

# Priestnall School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106133
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stockport
<b>Inspection number</b>	355890
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jane Austin 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1202
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jo Morgan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Priestnall Road Heaton Mersey, Stockport Cheshire SK4 3HP
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 42 lessons taught by 42 teachers as well as holding meetings with the headteacher, staff, groups of students and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school's data on students' progress, policies and procedures for safeguarding students, and information about the school's structure and management systems. Responses to inspection questionnaires returned by 420 parents and carers and 111 students were considered.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The performance of the various groups of students was evaluated.
- Students' learning and their rates of progress were investigated.
- The effectiveness of the use of assessment to support learning was examined.

## Information about the school

Priestnall is much larger than the average secondary school and is a designated centre for students with physical disabilities. Working in partnership with the local authority, Inscape and the Together Trust, it integrates students on the autistic spectrum into its mainstream provision. Hence, the percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is twice the national average, although the overall proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school is oversubscribed year-on-year. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average, with the largest single group being of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is broadly average, with none at the early stages of learning to speak the language. The school has sports college status. It has been designated a National Support School and the headteacher is a National Leader in Education. Consequently, the school works in partnership with other schools to effect improvement. The school has gained a range of awards including as an International School, Artsmark Gold, Healthy Schools Gold and Eco-school Silver.

**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

Priestnall School provides an outstanding education for its students. Their attainment is high and their achievement is outstanding. They behave well and their rates of attendance are high. The outstanding care, guidance and support for students, delivered through the college system, play a pivotal role in this. It ensures that all students are known as individuals, their progress towards challenging targets is tracked regularly, and any underachievement is tackled promptly and systematically. Through the college system, outstanding support is provided for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, as well as for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's inclusive ethos is reflected in the outstanding promotion of equality of opportunity.

The outstanding curriculum makes a significant contribution to students' excellent achievement as well as to their personal development. It comprises a wide range of courses and styles of qualification which meet students' needs and aspirations. The imaginative use of 'Deep Learning Days', as well as themed weeks, provides opportunities for placing learning in broader contexts as well as for practising skills for sustained periods. Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress because teaching is good. However, their progress is sometimes inhibited by tasks that are not sharply enough matched to their individual learning needs. In addition, the quality and consistency of marking is too variable. While there is some good practice on which to build, too often students are not given guidance on how they can improve their learning.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher leads an uncompromising and vigorous drive in ensuring the best outcomes for all students and is very well supported in this by leaders and managers at all levels. There is a shared ambition for the school and a sense of urgency in striving to be the best. Very well-designed quality assurance systems are tightly managed to ensure that leaders identify any areas for improvement promptly and address these rigorously. Governance is good: the governing body is well informed and makes a good contribution to the school's strategic direction. Improvements in many areas of the school's work since the previous inspection, so that students' attainment is now high and their achievement outstanding, demonstrate that the school has outstanding capacity to improve. It provides outstanding value for money.

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

- Develop students' independence in learning by:
  - refining the match of tasks to students' individual needs

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- ensuring marking consistently shows students how they can improve their progress.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**1**

The 2010 GCSE results show that students' rates of progress had risen markedly on previous years, reaching significantly high levels for most groups. This was the result of both improvements in teaching and the introduction of a revised curriculum. The school's current data point to sustained improvement and so increases in GCSE-level examination successes are expected this year. Both the school's data and lesson observations indicate that, overall, students make good progress from their starting points which are a little above average when they join in Year 7. There is no marked variation in the performance of the different groups of students.

Students' preparation for future study and adult life is outstanding: they have very well-developed basic skills. The many opportunities students have to contribute to the community, for instance as college leaders and subject ambassadors, assist in the development of the personal dispositions required. High levels of attendance and punctuality, as well as good behaviour, combine with the positive attitudes, persistence and collaboration evident in lessons to form a firm basis for future success.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The many opportunities to contribute to the community, as well as the school's diverse international links, foster these elements of their development very well. Spiritual development is, however, a comparatively weaker element. Students have a very well-rounded understanding of the factors that affect their physical and mental health. They contribute to decisions about school meal menus and data show that choices are increasingly healthy. Levels of participation in sport are high. Students say that they feel very safe and appreciate the steps taken by the school, and the attached police constable, to secure this. They are very confident that help is available should they need it.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Typically in lessons, relationships between staff and students are good and both have high expectations of learning. The school has worked with some success to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons. These are characterised by imaginative and lively teaching. A wide range of well-designed activities results in a brisk pace with high levels of concentration, engagement and enjoyment. Students play a strong part in their own learning, and that of their classmates, because teachers facilitate this expertly. In many lessons students have good opportunities to assess their own learning and that of their peers. Teachers use questioning well to identify strengths and weaknesses in students' learning. Nevertheless, this information is not always used well enough to plan activities that closely match the needs of individual students. On occasion, mundane teaching fails to stimulate students' interest and this leads to low-level disruption. The quality and frequency of marking is inconsistent, with too little that helps students understand how to improve their learning.

