

Priory School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101856
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	376633
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Bob Pugh

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
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	88
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	38
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Furmanski
Headteacher	Jillian Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 April 2009
School address	Tennison Road South Norwood London SE25 5RR
Telephone number	020 8653 8222
Fax number	020 8771 6761
Email address	kclements.306@lgflmail.org

Age group	11–19
Inspection date(s)	12–13 October 2011
Inspection number	376633

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed 11 lessons taught by 9 teachers and held meetings with staff, students and governors. Inspectors looked at students' work files, their records of achievement and at photographic and other evidence. The school improvement plan was scrutinised as were minutes of governors' meetings and reports from the local authority and the School Improvement Partner. The views of the 20 parents and carers who returned questionnaires to the school were analysed by inspectors; 40 students and 27 members of staff also made their views known through their questionnaires.

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

- Inspectors analysed the extent to which all students at the school are making sufficient progress, including those with complex needs and challenging behaviours.
- Inspectors reviewed the effectiveness of the school's leaders in raising the standard of all teaching and learning so that it matches the very best.
- Inspectors examined the extent to which all staff recognise and record the achievements of students in lessons and how they use that information to inform further planning.

Information about the school

Priory School is an average sized special school which provides education for students who have severe learning difficulties. Many have other needs including autistic spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and medical needs. All students have a statement of special educational needs. The large majority of students are boys and just over two thirds come from ethnic backgrounds other than White British. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average.

The school has grown considerably since the last inspection. Sixth form students are accommodated on a separate site some three miles from the main school campus. Plans are being discussed for a new school building so that the whole school can operate on one site and so that better and more specialist facilities can be provided.

The school has gained Sports Mark and the Healthy Schools Award for its achievements in these areas. Students in the sixth form can gain accreditation within the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).

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

3

Main findings

Priory School is a welcoming community which provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students. The care, support and guidance that students receive from staff at the school are real strengths and it is clear that students enjoy attending and make noticeable improvements to their behaviour and social skills. Parents and carers strongly believe that their children enjoy school and that staff help them to support their children at home. One parent stated that 'Priory School helps my child and helps me to learn to support him'. Robust procedures are in place for ensuring that the school is as safe as it can be thanks to effective staff training. Staff do their very best to ensure students' well being around the properly maintained school sites. As a result students say that they feel safe at school and know where to go for help when they need it. The school's good curriculum provides students with a wide range of interesting activities, for example, they have opportunities to compete in city wide sporting competitions which help them to learn about healthy lifestyles, and many take part in dance lessons during the weekly visits to the school by a dance teacher.

School leaders and managers have been less successful at ensuring that teaching is always of the very highest quality in both the main school and in the sixth form. Consequently, progress made by most students in learning important basic skills in numeracy and literacy, is no better than satisfactory. Whilst arrangements are in place for recording how much help students are given with specific tasks, insufficient time is allowed for checking how well they have understood the lesson content which means that it is often difficult for staff to judge how much progress students are making in lessons. Consequently teachers' lesson plans do not always address the needs of each individual. School leaders and teachers set targets for pupils on those occasions when assessment data is analysed and at Annual Reviews, but students have little involvement in this process and teachers are only partially successful at translating these targets into objectives for learning in the classroom and beyond.

School leaders and managers have introduced some self evaluation processes to provide them with information about how well the school is doing, including lesson monitoring, but this information is not consistently well used to drive up standards of teaching and learning. Opportunities are sometimes missed for involving parents and students in making a contribution to future planning. Governors play a supportive role but lack sufficient, high quality information to enable them to challenge the school to raise standards. As a result, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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

