

The Priory Academy LSST

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135565
Local Authority	N/A
Inspection number	361309
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Brooker 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	1800
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	470
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Coffey
Headteacher	Headmaster Ian Jones Chief Executive Richard Gilliland
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Cross O'Cliff Hill Lincoln LN5 8PW
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. In total there were 49 lesson observations, some of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders; 49 teachers were seen teaching. The inspectors observed the academy's work, and looked at the documentation relating to the safeguarding of students, the progress that different groups of students are making in their learning and their wider participation in the life of the academy. Inspectors analysed 527 questionnaire responses from parents and carers and questionnaires returned by some staff and a sample of over 150 students. Meetings were held with nominated staff, representatives of the governing body and groups of students.

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

- To what extent does the use of assessment drive improvement and minimise any unevenness in the performance and participation of different groups?
- Since opening as an academy, how have the academy and the Trust sustained and driven further improvement in standards and achievement?
- How does the academy's partnership role within the Priory Federation, including sixth form collaboration, impact on provision and outcomes for students?

Information about the school

The Priory Academy LSST opened in September 2008 as part of the Priory Federation of Academies Trust alongside Witham Priory Academy and Priory City of Lincoln Academy. 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 and a senior leader who manages the joint post-16 provision. Each academy has its own charter, governing committee and senior leadership team. The Priory Academy LSST has maintained the Foundation School character and admissions criteria of its predecessor school whereby it invites applications from each of 50 named primary schools on a pro rata basis. In addition, the academy allocates up to 24 places on the basis of students' aptitude in the academy's specialist subjects, science and technology.

The Priory Academy LSST is a large and popular school, and is heavily over-subscribed. It serves a wide catchment and attracts students of all ability and from a wide range of different backgrounds. A very large majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national figure, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the number of students with a statement of special educational needs. The academy has Artsmark Gold, the International Schools Award and the Silver Level Eco School status. A building programme is underway to construct extensive new sports facilities, specialist science buildings and boarding accommodation.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The Priory Academy LSST is outstanding in almost every regard. The overarching aims of the Trust are to drive up standards and improve the life chances of every student. The academy achieves these aims exceptionally well. Outcomes for students are outstanding in every respect; students excel academically and their wider personal development is also excellent. From the moment they arrive the students are inducted into the academy's unique traditions and distinctive learning environment. Students feel a sense of privilege which gives them responsibility and high aspiration so that, from the outset, they develop the attitudes, skills and self-reliance that prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education and for later life. The result is a calm and well disciplined climate for learning without bells, graffiti, litter or disruption, where students and adults work hard together for the highest possible achievement. Students feel completely safe and enjoy school. They respond to the academy's very high expectations and appreciate the wide range of opportunities that it provides. Their exemplary behaviour and exceptional attitudes to learning are key ingredients in their outstanding progress and impressive achievements.

The academy has an enviable record of high attainment, but its relentless drive to maintain and improve its results demonstrates that it is not complacent. Almost all students achieve at least five higher grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, and results at A level are also significantly above national figures. Although a large majority of students enter the academy with impressively high standards of attainment, they make exceptional progress as they move up through the school. Specialist subjects make a very strong contribution to the academy's provision and to student outcomes, and also have significant impact beyond the academy. This year almost 100 students, around half of the Year 13 cohort, chose to study for a degree in a discipline related to one of the academy specialisms.

The academy makes outstanding provision for its own students and, increasingly, for pupils, students and organisations across the wider local community. High quality teaching, combined with the outstanding curriculum and excellent support and guidance, underpin the students' exceptional learning and progress. Rigorous target-setting and tracking ensure that any students in danger of falling behind are identified and that suitable support and intervention are provided. The academy has sensibly prioritised the development of day-to-day assessment to sharpen the quality of teaching and learning. There is exemplary practice, but the use of assessment in lessons is inconsistent, and the principles and practice of the academy's revised assessment policy are not embedded in all classroom teaching or in marking.

The academy's exceptional record of success is securely founded on strengthening all aspects of provision through ambitious target-setting, rigorous monitoring and robust

