

# Priory Witham Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	135563
<b>Local Authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	361310
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Alder 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>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	857
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	79
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Academy Trust Terry Coffey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Headmistress Dorothy McRae
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	De Wint Avenue Lincoln LN6 7JG
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Thirty four lessons and 34 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff, the Chief Executive and the School Improvement Partner. In addition, discussions were held by telephone with the Chair of the Trustees and the Chair of the local committee. Inspectors observed the academy's work, and scrutinised a wide range of documents including those relating to safeguarding, pupils' performance data and the academy action plan. In addition, questionnaires were analysed from 125 parents and carers, 29 staff and 154 pupils.

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

What the academy is doing to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy.

- What the quality of teaching is like and how it can increase pupils' progress further.
- Achievement in the sixth form.

## Information about the school

The academy serves the age range of three to 18 years, although in size it is smaller than the average 11-18 school. It was formed from three predecessor schools which comprised an infants school with Early Years Foundation Stage provision, a junior school and a secondary school. When the junior school was inspected prior to closure, Ofsted judged that it required special measures. Priory Witham Academy opened in September 2008 as part of the Priory Federation of Academies Trust alongside Priory City of Lincoln 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 and a senior leader who manages the joint post-16 provision. Each academy has its own charter, governing committee and senior leadership team.

The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is about double the national average, as are the proportions of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who have statements of special educational needs. There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and fewer who speak English as an additional language in the academy than usual, the proportion being about one third of that found nationally.

The academy is currently housed on three separate sites about one mile apart. There is an extensive building programme underway on the senior site. Years 6 to 13 occupy new buildings on the site, and the pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those in Years 1 to 5 will move to new buildings on the site in September 2011.

The academy has specialisms in business and enterprise, and in the performing arts. It houses a SureStart centre and a privately run Nursery but these are not managed by the academy and so are covered by separate inspections.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

The academy's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Pupils' progress is good, but their attainment is low in literacy and numeracy. The Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding, and the sixth form is satisfactory. The strong leadership of both the federation and the academy ensures that improvement is rapid.

Although pupils' attainment is low, including in literacy and numeracy, they are now making good progress in these subjects. The progress made by all groups of pupils is good. This includes those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Progress is good because:

- assessment data is accurate and is used well to identify which pupils are underachieving and would benefit from further support for their learning
- the additional support for learning is effective
- the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11, allows an impressively wide range of courses to suit pupils' differing interests and aspirations; there is a wide range of vocational and work-related courses as well as the opportunity to take GCSE in English and mathematics early
- there is effective deployment of support staff, and some sixth formers, in many lessons to enhance learning
- all teaching is at least satisfactory.

In addition, other aspects of school life which have a strong effect on learning are improving. Pupils' attendance, which had been low, is now in line with the national average. Behaviour is good and, in some lessons observed it was outstanding. Teaching quality is improving too. While there are still too few lessons in Years 3 to 5 in which teaching is good or better, the proportion that are good, nevertheless, is increasing. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and their planning allows pupils to use a range of approaches to learning, including collaborative, individual and practical work with commendable frequency. However, although the development of literacy and numeracy skills is a priority and there are well-defined strategies to improve them, they were not sufficiently evident in the lessons observed. The academy's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

The academy's leaders, through their monitoring of progress, ensure that they look in detail to check that no groups of pupils are disadvantaged. The impact of senior leaders is strong. They know what is needed to further improve pupils' learning. There is, however, not detailed enough planning to bring about improvements in the sixth form.