About 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012 improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers in securing improvement by:
 - implementing robust self-evaluation processes, especially to monitor teaching and learning
 - using self evaluation as a basis for devising and introducing intervention programmes that can be put in place quickly to boost progress
 - ensuring greater involvement of governors and parents in self evaluation and development.
- Ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better by December 2012 by:
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations of students are as high as possible in all lessons
 - ensuring that teachers' planning focuses sharply on what each student will learn in every lesson so that progress can be accelerated for all students.
- By July 2012 provide opportunities for students to play a greater role in their own learning and in the life and development of the school including:
 - opportunities to help to plan and assess their own learning targets
 - opportunities for them to give their views about important developments in the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' attainment on entry to the school is low and their achievement is satisfactory. Students' progress is no better than satisfactory in the majority of lessons because teachers do not fully utilise available information on what they have previously learned. Consequently students are not fully engaged in learning activities planned for them. Students make better progress in a minority of lessons where teachers' planning is more precise because learning targets are personalised. In these lessons students' motivation is higher and their engagement in learning better because work is matched to their individual needs. Students with different types of special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with complex needs, make similar progress, and there are no differences between progress made by boys and girls or those from different ethnic groups.

Students' personal development is good. They behave well and are considerate of each others' needs. They enjoy coming to school although medical needs have an impact on attendance rates. Students are confident that staff will help them when

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

needed. They take good advantage of the many opportunities for participation in sport and games, and at break times, many choose to take part in physical activities such as football and running. Students were seen to be making healthy meal choices at lunchtime and they enjoy the opportunity to chat with their peers and with staff whilst dining. Through the skills they acquire students are adequately prepared for life when they leave school. They have a good awareness of being part of a school community and some can talk about achievements which they have shared, for example, taking part in residential trips. Students have some influence on day to day decision making in school, such as choosing a favourite activity as a reward at the end of a lesson. Students in the sixth form take some responsibility for keeping their working areas in good order. However the absence of a school council or similar body for bringing students together means that there are not enough opportunities to discuss school developments. Similarly, they are insufficiently involved in planning for their own learning needs. Pupils have some understanding of the diverse nature of their own local community, gained from visits to local places of worship and from visits into school by religious leaders. The opportunities they are given for learning about other areas of the United Kingdom are limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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

How effective is the provision?

In a minority of lessons, teachers’ expectations of their students are high and they ensure that every individual has work which challenges and provides stimulation and reward. Students are encouraged to recognise and celebrate the achievement of others. Teaching assistants in these classes are very well deployed to support students by keeping them interested in the lesson and ensuring high standards of behaviour. In the majority of lessons, teachers spend too much time talking to the whole group and miss opportunities to fully utilise support staff and consequently, in these lessons planning does not sufficiently match individual needs and students miss important learning messages. Whilst individual timetables for students are on display in some classrooms, they are under-used since they are rarely referred to as lessons proceed.

The school’s good curriculum provides students with a broad range of experiences which contribute well to their overall development and well-being. Enrichment opportunities are varied and very good use is made of local facilities to promote learning, especially to boost the school’s provision for sport and music. Students are encouraged to compete in sporting events and enjoy many successes as a result of the school’s strong provision for PE. There are good opportunities for students to learn to play musical instruments thanks to a well equipped music studio. Some students speak with pride of their performances as members of the school’s choir. Information and communication technology is well used in some lessons to develop pupils’ understanding, a good example of which was seen in a Maths lesson where a computer link up was effectively used to underpin students’ counting skills.

Partnerships with health professionals and with social care workers are strong and as a result the care needs of the most vulnerable students are well met. The high standard of care is evident in the close and trusting relationships which exist between students and staff and the attention to detail which is observed in planning behaviour and social skills programmes. Particularly good planning and assessment by staff in this aspect of students’ development means that new students are well supported on arrival at the school and settle quickly. Similarly, students in Year 11 pay weekly visits to the sixth form site so that they can become familiar with that area of the school before moving up.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	2

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

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders and managers demonstrate a very strong commitment to the well being of their students, supported by all staff. This can be seen in the effective systems they have developed for monitoring students’ behavioural and care needs. They are able to comment in detail on how individuals have improved in this respect, since the last inspection. They have been less successful in gaining an understanding of how much progress each individual is making with learning because of the lack of highly personalised improvement targets and insufficient monitoring of progress in lessons. Consequently they have been less effective in achieving a successful whole school approach to improving students’ rate of progress. Governors offer support by means of attending school events including parents’ consultation evenings. They meet all of their statutory responsibilities including those relating to safeguarding and they have worked hard to secure assurances from the local authority about improvements to the school site. However, the governing body does not systematically challenge the school regarding planned developments because it is not provided with information of sufficient quality to enable it to do so. The school has a generally positive relationship with parents and carers and occasionally takes account of their views about important issues. There is a regular exchange of information through newsletters and home/school link books.

