

# Priory School

## Inspection report

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|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 115443          |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Southend-on-Sea |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 379074          |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 28–29 June 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Ronald Hall     |

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>                      | Special  |
| <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> | 54   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Phil Bourne (Acting Chair)                                   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Elizabeth Baines   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 29 April 2009  |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Burr Hill Chase<br>Prittlewell<br>Southend-on-Sea<br>SS2 6PE |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01702 347490   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01702 432164   |
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|                           |                 |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 11–18           |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 28–29 June 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 379074          |



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Ronald Hall

Additional Inspector

Joanna Jones

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors spent over five and a half hours observing teaching, and visited 13 lessons taught by 10 staff. In addition inspectors talked to students, members of the governing body, a local authority officer and senior leaders. The team took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at information about students' attainment and progress, the school improvement plan, school policies and teachers' planning. Questionnaires from two parents and carers and those from pupils and members of staff were analysed.

## Information about the school

Priory School provides for students who have behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school other than at the normal times is high. The majority of students are White British and the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is above average. Most of the students have statements of special educational needs and all have a history of previously poor school attendance and other behaviours that have a negative impact on learning. Many are known to other agencies which specialise in supporting young people facing challenging circumstances. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is well above average. The substantive headteacher was not present during the inspection. There has been considerable uncertainty in the school recently. The school is currently led by an interim headteacher, who took up post two weeks prior to the inspection, and the assistant headteacher, who returned from long-term sick leave at the same time.

**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

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>4</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>4</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>4</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>4</b> |

## Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- This is not a satisfactory school because students do not make sufficient progress and many leave with few qualifications. Data on students' performance are unreliable and do not provide an accurate picture of students' progress between entering and leaving the school. Students are not adequately prepared for the next steps in their education or the world of work.
- Teaching is inadequate. Although there is some satisfactory and, very occasionally, some good or better teaching, staff do not assess students' work thoroughly or often enough, as they are unaware of how to do this effectively. Staff routinely accept poor quality work in lessons and this contributes to inadequate progress. Relationships are usually positive and supportive but students are not challenged because teachers do not accurately assess what they can already do. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is one of the few strengths of the curriculum.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is satisfactory. The majority of students show self-discipline and have respect for staff. Attendance is improving.
- Leadership and management are inadequate and the school has not moved on since its previous inspection. Subject leaders do not monitor, assess or plan effectively for their areas of responsibility because they lack sufficient understanding of data and target setting. While some staff are supportive of the changes needed others are not and this is slowing the pace of change. As a result the school does not, at present, demonstrate the capacity to make

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significant improvements. However, the interim headteacher and assistant headteacher have a robust plan in place to improve all aspects of the school.

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

- Raise achievement and attainment in English, mathematics and science by ensuring the school has robust attainment-on-entry data against which to set challenging targets and plan students' learning.
- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
  - developing the expertise of the teaching staff
  - ensuring that lessons take full account of students' prior learning and what they need to do next
  - identifying sharp and precise objectives for learning in every lesson
  - making greater reference to students' targets in lessons and ensuring staff are able to mark work effectively so that students know how to improve
  - planning activities that are challenging, stimulating and relevant to students' needs
  - giving students more opportunities to make decisions about their learning and to use their initiative
  - ensuring that students complete independent work that this is of a high standard and reducing an over-reliance on worksheets
  - ensuring that teachers and support staff have consistently high expectations of what students should achieve in lessons.
- Strengthen leadership, management and governance by:
  - pursuing a clear strategic direction for the school and ensuring that all staff agree and implement actions wholeheartedly
  - ensuring the creation of a suitably skilled and qualified middle leadership team, and providing mentoring and training so that they make a more significant contribution to monitoring provision and outcomes
  - holding teachers more robustly to account for their students' progress
  - supporting senior leaders to carry out their roles as effectively as possible, in order to build capacity in the longer term
  - ensuring all adults have a clear understanding of students' social and behavioural needs.

## **Main report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Many students start at Priory with attainment that is well below that expected for their age, often as a result of disturbance to their education in the past. Over their time at the school students do not make sufficiently swift progress to enable them to make up for learning they have missed. Attainment in English, mathematics and science is particularly low and progress in these subjects

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is too slow for most students, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, compared to similar groups nationally. The school is unable to say whether current students are achieving sufficiently well because staff do not know how to assess students' progress. When students join the school the staff do not have an accurate view of students' starting points or how to move them forward. Students' work shows an over reliance on worksheets and generally low levels of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics and, for many, a reluctance to put pen to paper.

During the inspection students generally made satisfactory progress in individual lessons. For example, in an English lesson, students successfully discussed characters in a video and how the setting, sound, script and plot captured the viewers' interest. In an art lesson students persevered and demonstrated clear enjoyment. The school does have its strengths; for example, in the mechanics and general workshop provision, students make excellent progress and consolidate their learning extremely well due to outstanding teaching.

In their questionnaires and in discussions, there was no consistent pattern to students' responses. Some said they enjoy school, learn a lot and know how well they are doing. Others categorically stated the opposite. A similar picture was seen in the parents' and carers' questionnaires. This inspection found that although there are occasions when some students make satisfactory or better progress in individual lessons, this is not sufficient to enable them to overcome previous underachievement or make the overall progress that they should.

