

Priestlands School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unique reference number | 137129 |
| Local authority | N/A |
| Inspection number | 395342 |
| Inspection dates | 30–31 May 2012 |
| Lead inspector | John Seal HMI |

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

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|--|--|
| Type of school | Academy converter |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1230 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | David Thomas |
| Headteacher | Chris Willsher |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19–20 November 2008 |
| School address | North Street Lymington Hampshire SO41 8FZ |
| Telephone number | 01590677033 |
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Introduction

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| John Seal | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Roger Fenwick | Additional Inspector |
| Kathy Maddocks | Additional Inspector |
| Joan Lindsay | Additional Inspector |
| Jim McVeigh | Additional Inspector |

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 45 lessons, taught by 42 teachers, some of which were joint observations with the senior members of staff. Inspectors spoke to different students in meetings, during lessons and at break times. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school’s work, and looked at the school’s strategic improvement plan, the safeguarding policies and the minutes of the governing body. Also, they analysed 338 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Priestlands School converted to an academy in August 2011. In most respects, the change in status from maintained school to academy has not altered Priestlands’ character. It is much larger than the average secondary school and holds specialist status for the performing and visual arts. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. A very small number of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. The proportion of students who are supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below that found in most schools. The school meets the government’s current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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 | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 1 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because, although most students make better progress in English and mathematics than students nationally, progress is not as rapid and sustained in some subjects.
- Achievement is good. Results at the end of Key Stage 4 are generally much higher than average. Standards and achievement in the core subjects of English and mathematics are above those seen nationally. Most groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, are making better progress than similar groups nationally.
- Teaching is good. An increasing proportion is outstanding. The teaching in some lessons seen during the inspection was no better than satisfactory because of a lack of preciseness in how some teachers use students' assessment information in their planning.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. This is an improvement from the previous inspection. Students are exceptionally polite and thoughtful. In lessons and around the extensive site, their conduct is exemplary.
- Leadership and management are good. Most leaders and managers including the governing body know the school well. The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been addressed well, but a small number of aspects regarding how a few teachers use assessment remain. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and individual student performance are established. However, not all leaders and managers analyse the patterns of progress within each year group systematically and consistently enough, especially in Key Stage 3.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rates of all students' progress, particularly in Key Stage 3, to be significantly faster than that seen nationally by:
 - making sure that teachers across all subjects consistently use student assessment information more precisely in their lesson planning to meet the different needs and abilities of students

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

- ensuring leaders and managers consistently and systematically monitor and evaluate the proportions of students making the required progress compared to similar students nationally.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students' attainment on entry varies from year to year but is generally above average. Rates of progress are usually better than average for most groups of students, especially in mathematics and modern foreign languages, leading to significantly higher than average attainment at the end of Key Stage 4. Prior to the school's conversion to an academy, disabled students and those with special educational needs made slower progress than similar groups. However, effective intervention work is ensuring the gaps in performance are narrowing for most of these students.

Evidence from lesson observations, students' work and the school's assessment information indicates that students in Year 11 are on track to meet or exceed the challenging targets set in most subjects. Assessment information for science indicates significant improvements. Most students know their targets and are able to refer to them in their SMART sheets and student record books. Students' progress is best when teachers provide clear guidance about what the students need to do to achieve higher levels or examination grades. Good examples of this were seen in physical education where Year 7 students were effectively evaluating each other's athletic performance to increase lengths of long jumping and sprinting speeds. The majority of students have above average literacy skills and apply them well, both in terms of their reading and written and spoken communication.

A very high proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires were very positive about the progress their children are making. Nearly all students who returned questionnaires and spoke to inspectors were also highly positive about the progress they make.

Quality of teaching

The strong focus on improving the quality of teaching has led to an improving profile of good and better lessons across many subjects. However, some variation in the quality of teaching between and within some key departments still exists. In the very best lessons, a range of activities is well prepared, matching the needs and abilities of different students. A good example of this was observed in a Year 10 drama lesson. Students were sharing views and comments about a play by working in groups while preparing for an assessment. Creative use of smart phones enabled students to listen to a recording of their teacher highlighting key features of a play in order to help them gain higher grades. Practical lessons help students learn first hand, for example in a science lesson Year 8 students were able to test the strength

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of an electromagnet. Teachers in many of the successful lessons use group discussions to allow students to learn from each other while skilfully posing challenging questions and reminding them how to achieve higher levels or grades. Students are aware of their personal targets which are referred to either in the SMART sheets in Key Stage 4 or their student record books in Key Stage 3. Disabled students or those with special educational needs are provided for well. Work is adapted to meet their needs and teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support their learning.

