

Priory City of Lincoln Academy

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135564
Local Authority	Not Applicable
Inspection number	361311
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2010
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	857
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Coffey (Academy Trust) and Ian Wright (Local committee)
Headteacher	Philip Ryland
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Skellingthorpe Road Lincoln LN6 0EP
Telephone number	01522 882800
Fax number	01522 882801
Email address	generalenquiries@priorycity.co.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 48 lessons, each taught by a different teacher. Meetings were held with the headteacher, nominated staff, pupils, the Academy Improvement Partner, the chair of the academy committee, the Federation Executive Headteacher and the chair of the Federation Board of Trustees. They observed the academy's work, looked at a wide range of documentation, and met with groups of students. The inspection team reviewed 124 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. A total of 100 student and 49 staff questionnaires were evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the academy's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- How successful has the academy been in raising standards and improving achievement?
- How accurate is the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning?
- What has the impact been of the federation partnership arrangements on provision and outcomes?
- The improvements secured in attendance.

Information about the school

Priory City of Lincoln Academy opened in September 2008 as part of the Priory Federation of Academies Trust alongside Priory Witham Academy and Priory Academy LSST. In September 2010 the newly opened Priory Ruskin Academy in Grantham joined the Federation. The Priory Federation has an overarching governing body, a Chief Executive Headteacher and a senior leader who manages the joint sixth form provision. Each academy has its own charter, governing committee and senior leadership team.

The academy is smaller than average and the number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of those whose first language is not English is very low in comparison to national averages.

The proportion of students registered by the academy as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national figure, as is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs. The students' social and economic backgrounds vary considerably. There are a small number of students who are looked-after by the local authority.

The academy's specialisms are engineering, sport and health. It has received the following national accreditations and awards: Investors in People, High Performing Specialist Academy, the Charter Mark, the Basic Skills Mark, the Careers Mark, the Healthy Schools Award, the Sportsmark, and the ECM Standards Award.

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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good, effective academy that has made considerable progress in the last two years. Outcomes for individuals and groups are good and show a rising trend. Standards of attainment have improved and are in line with the national average. The proportion of students securing five higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics in 2010 was in line with the national average for the first time and students' rate of progress has been significantly above the national average for the last two years. The low number of students who represent a variety of ethnic backgrounds make good progress. Students' whose circumstances make them more vulnerable and those who find learning difficult make outstanding progress owing to the improvements in teaching and learning.

The improvements secured in teaching in the last two years have helped to raise standards. The impact of the effective teaching on the quality of learning is evident in the students' current work. Teaching is good; there are no significant inadequacies in particular subjects or across year groups. Students of average ability and those who are generally lower attaining have made good progress as a result of the improvements in teaching secured in the last two years. Equality of opportunity for all students to learn and achieve is outstanding.

The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is good and has become a real strength of the senior staff. Marking is generally satisfactory and there are examples of good practice. Where teaching is outstanding, the use of assessment and academic guidance to enhance learning is a positive factor. However, inconsistencies in the use of assessment to support learning remain in some lessons.

The range of curriculum opportunities provided is good and the courses introduced in 2008 have begun to make a positive impact on standards. The new courses introduced within the academy specialisms of engineering and sport have begun to raise standards and improve students' achievement although many of the most recent additions to the curriculum have yet to contribute a full set of results. The proportion of Year 11 students, who left the academy in 2010, and who remain within education, employment and training was broadly average. The number who chose to take up a place in the sixth form at the start of this academic year rose. Outstanding partnership arrangements have been established within the Federation to provide students with access to a wide variety of courses, options and facilities.

Inspectors found behaviour to be good. Although some of the parent and student questionnaire responses expressed some reservations on this matter, those students who spoke to the inspection team were more positive. The academy has worked hard to reduce persistent absence, however, this still remains high. Significant improvement has been secured in overall attendance in the last year, and this is now broadly average.