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analysis. Effective systems for self-evaluation ensure that the academy has excellent capacity to sustain further improvement. Governors play a key role in supporting and challenging the academy in order to set ever-higher expectations. They are rigorous in fulfilling their duties, in monitoring the academy's performance and in shaping its direction and development. Plans to develop the new facilities have been very well managed and augur a successful new phase in the academy's provision and the expansion of its wider impact. The academy secures the very highest expectations and outcomes for its own students, but has also been highly successful in working with partner organisations, including other academies, to raise standards more widely. Its outward-looking and collaborative approach reflects the fact that the best interests of children and young people in the local area are at the heart of the academy's endeavours.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the exemplary practice that exists in order to achieve greater consistency in the way that teachers routinely use assessment:
 - to make students clear, through marking, about what they have done well and specifically how they can improve further
 - to improve their questioning in lessons, better to gauge the extent of students' understanding and ensure that all students are actively engaged in learning
 - to extend the use and effectiveness of peer and self assessment.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve exceptionally well regardless of their starting points. Their remarkable progress owes much to their exemplary attitudes to learning. In lessons students concentrate well and are very rarely off task, they work hard and take real pride in the quality and presentation of their work. They are ambitious and highly motivated, and have the confidence to ask as well as answer questions. They learn to appreciate the capabilities of others as well as themselves and show remarkable support and consideration for one other. Their mutual support in lessons and the way that they also challenge one another demonstrates remarkable social and intellectual maturity.

The students' exceptional enthusiasm, willingness to participate and commitment to succeed in all aspects of school life means that their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is a notable strength. They are independent-minded and articulate and thus able to make a significant contribution to the life of the academy, for example through the councils for sports, arts and community. Their involvement in the wider community is also substantial and is highly valued; many help in junior schools and with students in special schools. Currently, pupils in Year 7 are taking part in a survey of environmental issues in one of the local estates which they propose to present to the local council, with suggestions for improvement.

Students are very proud of and committed to their school community. Although critical of some aspects of lunchtime eating, students understand how to keep fit and healthy and participate fully in extra-curricular activities, including the many after-school clubs and teams, Combined Cadet Force and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. They respond

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impressively when given opportunities to reflect, and are quick to translate thoughts into positive actions.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

The academy's remarkable environment, with its exquisite gardens, art works and water features reflects the value that it places on the creation of a positive working atmosphere for staff and students. High quality teaching then ensures that students making exceptional progress. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge and plan challenging work with sharply focused objectives. For example, in a Year 10 dance lesson the teacher's use of excellent subject language allowed students to express what they understood about choreographic devices with great precision and enthusiasm. Positive relationships help students to work together very productively and ensure that no time is wasted managing off-task behaviour. Teachers use a very good range of activities, including interactive white boards, to gain students' interest. In the best lessons, teachers enthuse students and encourage them to work independently and collaboratively.

Teachers' use of assessment has improved distinctly since the new assessment policy was introduced almost a year ago and some excellent practice has developed. In the best lessons, teachers use skilful questioning to constantly assess students' progress, to check their understanding and to shape the next steps in learning. Mini white boards were cleverly used in a Year 13 physics lesson and also in Year 9 French to identify

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misconceptions, review and refine students' answers and to maintain a rapid pace. A minority of teachers do not use questions effectively to engage or challenge students and occasionally assume that their passivity reflects good understanding. Teachers' marking is regular and often helpful, but its impact is not evident across all areas of the curriculum.

Outstanding attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support, with excellent arrangements to welcome students entering the academy, starting with master classes in Year 6. Arrangements to keep students safe are outstanding. The tutorial system ensures that every student is encouraged to make the best of the opportunities offered by the academy. Students' participation and involvement, alongside their academic progress, is carefully monitored. Students with personal or academic problems receive a high quality of care, involving suitable and effective contact with parents or carers, coupled with the use of appropriate agencies. The systems to deal with challenging behaviour, including rare incidents of bullying, are positive and effective. Excellent procedures ensure high attendance.

The school's curriculum provides memorable experiences and many opportunities for high-quality learning and wider enrichment. In addition to sport, students enjoy a wide range of creative activities such as music and drama clubs. Students can participate in musical and dramatic productions, trips and visits including to places of local interest, to other parts of the country, to several European destinations and to India and South Africa. Year 7 students spoke enthusiastically of their 'French Centre' experience. The academy curriculum also has significant wider impact. Students from two local special schools have, for example, studied for a GCSE in technology. Pass rates are excellent.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior and middle leaders are conspicuously successful in inspiring the academy community in its shared sense of purpose. The academy has been relentless in its drive to sustain and improve its exceptional standards and to ensure equality of opportunity for all its students. Moreover, it is highly committed to working in partnership and takes a leading role in a range of activities that widen its positive impact. The academy is highly effective in working within its federation and also in other local schools to promote the high quality of experience for their students and others across the city. Activities such as conferences and visits to France for groups of students from all of the federated academies help students and staff to benefit from others' experience and expertise. The academy has excellent and highly productive links with the Royal Air Force, with local companies and with universities that benefit the students.

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There is an extremely effective and well-moderated system for monitoring teaching and evaluating its impact on students' learning. The information gathered is collated and closely analysed to track strengths and any areas for development. It is then reviewed across the federation to inform highly effective professional development for all teachers and targeted support for any that need it. As a result, teaching is constantly strengthened.

