the insights it can generate about an individual’s autism.

Prior Insight allows our Autism Practitioners (this role may be called a Support Worker in other organisations but our staff are given extensive autism related training) to record data on every aspect of a young person’s day from the amount of fluid intake to successes with learning activities.

This allows us to observe and investigate patterns in behaviour to provide enhanced support for young person, to monitoring and celebrating learning progress.

The platform also hosts a young person’s timetable to help practitioners build structure throughout the Extended Day, with Support Steps also available so practitioners can quickly access information on how best to aid and support young people in a variety of settings and scenarios.





Meals and healthy diet

Mealtimes are an important part of the School's learning programmes, enabling young people to develop social and life skills. The young people dine as a family group and staff eat with young people to model behaviour.

Kitchens and dining areas within each house and in the main dining room are carefully structured to encourage and support young people's developing independence.

Care is taken to ensure a balanced diet is provided and a dietician provides regular advice on nutrition. The School avoids the use of preservatives and artificial colouring in our dishes. All food is freshly prepared daily either in the school kitchen or by young people in the residential houses. Herbs, fruit and vegetables grown by young people in the kitchen garden are used by our catering team or within the houses.

All young people regularly shop for food and learn to prepare and cook meals. Snack time is an opportunity to practice communication and takes place in their class and house.

Each young person has an individual dietary plan. The School supports (at extra cost) a variety of diets which include gluten and/or casein-free diets with the written consent and agreement of the young people's medical consultant. Any young people on a specialist diet is expected to be monitored by a consultant or a paediatrician. The school also supports the cultural dietary needs of all young people.

Community links, leisure and generalisation of skills

As part of the Prior's Court Learning Framework, we seek to provide our young people with opportunities to learn, play, create and socially interact with other young people from the wider community.

We are actively involved in our community and welcome and encourage links with local schools, colleges and organisations. Young people regularly use local supermarkets, cafés and libraries to practice, consolidate and transfer skills. Visits are structured to suit individual requirements with visual instructions, schedules, shopping lists, and reward systems.

A wide range of trips, outings and special events are arranged including birthday parties, music concerts, cinema and theatre trips, swimming, bowling, museums, the seaside, theme parks and other tourist attractions.

Staff encourage young people to follow hobbies and take part in recreational and social activities with on-site sessions and clubs. This can include Scouts, trampolining, cookery, art, drama, dance, pampering club, and cinema club. Staff can also arrange for young people to attend youth clubs, sailing, horse-riding, rock climbing and other clubs and activities which require off-site travel.





Measurement and celebration of progress

We have high expectations of our young people in all areas of their lives. We celebrate their achievements and progress in a multitude of ways, within both education and residential departments, on a daily and weekly basis with praise, achievement boards, certificates and rewards.

Our young people's This Is Me plan identifies care delivery needs which are linked to daily diaries allowing for live tracking, celebrating progress and learning development across all settings, via our I Can statement system of progress measurement.

We hold weekly assemblies in school time to bring groups of young people together, to share achievements and participate in celebrations.

Accreditation

Learning delivered at Prior's Court is accredited by ASDAN, a charity, curriculum development organisation and awarding body offering qualifications to grow skills for learning, skills for employment, and skills for life.

ASDAN offers a framework of qualifications which our young people work towards from their first day of Post-16 education with us. Our Vocational Skills Learning Programmes, Hospitality, Land-based and Readiness to Work, are accredited by ASDAN, with skills developed in each programme's modules creating a pathway for each young person. This builds a record of personal achievement for young people, with each skill acquisition across each Learning Programme recognised.

While our customised learning programmes are accredited by ASDAN, for our young people learning itself is delivered through the Prior's Court Learning Framework which outlines how we aim to deliver on our ambition for our young people - to be happy, healthy, more independent and able to work.

See our website for our ASDAN outcomes for the past three academic years.





Notes on this data:

- With the three years of focused data, year-on-year we are able to set targets that stretch (i.e. ambitious targets)
- Alongside this, we review the whole of the framework for each young person to see what skills they have gained through regular practice. This ensures all skill development is recognised.
- Where progress is not yet at the level we would hope for a young person, this is often because they still require some level of staff support or prompting to complete a task at the set level, therefore while they haven't yet achieved the skill, they are working towards it. This is reviewed regularly across the year, looking at many factors, and support is provided to improve outcomes where appropriate.
- In 2023/24, we set individual targets for every young person in six Areas of Learning (Communication, Daily Living Skills, Healthiness, Keeping Me Safe, Positive Behaviour Support) and one of either Functional Academics, or Vocational Learning, dependent on their age. The table below shows the percentage of young people (in the School and Young Adult Provision) who achieved expected, or higher, progress:

Progress data

The table below shows the average number of I Can statements achieved per young person as set, with prompt levels, within each Area of Learning over the past three years. This data covers both the School and our Young Adult Provision.