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The care, welfare and guidance provided is outstanding and parents and students spoke very positively about the nature of the individual support available. The pastoral team's involvement with parents and carers has been at the heart of the substantial parental engagement in the students' learning and the improvements made in attendance. Academic guidance is good and a notable feature of the strongest teaching. All of the Every Child Matters National Children's Agenda areas of the academy's work, such as supporting students to lead healthy, safe lives and make a positive contribution to the community, were judged to be good.

Provision and outcomes in the sixth form are satisfactory overall. All of the sixth form teaching seen by the inspection team was judged to be good or better. The leadership and management of this developing provision is effective.

Governance is outstanding. The local academy committee has begun to establish a quality assurance role and the governing body of the trust has guided the outstanding partnership work of the three Lincoln academies whilst delivering the new build on the City of Lincoln site ahead of schedule.

The academy's self-evaluation is good and the leadership team has done well to secure the required improvements identified in standards, teaching and learning, equality of provision, behaviour and attendance. The academy's capacity to improve further is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards by further improving the focus on learning outcomes and eliminating any weaknesses in teaching.
- Develop the consistent use of assessment to support and improve the quality of learning for all students.
- Embed academic guidance and other more recently established processes in the sixth form in order to improve students' outcomes.
- Reduce the level of persistent absence and ensure that attendance continues to improve to match the federation average.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment on entry to the academy and its predecessor school has been below average in recent years, although this is higher for the current Years 7 and 8. Standards at the end of Year 11 have improved notably in the last year. The proportion of higher grade GCSE passes excluding English and mathematics, at 86%, is significantly above the national average. Similarly, the average points scored by students in all examinations was significantly above the national figure. The proportion of students obtaining five higher grades at GCSE including English and mathematics remains just in line with the national average. The results secured in the academy's specialist subject specialisms continue to improve and are now just above the national average.

Provisional data indicates that the variation in progress between girls and boys has been eliminated and the achievement of students in receipt of free school meals continues to be above the national average. The progress made by those who find learning difficult is outstanding because they have benefited the most by the improvements secured in

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teaching and learning. The few students from minority ethnic backgrounds progress as well as their peers.

The students' current learning and performance in the classroom mirrors the improvements shown by the most recent examination results. In the large majority of lessons, students make good progress and enjoy their work. Lesson outcomes are strongest where there is a clear focus on what the students are expected to learn and students respond well to this challenge. In an outstanding Year 9 mathematics lesson, tasks were very well planned to match the learning needs of less-able students; questioning was particularly skilful and students responded very positively as they discovered mathematical ratios. Enjoyment and achievement is good overall, with strengths evident in individual achievement, a positive attitude to learning and good behaviour.

Students and their parents and carers are positive that students feel safe in school and observed good staff/student relationships support this view. The academy provides effective support for a healthy lifestyle. A good range of healthy meals are available and the proportion of students engaged in sport is high. The students' contribution to the academy and wider community is good and they appreciate the range of responsibilities they are able to assume. Overall, the range of workplace and other skills the students develop towards their future economic well-being are good. Significant improvement has been secured in the students' key skills. Academy staff have worked hard to improve attendance in the last year although persistent absence is still too high.

The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the social maturity displayed by the students was particularly impressive.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers generally plan a range of appropriate activities and tasks to meet the lesson's learning objectives. Staff select topics that will interest and motivate the students. As a result, behaviour is generally good and engagement high. Where progress is slower it is often because the level of challenge is too low for some or all of the students. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it to provide clear explanations so that students understand what is required of them. In the best lessons the objectives are revisited and teachers adjust their teaching in order to address any misconceptions or variations in students' understanding and progress. However, the quality of questioning is variable. In some lessons teachers rely on volunteers to respond and do not direct questions to maximum effect so that some types of questions do not drive deeper understanding of the topic for more-able students. In the best lessons, questioning is used well to gauge progress and to allow adjustments to be made to ensure the rate of progress does not slow for individuals or groups.

The pace of teaching is generally brisk, but is sometimes inappropriate for certain groups when all students are required to attempt the same range of tasks at the same time. In these situations more-able students do not have the opportunity to tackle the more demanding tasks at the end of the sequence of activities. Similarly, slower-learning students are required to move on before their learning has been secured.