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

- Raise pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy by ensuring that policies to extend the teaching of these across the curriculum are fully implemented, influence teaching more comprehensively, and are carefully monitored for their effectiveness.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
  - developing the use of data in the planning of different tasks for pupils in lessons, according to their ability and prior knowledge
  - making more use of questions during lessons to assess pupils' understanding, so that the teaching can be adapted if necessary
  - ensuring that lessons are well-paced
  - using the good practice that already exists in the academy to develop it further.
- Improve achievement in the sixth form by developing a strategic plan, based on self-evaluation, to include:
  - providing more consistent challenge in lessons
  - ensuring that assessments are used to identify underachievement so that it can be rectified.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>3</b>
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When pupils start in Year 1, their attainment is below expectations for their age. Pupils' attainment remains low, but is improving. This is true of all groups, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the GCSE examinations in 2010, the proportion of pupils who achieved five or more good GCSE grades including English and mathematics was in line with the government's minimum expectation. All pupils achieved five or more good GCSE grades excluding English and mathematics. Taking the results of all pupils into account, pupils' performance in GCSE English and mathematics is lower than average but nevertheless, given their starting points at the age of 11, the results represent good progress. In addition, the current Year 11 pupils, most of whom have taken their GCSE examinations in English and mathematics early in Year 10, achieved better results than previous Year 10 cohorts. Achievement in the academy's specialist subjects is good.

In the most recent national tests taken by pupils in Year 6, attainment was low. This group has shown inadequate progress since Year 2. However, data show that all groups have made good progress in the two years since the academy opened. In the tests for Year 2 pupils in 2010, while attainment was low, there were good improvements over the previous year's results, especially in reading and mathematics.

The progress made by pupils in lessons is satisfactory and in almost half it is good. Progress is good in a very small minority of lessons in Years 3 to 6. No lessons observed were inadequate. Pupils of all abilities make good progress overall. This is partly because

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those who are underachieving receive extra interventions that are effective in improving their progress.

The new building is attractive, welcoming and of high quality. Pupils readily say that they enjoy learning in it. Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel safe. Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are good overall, and satisfactory on the junior site. A small number of pupils reported that some bullying occurs, but said it is rare and is acted upon quickly and effectively.

Although pupils' skills in numeracy and literacy are relatively low, they learn to work in teams and collaborate well. They also learn well about business and enterprise through the specialism. This, together with work experience and vocational subjects, means that pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future working lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
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	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?**

Lessons are well-focused upon their objectives. Pupils' interest and enjoyment are maintained by the variety of tasks they are given, including practical activities. While questions are used effectively to summarise previous learning as a means of preparing the class for new work, they are not used as a matter of course to assess learning. Some lessons were observed in which the teacher recognised that pupils did not understand the work and so found ways of improving this. However, this practice is not sufficiently

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common. In most lessons, there is recognition of different abilities and there were different expectations of the progress of different groups. However, more rarely is the work adjusted to take this into account. Pupils are often encouraged to assess their own and each others' work using examination criteria, an exercise that enables them to understand more clearly what the expectations are and how successfully they are achieving them. Marking is thorough and helpful, with useful targets for improvement given.

The curriculum is a strength of the academy. Particularly for pupils in Year 10 and above, there is the opportunity to study some subjects in other parts of the federation, giving a large number of options. In addition, there is a good range of extra-curricular activities, which a good proportion of students attend. These benefits are a result of the academy's specialisms. The performing arts specialism is important in developing pupils' confidence and in developing community links, for example in relation to theatre, dance and football. An opportunity to spend some time at the federation's site in France is offered to all pupils in Year 7 and helps to expand their horizons and raise their aspirations.

Care, guidance and support are strong. Pupils increasingly benefit from the all-through nature of the academy. For example, for those already in the academy, the transfer to junior classes or to the secondary phase is eased by this. The support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The plans for them are effective and include clear targets and practical steps for them, and those who support them, to follow in order to improve their learning. The academy uses a good range of support organisations to ensure that vulnerable pupils have their needs met, including those who have missed work through illness. The work to improve attendance is effective.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The Chief Executive, the headmistress and her team, the Trust and the local governing committee have an exceptionally clear and cohesive view of the ways in which pupils' academic and personal development should benefit from the academy's work, and reinforce this regularly. They also have a clear strategic view of how this should be achieved.

Senior leaders evaluate the quality of provision and how well pupils are benefiting from it and use the information well to identify where further improvement is needed. The development of middle leaders, such as those who are responsible for the quality of subjects of the curriculum, is well underway, but they do not yet produce formal evaluations or improvement plans. Evaluations are generally accurate, although this is not

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universal. For example, there is some generosity in the judgment of teaching quality, as some evaluations focus more on what teachers do rather than on the impact of their work. Nevertheless, good use is made of the observations to identify areas for improvement and to find how staff can share expertise. Records show that teaching is improving as a result. The impact of leadership and management in driving improvement is good.