Area of Learning	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Communication	7	6.5	10.5
Daily Living Skills	10	10	8
Functional Academics	23	15.5	52
Healthiness	18	10	11.5
Keeping Me Safe	5	5	7.5
Positive Behaviour Support	13	9.5	14
Vocational Learning	19	53.5	43.5
Average I Can's achieved per young person	13.5	15.5	21

Area of Learning	2023-24
Communication	78%
Daily Living Skills	29%
Functional Academics	89%
Healthiness	54%
Keeping Me Safe	78%
Positive Behaviour Support	95%
Vocational Learning	74%

- We recognise improvements are required in some areas, and there is planned targeted support in leadership, delivery, and moderation to ensure all seven Areas of Learning are achieving the best possible outcomes.
- Whilst the average number of targets achieved in Vocational Learning appears to have decreased (see the first table), 74% of young people achieved at least expected progress. The decrease can be explained by a significant increase the previous year, due to the development of the Vocational Area of Learning in 2022-2023. This is now being embedded.





The school environment

Space is a key feature of the school. Set in approximately 50 acres of gardens, woods and paddocks, the School provides a secure and welcoming environment specifically adapted to suit the needs of the young people with a range of exceptional facilities.

The education and care facilities are carefully designed to provide a highly-specialised environment - calm, tranquil, highly-structured and adapted to support young people's needs.

The well-equipped classrooms each have a group area, individual work stations, one-to-one room for focused work, individual learning and tables for small group work.

Each class has immediate access to the grounds outside.

Key hours

The School Day runs from 9am to 3pm.

The Extended Day runs from 7am to 10pm



Leisure, exercise and recreational activities

- 50 acres of safe parkland including a 10-acre wood with sculpture trail
- indoor, heated sensory swimming pool
- all-weather activity track for walking, running, cycling, and scooting
- swings, trampolines, and outdoor gym equipment
- indoor gym with equipment including treadmills and static bicycles
- art room
- library
- contemporary art and sculptures placed throughout the site, gifted by our Founding Patron, Dame Stephanie Shirley CH





Further specialist facilities to support and extend learning

- Health & Wellbeing Hub which contains a medical treatment room to replicate external health settings, an in-house pharmacy, and two therapy engagement rooms
- multi-sensory suite with interactive multisensory and soft play rooms
- food technology and independent living skills classroom
- a bespoke Performing Arts Centre opening in the 2024/25 academic year to allow the young people supported by Prior's Court access to the transformative power of the performing arts.
- spacious, purpose built dining room that enables students and staff to eat as family groups in a social setting. Movable screens can subdivide the space and windows are high to minimise distraction
- Virtual Reality suite used for a range of purposes including sensory regulation, desensitisation, travel experiences and more

Vocational facilities:

- kitchen garden and horticulture area with greenhouse, polytunnels, horticultural classroom, raised beds and vegetable plots, flower beds, and fruit trees
- orchard currently providing apples for on-site usage
- industry-standard bakery facilities
- Countryside Learning Centre with outdoor classroom, stable yard and paddocks, housing a small range of farmyard animals
- fully equipped classrooms for hospitality learning - where young people can learn food preparation, customer interaction, and housekeeping skills which they are encouraged to practice in their residential environment
- IT suites that reflect an office environment to encourage and support vocational skills
- a Careers Library with accessible information about the world of work and careers available





Residential accommodation

There are 12 residential homes at Prior's Court School.

All homes are designed to provide a comfortable and homely environment that is also autism-specific and suited to the age and needs of the children and young people living there. Houses are carefully organised, with clearly defined areas (e.g. for socialising, play and relaxation, food preparation, group or individual activities), and visual and physical structure as appropriate to support and encourage independence.

Young people are assessed and grouped according to age, ability and compatibility and provided with accommodation which is varied to reflect a range of the young person's needs. Some of the residential homes are purpose-built and designed to provide a more spacious environment, while other homes are smaller and better suited to young people who prefer a small group home.

Every young person has their own bedroom which can be personalised to meet their needs and preferences for soft furnishings, pictures, toys or music, computer equipment or other items. Epilepsy monitoring systems are provided, where required.

"Pupils feel safe at the school because they know that staff will support them every step of the way. They trust adults to look after them, and they know that adults will help them to overcome challenges when these arise."