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Interactive whiteboards and data projectors are used well to provide interesting visual stimuli that engage students and promote their understanding. Other adults support learning well. For example, the contribution by a food technician to the smooth operation of practical work and the availability of resources, so all could participate, was excellent, especially as this was achieved while providing academic support for small focus groups. Marking remains variable. In the best lessons, good attention is given to making clear to students how to improve. Examples of outstanding marking were seen in history.

The range of curriculum subjects is very broad and students are provided with significant individual choice. Many of the subject courses are very new and have yet to generate the strong academic outcomes senior leaders are working towards. The academy subject specialisms in engineering and sport produced results close to the national average.

Students demonstrate considerable confidence in the outstanding care, guidance and support available at the academy and they appreciate being known and cared for as individuals. Partnerships and multi-agency working support potentially vulnerable students very effectively. For example, staff from the academy, working with outside agencies, showed care, concern and determination in a situation where communication with a parent and carer was challenging and complex. The work and role of the Federation social worker is especially valued.

The monitoring of attendance continues to develop successfully. The introduction of electronic registration systems has increased the availability of attendance data and improved the effectiveness of the academy's interventions. Students' behaviour as they move around this complex site is good and is underpinned by good staff and student relationships.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and his senior team have embedded ambition and driven improvement in an outstanding manner since the formation of the academy. Senior staff have high expectations of the high quality classroom practice they require. The monitoring, evaluation and improvement of teaching and learning by senior leaders is good and has been at the heart of much of the academy's improvement. As a result, standards are improving and students make good progress, and in some instances outstanding progress, towards challenging targets. Staff and the governing body go to considerable lengths to promote equality of opportunity, and this has been critical to improvements in the quality of provision and the achievement of all groups of students.

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Governance is outstanding with a clear focus on enhancing provision at every level. The academy's new building is nearing completion ahead of schedule as a result of the senior leaders and managers' drive and commitment. Partnership working provides outstanding support for the education and personal well-being of the students. Safeguarding procedures are good and the academy promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. Engagement with parents and carers is good and is being enhanced by the work of the pastoral team. Senior staff and the governing body deploy resources effectively and the academy provides good value for money

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Sixth form outcomes are satisfactory overall. Academic standards are beginning to rise and the initial modular test results of new courses are beginning to show positive outcomes. As the size of the sixth form has developed, so students' maturity has become more evident. Nearly 20% of sixth formers volunteer locally with local charities. Provision is satisfactory overall and teaching is good. The leadership and management of this developing sixth form is good.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The large majority of responses to the inspection questionnaire were positive. Parents and carers were appreciative of the pastoral and academic support available. A small number expressed concerns about the way the behaviour of some students was managed but the inspection findings did not support their concerns during this inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Priory City of Lincoln Academy to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 124 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 857 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	23	82	66	8	6	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	38	31	79	64	4	3	2	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	54	44	66	53	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	33	72	58	8	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	31	25	80	65	7	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	28	77	62	7	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	20	75	60	19	15	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	29	23	86	69	4	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	27	75	60	8	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	26	69	56	13	10	6	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	20	75	60	17	14	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	27	22	80	65	6	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	35	72	58	2	2	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



19 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Priory City of Lincoln School, Lincoln, LN6 0EP

This was the second time I have had the pleasure of visiting your academy. The inspection team were very pleased with the improvements in behaviour and attendance since our 2009 visit.

It was good to see the rise in standards and achievement in the 2010 examination results. Inspectors feel that teaching and learning is now good and that outstanding educational opportunities are being provided within the Priory Federation of Academies. I have asked the headteacher to:

- continue to improve the standards you attain by improving the proportion of good teaching in the academy and eliminating any weaknesses in teaching
- develop the consistent use of assessment to support and improve the quality of learning for all students.
- embed academic guidance into the pastoral care systems in the sixth form.

You can help by ensuring that your attendance continues to improve to match the federation average.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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