### **Quality of teaching**

Teaching is inadequate overall, although some satisfactory and occasionally better teaching was seen during the inspection. There are insufficient qualified teachers with the skills to move students' learning forward. The inconsistency of assessment records and weak planning result in lessons that are insufficiently geared to the students' interests and abilities. Lesson objectives are not sharply focused and do not match students' needs well. Students' prior knowledge is not given appropriate consideration when planning or delivering lessons. They are often 'turned off' by the worksheets they are expected to complete because they see them as irrelevant and often not matched to their abilities. In one English lesson students with widely differing skills were asked to complete the same worksheet. Students completed the work but the quality was poor and staff accepted this.

Students are given insufficient opportunities in lessons to use their own initiative. Staff give a high level of individual tuition to students, but this is often ineffective because the work provided is inappropriate and results in a few students becoming distracted. There is very little collaborative learning and so students do not have the opportunities to work together. However, staff have built up positive relationships and one strength of lessons is the opportunity for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, through discussions.

There is little consistency in setting the students' targets. Therefore, they are

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unaware of what they are aiming for or how to improve their work. The staff lack the skills to provide effective support by way of marking or constructive verbal feedback.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Despite the changes in leadership and management in the school over time and the uncertainty this causes for staff, students manage their own behaviour and develop their personal and social skills well. Students themselves agree that behaviour is satisfactory most of the time, and that their learning is not disrupted. Parents and carers support this view. The rate of exclusion over the past year has fallen dramatically. This is because of well-targeted training that has ensured the staff have focused effectively on supporting students to develop their social skills. As a result, students are generally respectful to adults and each other. Staff are very patient in managing behaviour and support students closely at all times, encouraging them to remain in lessons. Staff have all received appropriate up-to-date training in methods of managing extreme behaviour.

Students, parents and carers say that students feel safe at school. They know that the adults will support them if needed, and that they can refer themselves to the behaviour manager if they feel under pressure. They note that bullying including cyber incidents are effectively dealt with by staff. Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy and generally put their knowledge into practice.

## **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management are inadequate and there is little evidence of any improvement in provision or in the students' attainment since the previous inspection. Although data are detailed, they are not robust as attainment-on-entry data are inaccurate. Teaching over time has not been effectively monitored, and the performance management and professional development of staff have been ineffective. As a result teaching, planning, target setting and assessment are fragile and pupils' achievement is inadequate. Middle managers are ineffective and do not have the skills to improve their areas of responsibility, students' attainment or the quality of teaching. Staff are not working together nor do they have a shared vision. Since taking over the running of the school just a few weeks before the inspection, the interim headteacher and assistant headteacher have made strenuous attempts to improve provision through their dedication and robust approach to solving problems and meeting challenges. The local authority is fully supportive of the drive to overcome the issues in the school. However, the school has not demonstrated adequately the capacity to drive and secure improvement since the previous inspection.

The curriculum is inadequate. It is limited and uninspiring and does not meet the needs of many of the students. Very few non-GCSE courses are on offer and many older students find the courses inappropriate for their needs. Curriculum leaders have no coherent and effective plans about how to improve their subjects. However,

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practical courses, such as woodwork, physical education, design technology, mechanics and food technology are popular; students' progress in these areas is satisfactory and in some cases even better. The curriculum promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because of generally positive relationships between staff and students and the coverage of these aspects in lessons.

Since the students achieve poorly and many students are given inappropriate work and insufficient support, the promotion of equal opportunities is inadequate. Safeguarding procedures are secure and the school's arrangements meet statutory requirements. Health and safety issues relating to the mechanics and general workshop provision have been robustly and effectively dealt with by the interim headteacher and assistant headteacher. Although governors monitor safeguarding and health and safety arrangements thoroughly, they have not challenged the school robustly enough in terms of students' achievement.



## 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](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.

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.**

2 July 2012

Dear Students



### **Inspection of Priory School, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6PE**

Thank you for your positive welcome when we visited your school recently. We appreciated you talking with us. We have decided that the school is not giving you an acceptable level of education and that the school needs 'special measures' to help it improve. The teaching does not enable you to make enough progress, and your attainment is well below where it ought to be by the time you leave the school. The school does not keep careful records of how well you are doing or provide enough help to students who are falling behind. Teachers do not always assess and mark your work thoroughly or show you how to improve it.

There are a few aspects of the school that are improving. Some of the work you do in woodwork and in practical subjects, such as design technology, physical education, mechanics and food technology shows that you enjoy these subjects. We also recognise that your interim headteacher and assistant headteacher are trying very hard to improve the school.

In order for the school to improve we have asked the leaders and managers to:

- help you make much better progress so that your attainment rises, especially in English, mathematics and science
- make sure that your teachers have the skills and knowledge to adapt your work, to take enough account of your interests and the fact that you learn at different rates
- strengthen the way the school is led by setting up systems to check on your progress, to make sure the school runs smoothly and to bring about improvements as quickly as possible.

You can make a big difference to the school by behaving well and trying your best in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Ronald Hall  
Lead Inspector

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