Ofsted Education report, 2022



Each home has a shared kitchen and dining room or dining area for snack and meal preparation, as part of the young people's living skills development. Meals are also taken in the spacious, purpose-built main dining room which enables young people to eat with their class and house as family groups in a social setting. Kitchens and dining areas within each house and in the main dining room are carefully structured to encourage and support young people's developing independence. The young people dine as a family group and staff eat with young people to model behaviour.

Each home has an enclosed garden, a living room and an area for activities. Many of the homes have a separate quiet room or sensory room. There are en-suite or shared bathrooms.





Partnership and communication with parents/carers and families

The relationship between parents and Prior's Court School is regarded as a partnership and parents/carers and families are involved in discussions at all stages of their child's stay.

Arrangements for contact between parents, carers, relatives and friends are agreed during the pre-admission visits. These are to meet the needs of the child and parents/carers and are detailed in the young person's plan.

Education and care staff communicate frequently to update parents and families on their child's progress and wellbeing such as through a telephone call at a pre-arranged time once or twice per week, or email correspondence, depending on parental preference.

Young people are encouraged and supported by staff in communicating with their families in a number of ways such as making a telephone call, video call or sending an email.

Parents and families are welcome visitors. A family room and a family flat are available for parents and families to use and stay in during visits.

All parents are invited to the Statutory Annual Review and Looked After Children (LAC) Review (where applicable) of their child's special educational needs.

All parents have access to the Parent Portal section of our big data platform Prior Insight.

The portal enables parents to access three key areas of information about their child:

Profile – basic placement details.

Media gallery – a log of all approved media uploaded by staff working with the young person.

Reports – live data displayed virtually to keep up-to-date with the young person's wellbeing and activity. This helps parents get a closer look at what their child is doing on a day-to-day basis and help them to better understand their child's autism.

A parent newsletter is sent to parents/ carers approximately every six weeks, giving an overview of news from the site.

Parents have access to a private Facebook group and a closed section of the Prior's Court website for further updates, information and a parent handbook.

A regular Parent Forum, held virtually, is also organised. Parent WhatsApp groups for each residential home are also available and there is a site-wide group.

Parents are invited to special annual events such as Sports Day, the Christmas Carol Concert, a fireworks display, and our on-site music festival.

A parent survey is undertaken annually to gain the views of parents, carers and those who advocate for their child about Prior's Court School's provision of education and care.



Staff

An employer of choice

The staffing community within the School is of a wide cultural and ethnic diversity, with a good balance of male and female staff. It is our aim to be an employer of choice with staff who feel valued, respected, motivated and inspired.

Staff expertise

The School aims to provide a very high standard of education and care with well-qualified and well-trained staff. Learning is led by Learning Specialists and delivered by Class Teachers. Homes are led by Care Managers and Assistant Care Managers while each individual home will have Team Managers who are responsible for leading a team of Autism Practitioners. Young people are also assigned a Key Worker. Waking night staff are responsible for young people throughout the night.

A large team of multi-disciplinary and therapeutic professionals include a Speech and Language Therapy team; Occupational Therapists; a physiotherapist; General Registered Nurses; Positive Behaviour Support specialists; and PE, Swimming, ICT, Horticultural, Countryside Learning and Vocational Skills teaching staff.

Staff liaise with external professionals and additional therapists are brought in to meet young people's identified needs.

The School is further supported by staff within the Foundation in areas such as Human Resources, Finance, and Workforce Planning.

The expertise within Prior's Court School is supported by a strong focus on learning and development; induction and refresher training is complemented by specialist personal and professional development.



"Managers use impressive systems to monitor the children's progress and are striving for the best quality of care possible for the children. Managers at all levels know the children well and have a firm grasp of the progress they are making. Managers are extremely proud of the progress children make."

Ofsted Care report, 2023





Our core programme of training includes:

- Safeguarding
- Team Teach (positive behaviour support)
- First Aid
- Medication Dispensing
- Epilepsy
- Infection Prevention & Control
- Food Hygiene
- Autism training (Prior Approach)

These are in addition to the methodologies and practices within the Prior Approach, sensory integration therapy, and other autism specific training.

To ensure consistency and best practice, a strong emphasis is placed on training staff in Structured Teaching. Prior's Court has strong links with the University of North Carolina, where the Structured Teaching system was developed. A number of our team are qualified to TEACCH Advanced Consultant level. Staff attend regular Structured Teaching training sessions run by our TEACCH qualified staff with support from University of North Carolina specialists.

Prior's Court has developed a successful Diploma programme which supports our residential teams to achieve their Level 3 Diploma in Residential Childcare in line with the government's Quality Standards for Children's Homes. Senior residential staff are offered the opportunity to complete the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership & Management for Residential Childcare.