In a smaller number of lessons that are less well taught, teachers use learning objectives to set broad expectations for the lesson. However, assessment information is not used precisely enough to meet the different students' needs and abilities, especially those who require more support or structure to aid their independent learning skills. In some lessons, teachers' explanations and instructions are too long. Consequently, students are hindered from making more rapid progress as the pace of the lesson is dictated by the teacher regardless of students' capabilities. In providing feedback to students about how to improve and achieve better grades or levels, teachers' references to and use of student record books and SMART sheets are less regular and lack challenge, hindering students from making faster progress towards their targets.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The vast majority of parents, carers and students are positive about behaviour and safety over time. During the inspection, some parents, carers and students raised a few concerns about how the school handles incidents of inappropriate behaviour. These concerns were thoroughly investigated by inspectors. Students' behaviour around the school and in lessons was observed, policies and record keeping were scrutinised and inspectors held a variety of discussions with students and staff. No significant evidence was found to support these concerns, although there were some indications that a few lessons taught by a small number of cover teachers are less well managed. This occasionally leads to minor disruptions. Nonetheless, inspection evidence strongly suggests that the school handles these very small numbers of incidents very well. Students are fully committed to their learning and in the better lessons make an exceptional contribution to their learning. Their excellent behaviour is a contributory factor to the school's results and ethos. Punctuality at the start of the day is good and attendance is above average and improving. Given the widespread nature of the site and the very large numbers on roll, students usually arrive on time for their lessons and promptly settle down to their learning. Students' ability to collaborate with each other is exemplary. There are many opportunities for students to take on additional responsibilities including the roles of head boy and girl, prefects and the well-trained and effective peer mentors. Students are very aware of the different types of bullying and say although it happens very occasionally, they know who to go to for help and support including the pupil support managers. The school has recently implemented an internal exclusion system which has seen fixed-term exclusions drop substantially. The few students who are referred temporarily to the Cold Zone are able to continue their learning whilst not disrupting other lessons.

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Leadership and management

The headteacher, leaders and managers, including the governing body, are very ambitious for the school. The school's strategic improvement plan is geared to improving the quality of teaching and learning and achieving the best academic results possible based on accurate self-evaluation. The strong focus on improving teaching is paying off and the number of good and better lessons is increasing. Priorities for improvement are known by all the leaders and managers. Performance management is effectively focused on students' achievement. The systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluating students' progress at an individual level across the whole school are accurate. However, the analysis of the proportions of students who are making expected or better progress across each year group is less robust, particularly in Years 7 to 9. As a result, different leaders and managers do not have a clear overview of the rates of progress made by students over time. Senior leaders are aware of this and are in the process of remedying the situation.

The curriculum is good. It has exemplary features; students' needs are met well because of its flexible and creative approach for both academic and vocational learning. Consequently, students are able to choose a range of courses and subjects that are both academic and work related. The school's effective promotion of equality means that the groups of students who were underachieving in the past are beginning to narrow the gaps with their peers.

The promotion of the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also a strength. Staff know the students very well and highly positive relationships are apparent throughout the school. As a result, students work together in a mature fashion and have a well-developed awareness of a range of cultural experiences across both the specialist status subjects and in personal, social and health. As a result, students gain a good understanding of how to be tolerant of difference. As one student told inspectors, 'The teachers would put us first.' Another said, 'It's like having a second family.'

Senior leaders and managers are clearly focused on securing improvement. The extended leadership team provides the school with a good capacity for further improvement because of the increasing levels of attainment and successful shared vision for improving classroom practice. This is allied to regular professional development opportunities for staff and underpinned by effective performance management procedures. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.

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 | 54 | 42 | 2 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 14 | 49 | 32 | 6 |
| Secondary schools | 20 | 39 | 34 | 7 |
| Special schools | 33 | 45 | 20 | 3 |
| Pupil referral units | 9 | 55 | 28 | 8 |
| All schools | 16 | 47 | 31 | 6 |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Attendance | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance. |
| Behaviour | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Floor standards | the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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: | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. |
| 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. |
| Safety | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning. |

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.



1 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Priestlands School, Lymington SO41 8FZ

Thank you for your exceptionally warm and friendly welcome when we recently visited your school. It was thoroughly enjoyable meeting you, observing you in lessons and talking to you around the school. We judged your school to be good. What stops it from being outstanding is that many of you could make even better progress in more subjects than you do. The particularly good things we found about your school were:

- your outstanding behaviour and attitudes towards learning
- the results you achieve in your GCSEs are generally above average
- most of your lessons are good or better
- your headteacher, governing body and the team of leaders and managers are continuing to make the school a better place.

We have spoken to your headteacher, senior staff and governors about what they are doing to make things even better for you. They will be working hard to:

- help all of you make even better progress by making sure that all teachers give you work that matches your abilities even more closely and make sure you are really clear about what you need to do to learn even more
- develop better ways of checking to see how many of you in each year group are making faster progress to achieve even higher results.

We all hope you continue to enjoy your time at school and wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Seal
Her Majesty's Inspector

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