

# The Priory School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	101659
<b>Local authority</b>	Bromley
<b>Inspection number</b>	376612
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Robin Hammerton HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,250
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jane Winter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Nick Ware
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 May 2009
<b>School address</b>	Tintagel Road Orpington Kent BR5 4LG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01689 819219
<b>Fax number</b>	01689 600842
<b>Email address</b>	office@priory.bromley.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	24–25 January 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	376612



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Robin Hammerton

Her Majesty's Inspector

Veronica Young

Additional inspector

Judy Rider

Additional inspector

Kewal Goel

Additional inspector

Noureddin Khassal

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 40 lessons, involving 40 teachers; made shorter visits to several lessons with senior staff; heard students reading; scrutinised students' work; and held discussions with staff, students and governors. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and analysed documents, including the school's strategic plans, reports and evaluations, teachers' lesson plans and minutes of meetings. They took account of the 224 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 104 completed by representative students and 48 from staff.

## Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average non-selective secondary school, and a specialist sports college, in a selective area. Most students are White British. Fewer students than average speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs.

The school exceeds the current government floor standard. Since the last inspection, it has attached students in Years 7 to 11 to one of five 'colleges', designed to offer a smaller 'school within a school' experience. Rochester College provides for students in Years 8 to 11 at risk of underachievement. Yalding College, the sixth form, continues to develop its post-16 sports academy.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school. It, determinedly, enables students, whatever their needs or background, to leave with good qualifications and many useful skills. Almost all move successfully into further or higher education or the workplace. At Year 11, examination results for all groups of students are notably above the national average. The sixth form is good; in Years 12 and 13, students' attainment is average and improving. Many students go on to university.
- The key reason for students' examination success is the very wide range of subject and course pathways offered. There are highly relevant options for everyone. Tutorial systems encourage and motivate students to succeed.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are good. They feel safe and secure; this also helps them succeed. However, students with a problem or concern are not always sure that their voice will be heard by staff.
- Teaching is of sufficient quality, given the school's other strengths, to support the students' good achievement. Teachers show good subject expertise and manage classes effectively. Lessons are suitably paced. However, teaching requires further improvement. In too many lessons, teachers do not allow students sufficient independence or enough opportunities to think for themselves. The work set is not always matched closely enough to the students' different needs. The marking of students' work by staff is weak.
- The school is extremely well led. The successful college system, examination results and the good curriculum show the difference this purposeful leadership makes. Many aspects of the school are well managed, but not all. For example, the school has evaluated the quality of its teaching too highly. The planned work to increase students' independence in lessons is organised in too piecemeal a way to be sufficiently effective. There is some unhelpful overlap of responsibilities and accountability between the colleges and subject departments.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further so that, by spring 2013, it is consistently at least good, by:

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- enabling students to take more responsibility for their own learning and encouraging their greater independence
- matching the teaching and work set in lessons precisely to the students' assessed needs so that they are all better challenged
- improving the consistency and quality of marking of students' work so that it guides them clearly in their next learning steps
- ensuring that senior staff who observe lessons evaluate the quality of teaching accurately by relating this more closely to how well it enables students to learn, so that they can then provide pertinent feedback and guidance to teachers on how to improve further.
- Make certain that all students who have concerns or problems can readily raise these, confident that they will be listened to sympathetically and fairly and that action, as appropriate, will be taken by the school.
- Ensure that the management of all school systems and improvement initiatives have, as appropriate, clear targets, timescales, actions and lines of responsibility and accountability.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students in all groups make consistently good progress from their starting points, most markedly in Key Stage 4. Their attainment, overall, is above average. They engage with interest in lessons and develop their understanding of subject matter thoroughly. Almost all students leave the school with a set of worthwhile qualifications, suitable to their needs and aspirations, and the confidence to move into a successful future. Parents and carers are understandably delighted about this; one commented, 'I am very pleased with both my children's progress at the Priory. My eldest child achieved fantastic GCSE results last summer which have enabled her to go on to the sixth form and take four A levels with the expectation of top grades.' Because of the carefully planned curriculum, sixth-form students in the Frank Bruno Boxing Academy develop good self-discipline and many inter-personal skills needed to gain employment in the leisure and personal training industry; most are successful in doing so. Almost all students in Rochester College, many of whom are potentially particularly vulnerable, gain good qualifications as a result of encouraging personal guidance and a rigorous alternative curriculum which includes well-planned learning outside the classroom.

Students with disabilities and those with special educational needs make as good progress as their peers due to well-managed specialist intervention work outside normal lessons and the fact that teachers engage them well in lessons. However, their particular needs are not always addressed specifically in class lessons, even though these needs are clearly identified in their individual plans. Younger students arriving from primary schools with below average literacy levels are supported well and make good progress with reading, gaining confidence and improving their ability to use phonics (linking sounds and letters), inference and context to interpret and understand written text.

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## Quality of teaching

The school employs teachers with diverse, wide-ranging qualifications and the necessary expertise to deliver successfully the school's very broad set of subject options and pathways. Students are motivated to succeed, taking subject combinations that justifiably they see as relevant to them. Teachers add to this motivation by developing positive and encouraging relationships with students, which help the students' social and moral development. They manage behaviour well, teaching their subjects clearly; parents and carers notice this. Teachers ensure students understand clearly what they are expected to learn and do and how this relates to examination or assessment requirements. In most lessons, teachers provide useful positive verbal feedback to students on their work. Students consider they know how well they are doing, although some are unsure of their targets.