The curriculum, which is kept under constant review, makes an outstanding contribution to students' achievement and their personal development. Considerable flexibility has been gained by reducing the length of Key Stage 3 and beginning examination courses early. There is a broad range of pathways at Key Stage 4, carefully matched to the needs of individuals, and including a number of vocational courses offered in partnership with local providers. Cross-curricular days broaden students' experiences, giving them opportunities

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to develop a range of skills such as those needed for teamwork. The school's specialism ensures that all follow accredited courses in physical education or dance as well as providing wider opportunities, for instance as junior sports leaders. The specialism also contributes well to the wide array of extra-curricular activities on offer: participation rates are high. The nurture group, with its personalised approach to the needs of students in Years 7 and 8 whose circumstances make them vulnerable, is very effective in raising their confidence and integrating them into mainstream lessons.

The school's commitment to inclusion is evident in the outstanding care, guidance and support carefully tailored to students' individual needs. The college system forms a robust framework within which students' academic and pastoral needs are known and met in a highly-effective, coherent and integrated way. Strong inter-agency partnerships extend the scope of help available and enable the school to develop its own in-house expertise, for example in supporting students on the autistic spectrum. The school's close links with families increases the benefits of the support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A comment from one parent of such a student captures the views of a number who wrote to praise the school for providing, 'the best of care in a nurturing environment'. Transition arrangements at the beginning and end of students' time at the school are excellent, particularly for those who are vulnerable in any way.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders and managers share high aspirations for the school and a sense of moral purpose in ensuring that all is done to enable students to succeed. The headteacher gives a commanding lead and has put in place an innovative, integrated leadership structure that brings together academic and pastoral support for students through a series of colleges. Through these, staff and students alike have developed a clear sense of belonging. The colleges provide the key leadership mechanism for quality assurance and accountability. They are augmented by a faculty of learning and teaching that reflects the school's major drive for improvement in this area. Sharp analysis of the school's performance through multi-tiered monitoring and evaluation, provides a comprehensive picture of strengths and areas for development.

Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. The expertise of the governing body has grown and governors provide a good level of challenge to the school's leaders. Statutory requirements are met and the school's safeguarding procedures are exemplary, with effective monitoring of these by the governing body. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding. Racist incidents are very rare and staff

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are diligent in checking that all groups are represented, for instance, among the subject ambassadors and in the take-up of extra-curricular opportunities. Frequent checks on students' progress towards their challenging targets ensure that all groups of students stay on track to achieve as well as they can. Community cohesion is promoted well. The college system fosters cohesion within the school highly effectively. There is a wide variety of links with the local community and, as reflected in its international school award, a range of global contacts. The action plan for community cohesion is recent and the school recognises that the impact of its work in this area has yet to be evaluated. The school engages well with parents and carers, providing daily opportunities for any parents and carers who wish to bring a concern to the attention of senior staff. The school's work with partners, for instance through its specialism and Inscape, makes an outstanding contribution to students' learning and well-being.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires is much higher than usual. Concerns, including those expressed in the comments added by parents and carers, were followed up. Inspectors found that overall communication with parents and carers is good with clear information regarding students' progress regularly and frequently shared. Inspection evidence indicates that concerns regarding the school's support for the development of healthy lifestyles are unfounded.



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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Priestnall School 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 420 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1202 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	133	32	264	63	19	5	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	164	39	245	58	5	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	136	32	242	58	31	7	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	144	34	231	55	29	7	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	111	26	275	65	11	3	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	18	246	59	68	16	7	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	71	17	251	60	75	18	7	2
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)	89	21	262	62	28	7	2	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	110	26	271	65	23	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	107	25	246	59	27	6	5	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	73	17	223	53	50	12	6	1
The school is led and managed effectively	119	28	249	59	21	5	5	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	160	38	230	55	18	4	1	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## 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.**



10 June 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Priestnall School, Stockport, SK4 3HP**

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school recently and particularly to thank those of you who gave up your time to tell us about school life. What you said helped us reach our conclusions. I am sure you will be delighted to know that your school provides you with an outstanding education.

The school is preparing you very well for the next stage of your education and ultimately adult life. Not only do you gain excellent results in examinations, but you also have many opportunities to take on responsibilities and so develop a range of essential skills. The Deep Learning Days, for instance, help broaden your perspective while giving you extended periods to apply your learning. Evidently you enjoy school since you behave well and your rates of attendance and punctuality are high. Very many of you participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and this helps you develop healthy lifestyles. You told us that being a member of a college gives you a sense of belonging. We were very impressed by the way the college system ensures that you are all known as individuals. The care, guidance and support provided for you are outstanding.

As you know from your own work, there is always room for improvement: it is the same for a school. So we have asked your headteacher and staff to ensure that the tasks set for you in lessons are closely matched to your individual needs. We have also asked them to ensure that your work is marked regularly and that you are given clear guidance on how you can improve. You can play your part by continuing to work hard and to take advantage of the many opportunities the school offers you.

I wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin

Her Majesty's Inspector

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