The academy's outward-looking approach and excellent curriculum make a strong contribution to the promotion of community cohesion, although some of its planned work is at an early stage. It successfully encourages engagement with a wide range of different groups and maintains a highly cohesive community in which students from different backgrounds get on noticeably well. The academy seeks the opinions of parents and carers regularly, welcoming their comments and responding promptly to concerns about their children's education and welfare. Pastoral staff make strenuous efforts to contact parents who have not been in touch with the academy about their children's progress, or when they identify individual problems. Parents and carers have ample opportunity to know about their children's progress and to discuss any issues, including through the informative website.

The academy has excellent procedures for safeguarding students which are implemented and reviewed with exceptional rigour so that staff and governors at all levels are aware of their responsibilities. A realistic and proportionate approach to safety and safeguarding permeates all aspects of the academy's provision.

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	1
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	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The sixth form is very popular and highly successful. It is very well led and sustains outstanding outcomes through rigorous self-review and evaluation. Students make excellent progress from their starting points at the end of Year 11 to achieve results that

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are above those found nationally. Students value highly the positive relationships with teachers and other staff that set the highest expectations of their achievement and engagement, and support well their academic and personal development. The quality of care, guidance and support enjoyed by students is excellent. Levels of attendance, retention and progression are all very high, with almost 80% of students going on to university.

Sixth-form teaching is of a consistently high quality and often inspirational, and places due emphasis on developing students' independence within a supportive environment. Teachers set highly aspirational targets, against which the students' progress is regularly monitored using rigorous assessment. The academy provides a very wide range of courses that are well matched to students' needs and aspirations. The sixth-form curriculum is supported by an outstanding range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities, many of which encourage the students to contribute extensively and positively to the academy and its wider community. Sixth-form students organise and produce the school newsletter and many others initiate fund-raising projects for charitable causes. The Teaching Bursary Scheme for sixth-form students is particularly successful in its impact across the school and with local primary schools.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire are happy with their children's experience at the academy. A significant number made additional comments in fulsome praise and commendation of the academy, particularly when they reflected on the long-term impact on their older children, some of whom had now left school. A few parents and carers articulated critical comments, particularly with regard to communication and to issues linked with facilities for eating healthily at lunchtime. Although there are occasions when the academy has not met some parents and carers' expectations regarding communication, inspectors judge that the academy's engagement with parents and carers is outstanding because it has worked hard to develop a highly positive relationship with all groups of parents and carers and to respond to their views. Considerable work has been undertaken to improve facilities for eating at lunchtime.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Priory Academy LSST 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 527 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1800 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	239	45	263	50	21	4	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	287	54	232	44	5	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	269	51	238	45	16	3	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	288	55	219	42	12	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	262	50	242	46	13	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	181	34	281	53	45	9	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	123	23	309	59	72	14	7	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)	213	40	258	49	24	5	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	247	47	251	48	16	3	2	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	261	50	223	42	26	5	6	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	127	24	301	57	47	9	8	2
The school is led and managed effectively	261	50	235	45	12	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	297	56	217	41	6	1	3	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 The Priory Academy LSST, Lincoln LN5 8PW

Thank you for making such a positive contribution to our recent inspection. We appreciated the time that you took to speak to us. Your views, alongside the survey responses from your parents and carers, were helpful in confirming what the published exam results indicate: that yours is an exceptional school. The academy has many distinctive features and outstanding strengths. We were particularly impressed by:

- the academy's exceptional academic record and its continued improvement
- your impressive progress, both academically and in your personal development
- the academy's outstanding provision, including the high-quality teaching, the excellent curriculum and its outstandingly effective care, guidance and support
- your exemplary behaviour, your excellent attitudes in lessons and the remarkable responsibility you show for your environment
- the academy's wider impact through its work with other schools and organisations.

It would be unusual if students and parents did not occasionally have cause to grumble. Some of you shared concerns about aspects of provision, such as the shortage of space to eat at lunchtime. However, the academy evidently listens and responds to your well articulated views. Everyone works hard to achieve the very best outcomes for you, both academically and by providing a very wide range of different opportunities for you to develop wider interests and skills. Many of you told us how much you value the fact that the academy holds the highest expectations of the standard of your attitudes, behaviour, work and ultimately your achievements. You recognise how fortunate you are to attend such an outstanding school.

The inspection findings are overwhelmingly positive. Nonetheless, we have asked the academy specifically to develop the use of assessment, particularly in lessons and through marking, so that you are more often actively engaged in your learning and assessment and so that you understand more precisely how to improve your work.

You can all be proud of your efforts and many achievements. We wish you all every success in the future

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker

Her Majesty's Inspector

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