In better lessons, teachers encourage high-quality independent learning successfully and question students skilfully. In a good Year 12 geography lesson, students benefited from taking roles in groups and considering and challenging each other's viewpoints. However, in many lessons, teachers do not allow students much opportunity to take the initiative, develop their own ideas, or evaluate their own learning. They tend to dominate discussions and activity and do too much thinking for the students. Teaching is usually precise and well paced, but is too often delivered generally to the whole class with insufficient attention paid to the levels of understanding of the students. The assessment data held on students are scarcely used to inform the teaching or meet students' varied needs. Teachers' marking, too rarely, shows students how they can improve their work and too much work is left unmarked. The impact of the contribution of teaching assistants in lessons is variable, depending on how closely it is focused on particular students' learning and progress.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students enjoy school. They feel secure and well supported in the colleges and tutor groups. The staff in these smaller communities are helpful and are usually quick to sort out any problems. One parent commented, 'The vertical tutor group system appears to work really well. When the children first start, it immediately makes them known... whilst also providing a community feel.' Bullying of any kind is rare and invariably dealt with quickly and well, although there is sometimes a need to allay the victims' fears more quickly.

Students' behaviour and attitudes are good. They know and agree with the school's aspirations and clear expectations of them. They are polite and friendly, punctual to lessons and ready to learn. In lessons where they are given the opportunity, students enjoy taking responsibility and working independently. They are very sensible and well focused when undertaking active, practical tasks. In the lessons where teachers do not allow such independence, students become more passive, but sustain a good work rate and show commitment.

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Attendance is promoted well, through good systems, and has risen to a rate just above average. The school makes no fixed-term exclusions, working instead very successfully and inclusively with students at risk through its 'Reachout' provision and Rochester College. The rate of permanent exclusion is, however, above average. A disproportionate number of excluded students have special educational needs. Although the school's 'behaviour for learning' policy works very effectively in most respects, students, parents and carers, reasonably, identify some problems. Some students who met with inspectors were upset, feeling they had been recently unfairly or harshly punished. They explained their reasons, but felt they had no way of raising this with staff. This leads to diminished levels of trust. Some other students, although positive about the school in general, feel more generally that it is sometimes difficult to raise any concerns, or perceptions of unfairness, with staff.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher and his senior team provide very clear, strong leadership. This has led to considerable improvement since the last inspection. They show determination and vision, which are being realised, that all students can succeed and that the school will provide equally well for all of them, depending on their needs. Staff who responded to the questionnaire and who spoke with inspectors feel encouraged by this and involved. One said, 'I have never known the school to be as driven and as focused as it has been in the past few years. I consider it a privilege to be part of this community.' Parents and carers recognise this drive and improvement, too.

The governing body share this vision fully. The governing body is led well by its Chair. It is appropriately organised and contributes astutely, especially in areas such as school organisation and finance. It asks pertinent and challenging questions of the school. Self-evaluation is mainly accurate. However, neither the senior staff nor the governing body listen quite sensitively enough to the voice of students about key matters. Partly as a result, some remaining weaknesses, such as those in teaching and the fine application of the behaviour policy, have not been clearly identified or considered. The school's evaluations of lessons are focused too heavily on what teachers do, with too little focus on the impact that teaching has on the experience and learning of students. Professional development activity for senior staff has not assured suitable quality or accuracy in their observation of lessons. More widely, staff development and training have supported curriculum development very well, but have had less positive impact on teaching. Inadequate teaching has been almost entirely eradicated, but good teaching has not been developed consistently.

The school's main strategic improvement plan sets out clearly appropriate objectives and targets for the next five years. It provides a clear sense of direction. Many parts of the plan are managed well. For example, the very broad and well-considered curriculum pathways, across all key stages, continue to develop strongly. In the sixth form, the range of academic A levels and vocational courses available is considerable. There is a wide range of activities outside school hours, especially within the sports specialism. Although the variety of musical activity and range of instrumental teaching have dwindled somewhat, students are keenly involved. The

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curriculum includes worthwhile visits out of school and residential activities. It contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Systems for safeguarding students are well organised and implemented. New leadership in the sixth form is providing fresh impetus and swiftly bringing improvement.

Some aspects of management are less successful. For instance, the school improvement plan, correctly, identifies the need to increase students' independent learning. This initiative is not implemented and monitored systematically through each subject department. Its impact is, therefore, limited and inconsistent across the school. While the school's middle leadership structure very helpfully encourages joint working between the colleges and subject departments, there is some lack of clarity about where accountability lies for monitoring and ensuring students' progress.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



27 January 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of The Priory School, Orpington BR5 4LG**

Thank you for making us welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing you in lessons and around the school.

We agree with what you told us – that The Priory is a good and improving school. The headteacher, staff and governing body are determined that you can all do well – and you do. Almost all students gain a good set of qualifications and have the right skills to do well in further study or a job. The school's system of pathways ensures that you all choose and follow courses that are just right for each of you. The college system is working well. You behave well in school. It was good to see you ready to learn, helping each other, joining in together and working hard. Well done! We were pleased to see how much those of you involved in the sports academies benefit from them. Similarly, those of you in Rochester College can be very proud of your work and progress. In fact, those of you in every college can be proud.

Even though the school is doing a good job, it can still keep improving. We have asked the staff and governing body to work on the following things. First, we are asking teachers to give you more independence and responsibility in lessons. We can see you are ready for this. The activities you do in lessons need to be just right to challenge each of you – not too hard or too easy – and the marking of your work needs to tell you more clearly how you can improve it. We are also asking senior teachers to check carefully that all your lessons are good. We want you all to be confident that if you ever feel unfairly treated or unhappy you have someone in school to talk to, who will listen carefully and has the power to do something about the situation if necessary. Finally, we are asking senior staff to ensure that they have good management systems for all key aspects of school life.

We wish you all very well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton  
Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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