The academy's contribution to promoting community cohesion is good. There are good, and growing, links with the local community. The academy plays an important role in supporting vulnerable groups, a result of good use of data, to the identification of local needs. Links have been established with France as well as, through virtual business links, with other countries. The academy has a wide range of partners to help it support the education and well-being of the pupils. Safeguarding procedures are effective and partnerships within the federation are fundamental to pupils' equality of opportunity for learning and achievement, and the lack of discrimination against any groups.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a very good start in this provision. They enter Nursery with knowledge and skills that are very low compared with those expected for their age. The improvement represents outstanding progress. By the time they leave Reception, children's attainment is below national levels, especially in early reading, writing and calculation. Nevertheless, they make good progress in developing personal qualities and have good relationships with each other, including with those from different backgrounds, and with adults. They have a good awareness of safety considerations. The provision is outstanding, centred on very effective teaching that consistently builds on previous learning. Staff are adept at using assessments of children's work to plan the next steps in learning and to check rigorously on every child's progress. The classrooms, both inside and outdoors, cover all



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areas of learning through a judicious balance of activities led by adults and those initiated by children. The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. Consequently, there is a very clear direction for the work of the other staff, based on an excellent understanding of the key improvement priorities. Staff work exceptionally well as a team. As a result, the progress of boys and girls are similar and the needs of the individual child are clear to all adults. For example, the 'nurture' group is a key feature in meeting the social and emotional needs of some children, mostly in Reception. A highly effective and diverse range of ways is used to engage parents and carers, including the use of home school diaries.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Sixth form

The sixth form is small, but growing. Students join Year 12 with attainment that is below average, as it is when they leave. However, the proportion of students transferring from Year 12 to Year 13 is below average. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and students make satisfactory progress. At the academy, the subjects offered are largely vocational but students have a wide range of subject options across the federation. They have good opportunities to be involved in the work of the academy, for example helping younger pupils in class and through the sixth form committee and school council. Students say they value the support they are given, for example when applying to university.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
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	3

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are strongly supportive of the work of the academy. The aspect which gives rise to the greatest concern is to do with how effectively unacceptable behaviour is dealt with. Inspectors investigated behaviour thoroughly by interviewing pupils, analysing

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the questionnaires completed by parents, carers, pupils and staff as well as observing behaviour in lessons and in and around the buildings. In addition, the academy's behaviour and exclusion logs were scrutinised. Inspectors found that although there have been some instances of poor behaviour, overall it is good and in some lessons it is outstanding.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Priory Witham 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 125 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	58	46	60	48	3	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	61	49	63	50	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	71	57	50	40	2	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	63	50	57	46	3	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	64	51	59	47	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	38	67	54	6	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	34	70	56	8	6	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)	47	38	73	58	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	37	75	60	3	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	34	65	52	8	6	5	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	32	69	55	10	8	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	52	42	69	55	4	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	50	56	45	5	4	0	0

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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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 Pupils

**Inspection of Priory Witham Academy, Lincoln, LN6 7JG**

Thank you for your help when we inspected the academy. We spoke to a good number of you in meetings, lessons and around the buildings. We found you to be polite, friendly and helpful. You told us that you feel safe and that behaviour is good. You said there had been a little bullying, but that it had been dealt with quickly and well.

We found that you are making good progress in your work. You pay attention in lessons and you get on well with each other and with your teachers.

We also found that the academy is well run. Your headmistress and the other leaders are very good at recognising where the academy should improve. They are successful in bringing about improvements. As a result, your learning is getting better and you are developing well as young people. We noted, too, that while your attendance is satisfactory, rather than good, it is improving.

We have suggested some areas in which the academy can improve further. These are in helping your literacy and numeracy improve faster; making more teaching of good quality so that your progress is even better in all subjects; making the sixth form better by careful planning and seeing what can be done to raise standards further.

You can all play a part in helping to improve your own learning, for example, by making sure that you attend as regularly as possible.

Yours sincerely

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector

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