A significant number of teaching staff have Qualified Teacher Status, with more on the QTS pathway in 2024/25. QTLS is also offered to education staff. Prior to training, unqualified teachers will have significant experience of working with autistic individuals with complex needs, will have direction and support from a qualified teacher, have access to regular autism specific training sessions, and development sessions on teaching standards.





Our policies and procedures

Transition planning

Through careful planning and liaison with families, our Transitions team, comprised of experienced practitioners, ensure incoming and outgoing young people's transitions are as seamless and successful as possible.

Safeguarding children

All staff are carefully screened before commencing employment. This includes positive references, occupational health assessments and a satisfactory enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check to ensure that practice is in accordance with the regulatory bodies and the Government's Safeguarding Children's Strategies and Safeguarding Adult's Strategies. Those involved with recruitment processes have to complete Safer Recruitment training.

Personal, Social, Health and Sex Education

Our aim is to provide experiences for our young people which will enable them to achieve a sense of personal identity, self-esteem and self-respect.



Through our approach to PSHE embedded within our Learning Framework we strive to create a happy and stimulating environment for the development of sexual, physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and social skills, which considers the individual needs of our pupils.

Religious, Education and Collective Worship

The school has a multi-faith ethos. Acts of Worship involve activities in which the young people are given the opportunity to reflect upon and celebrate their own faith and learn about other faiths. All parents have the right to withdraw their child from such activities.

Equal opportunities

Implicit in the aims of the school is the recognition that all children are equal and are therefore entitled to the same opportunities of learning experience within Prior's Court School. It is our intention that this school does not perpetuate stereotypes that undermine this aim.

EAL

Our communication programmes support the needs of young people with English as an additional language.





British Values

As part of a broad and balanced curriculum we aim to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of our young people. This includes promoting fundamental British values as set out by the Department for Education (2014).

Some of these values are complex, but through our specialist approach using visual cues and sensory stories we are able to help young people explore these values at a level they can understand.

See our website for further details.

Uniforms and possessions

All staff and young people wear school uniform. In addition, parents are asked to provide a range of appropriate clothing and young people may bring a selection of personal possessions. Parents are asked to provide pocket money for their child.

Complaints procedure

Our Complaints Policy is available on our website or from our reception.

Disabled provision

The main teaching areas are wheelchair-accessible, but some residential areas are not.

All our policies and procedures can be found on our website.





Admissions

Admissions process

Prior's Court School welcomes parents, carers/ guardians and professionals with frequent open mornings and individual visits to enable families, carers and local authority professionals to consider whether Prior's Court School might be suitable for the young person.

An initial screening of statutory reports is undertaken by the Admissions Manager following completion of an admissions questionnaire and feedback to the Practitioner Panel to establish suitability to assess the young person. With the support of the local authority, the young person and their parents/carers are invited to an on-site assessment undertaken by senior lead practitioners with significant experience and members of the multi-disciplinary team where appropriate. A second assessment in the current provision or young person's home is undertaken if necessary.

The assessment, together with further information from parents/carers and professionals, is considered by the Practitioner Panel to determine whether Prior's Court School would be able to meet the young person's needs, provide an appropriate peer group, enable progress and if an appropriate placement is available. Decisions by the Practitioner Panel are guided by Prior's Court School's Admissions Policy and the SEN Code of Practice. The Practitioner Panel confirm that the admissions criteria have been met and that a place is available before an offer of placement may be made.



The suitability of the placement and level of support required will be subject to an initial 3-month review and annually thereafter.

Fees available on request.

For details of open morning dates, to arrange a visit or for further information please contact the Admissions Team:

T: +44(0)1635 245914

E: admissions@priorscourt.org.uk

Prior's Court School lies midway between the villages of Chieveley and Hermitage on the Berkshire Downs, six miles from the market town of Newbury, which has excellent road and rail connections

"We have so much to thank Prior's Court for and count ourselves so lucky that our son has had 15 happy years with you. The thing that shines out to us is the caring culture across the organisation and that makes such a difference. So many staff have gone the extra mile over the years and we really, really appreciate it."

Parent of a young person at Prior's Court School



Prior's Court School

38, 44 & 52-week specialist education for 5-20 years

Prior's Court Young Adult Provision

52-week supportive living and learning for 19-25 years

Prior's Court Training & Development Centre

Specialist training, and consultancy

Managed by Prior's Court Foundation,
a non-profit making charity

Dual Registered Managers

Care Leads

Matt Phelps and Lisa Potheary

School Principal

Helen Franks

Prior's Court Foundation, Hermitage,
Thatcham, Berkshire, RG18 9NU

t: +44 (0) 1635 247202

e: mail@priorscourt.org.uk

w: www.priorscourt.org.uk



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