Some of the school’s partnerships serve to extend its provision, for example, with the local further education college, which permits older students access to its facilities during their weekly visits. Students show respect for each other. All students in all groups have equal access to all of the school’s resources, but specialist teaching techniques (for example, key word signing and personalised timetables) are not consistently well used to get the best work from each student. School leaders have ensured that good practice is adopted in all areas of its work to ensure that pupils are safeguarded. Risk assessments are used well for learning and recreational activities and a high level of supervision and care is made available at all times of the school day. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding and recruitment procedures and use them appropriately and efficiently in their everyday work.

School leaders have carried out an audit of their work to promote community cohesion, and without doubt, they understand the local context very well. They have identified a need to build upon existing learning experiences about other British and international cultures.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3

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

The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Sixth form

Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress overall though there are some areas where progress is better, for example in improving communication skills. Behaviour and relationships are good and students enjoy working together. They are well supported and guided, and there are good opportunities for parents and other professionals to work with school staff to ensure smooth transitions into college or other adult settings. Staff work hard to help students improve their behaviour. However, teaching in lessons is not sufficiently targeted towards improving learning for individual students. Whilst 'Moving On Key Skills' and other accreditation schemes including ASDAN are in use, the lack of personalised targets means that there is some uncertainty about whether students are making sufficient progress in all subjects, based on their starting points.

Leaders in the sixth form are in the process of developing a clearer idea of how it might improve. For example, the weekly link with the local college helps students to gain a realistic idea of what they would like to do after school. As a result, students are adequately prepared for the next phase of their lives. The programmes and activities which make up the curriculum for students on the sixth form site meet the needs of most students but the growing number of enrichment activities available to students in the rest of the school, have not yet fully percolated through to the sixth form site and as a result the curriculum for these students does not always fully challenge them.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
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

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

Views of parents and carers

All the registered parents and carers of pupils and students were invited to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. A below average number returned the questionnaire. On the whole, their responses were positive and supportive; in particular they said that their children enjoy school and that as parents and carers they are kept informed of their children's progress. Most felt that the school works hard to encourage healthy lifestyles and that the school helps them to support their child's learning. Inspection evidence broadly supports their views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Priory 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 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 88 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	90	2	10	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	60	6	30	1	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	14	70	6	30	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	40	9	45	0	0	1	5
The teaching is good at this school	9	45	9	45	0	0	1	5
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	10	50	8	40	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	50	8	40	0	0	0	0
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)	7	35	10	50	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	8	40	10	50	0	0	1	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	8	40	11	55	0	0	1	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	50	7	35	1	5	1	5
The school is led and managed effectively	10	50	6	30	1	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	11	55	6	30	0	0	1	5

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see 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">■ 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.



14th October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Priory School, South Norwood, London SE25 5RR

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. You behaved well and were very polite and helpful. A special thanks to those of you who met us and shared your ideas about the school. We found that your school is satisfactory overall, which means that it does some things well but there are areas that can be improved.

We think that your school cares for you well and gives you good guidance and support. It provides you with some exciting opportunities to take part in sporting and cultural events such as football and dance. Your families agree that your school offers you interesting lessons and activities.

To make the school even better and to improve your progress, we have asked your school to ensure that:

- leaders check more carefully about how well the school is doing and where it needs to improve
- your teachers are clearer about what each of you will learn in your lessons and that their expectations of you are as high as possible.
- you have better opportunities to give your views about how much you have learned in lessons and about how the school should develop in the future.

I hope that you continue to enjoy your learning and do your best.

With my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Bob Pugh
Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**