

Priory Witham Academy

De Wint Avenue, Lincoln, LN6 7DT

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' attainment remains too low particularly in mathematics at the end of Year 6. Students' progress is now accelerating. However, this has not been the case for long enough to fully compensate for previous underachievement, particularly in mathematics.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students are not yet making consistently good progress in all subjects.
- In some lessons, students do not have sufficient opportunities to find out things for themselves or to develop their thinking and answer questions in detail.
- Good practice in teaching is not yet fully shared across the academy.
- Teaching is improving. It still requires further improvement because teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what students can do and work in lessons is not always sufficiently fast paced and challenging for all students.
- Leaders and managers, many of whom are new in post since September 2012, supported by members of the governing committee, have recently put in place better systems to improve teaching and monitor progress. However, these systems have not yet had time to become part of the academy's routine work nor to have been fully checked and improved where necessary.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving academy. Key weaknesses have been identified and the right strategies put in place to address them. Consequently, attainment is rising and students' progress is accelerating.
- The youngest children and their families are very well supported. Children move seamlessly from the day care centre into the Early Years Foundation Stage, where they make excellent progress.
- Good-quality professional development, better tracking of students' progress and closer monitoring of teaching and learning are all beginning to bring about improvement.
- Students behave well and feel safe in school. They show respect for each other and are polite and kind to staff and visitors.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons and part-lessons of which four were joint observations with the headteacher and senior staff. They also listened to students read.
- Discussions were held with students, staff, the Academy Improvement Partner and the Chairman of the Priory Federation of Academies Trust.
- Inspectors observed the academy’s work, and looked at students’ books, progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- There were seven responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also scrutinised the results of the academy’s most recent student and parental surveys and 42 completed questionnaires from academy staff.

Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Taylor	Additional Inspector
Susan Vasey	Additional Inspector
Steven Goldsmith	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Priory Witham Academy opened in September 2008 and is one of four sponsored by the Priory Federation of Academies Trust.
- This academy, for students aged three to eighteen, is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British. An average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a similar proportion speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and for students known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The academy's own unvalidated data indicates that the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for attainment and progress, are met at Key Stage 4. The academy does not meet floor standards at Key Stage 2.
- The academy makes alternative provision off-site, at Laughton Curriculum Centre, for a small number of students in Years 9 to 11. They attend work-related courses alongside students from other academies in the Priory Federation. A small number of sixth form students attend courses at other academies within the Priory Federation.
- The academy's specialist subjects are in business and enterprise and in the performing arts.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2012.
- The Priory Witham Academy Day Care centre and Family Centre share the academy's site. These did not form part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good or better by:
 - ensuring that work is hard enough and pitched at the right level for all students
 - giving students more opportunities to work on their own, investigate and solve problems and think for themselves
 - giving students more opportunities to talk, develop their thinking and answer teachers' questions in detail in all lessons.
- Raise standards and help students to make faster progress, especially in mathematics, so that the academy meets or exceeds floor standards at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 by July 2013, by:
 - sharing good practice in teaching including that which is present in the Early Years Foundation Stage with teachers of all year groups
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can do and increasing the pace of lessons so they make faster progress.

- Develop the roles of the restructured senior management team and those of newly appointed senior and middle managers so that they are:
 - making sure that new ways to improve teaching and track students' progress are applied consistently across the academy and become part of its routine work
 - checking these new systems are working and refining them when needed

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Most children join the academy with skills which are well below those expected for their age, particularly in literacy. They settle quickly into academy routines and make excellent progress in the Nursery and Reception Classes.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have been below average for the last three years. They have been particularly low in tests in mathematics at the end of Year 6, where students have underachieved. However, recent checks on Year 1 pupils' standards in phonics (the sounds that letters make), the academy's own tracking data and work seen in pupils' books indicate that pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. Progress in Key Stage 2 still requires improvement, but it is beginning to accelerate because teaching is improving. Standards, particularly in mathematics, remain too low.
- The academy has focused on improving students' progress in reading. Although some students are reluctant to read regularly, more are beginning to enjoy reading and their progress is accelerating.
- All students pass five GCSEs or equivalent qualifications with grades A* to C. However, unvalidated academy data shows that this figure falls to 40% when English and mathematics are included. Progress in English improved in 2012 but students' achievement in mathematics remains well below that found nationally.
- In the past, the academy has entered large numbers of students early for GCSE examinations in English and mathematics in order to boost grades. This has led to some students not being challenged to aim for the highest grades possible, particularly in mathematics. Early entry is now restricted to a very few students with particular individual needs.
- Students achieve particularly well in business, information and communication technology (ICT), and performing arts subjects, reflecting the academy's specialism in these areas.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and students who speak English as an additional language, make the same progress as their peers because they receive constructive individual help from teachers and teaching assistants.
- The school leaders are developing a clear strategy for helping students who are supported by extra funding (the pupil premium). The gap in attainment between them and other students is narrowing. This is because pupil premium money has been spent wisely on training for staff, on reducing class sizes and on providing smaller group and individual help for students who need it.
- Many sixth form students make the progress they should, often from low starting points. They particularly enjoy the range of vocational courses, which is tailored to their needs. However, their progress is not yet consistently good across all subjects.
- Six students in Years 9, 10 and 11 benefit from the academy's alternative provision at Laughton Curriculum Centre. Regular reports detail that they make the progress expected of them, behave well and attend regularly. The curriculum for sixth formers is broadened successfully because they are able to attend classes at other academies within the federation. Their progress is carefully monitored and they make the progress they should.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not yet consistently good across the academy. Teaching is now more closely monitored and is improving. Examples of good and outstanding teaching were seen during the inspection but there is not yet enough of it.
- In some lessons, teaching still requires improvement because teachers' expectations of what the students can do is not high enough, work is not always hard enough and sometimes the pace of learning is too slow. In some lessons, students are asked to spend too long listening and do not have enough time to work on their own, solve problems and find out things for themselves.
- In some subjects, and in the Reception class, there are examples of good use of the results of observations and assessments being used to plan the next steps in learning. In most subjects, books are marked regularly and most students are aware of their targets, even though not all are sure about how to achieve them.
- In good lessons, teachers encourage students to work in groups and pairs, to talk, to extend their answers to questions and think deeply. However, this good practice is not yet widespread. In too many lessons, not all students are involved in answering questions and they are not challenged to develop their thinking and improve and extend their answers.
- In the Reception class, children make particularly good progress and enjoy learning, both indoors and out, as they are encouraged to build structures in 'Bob's Yard', tend the garden around 'Granny Dot's House' and splash in puddles during wet weather.
- Where teaching is good, teachers manage their classes well and use a range of interesting resources to engage the interest of their students. In an ICT lesson, students achieved well and greatly enjoyed learning as they followed their own interests to design quite sophisticated websites on themes as varied as 'milk shakes' and 'rocks and fossils'.
- In other good lessons, explanations are very clear and work is closely matched to examination requirements to give students the best possible chance of success.
- In lessons, teachers and teaching assistants give all groups of students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium, effective extra help if they are struggling to understand or are falling behind with their work.
- Teachers help to promote students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development by encouraging them to cooperate and share ideas and information sensibly. Older students are encouraged to discuss topical moral and social issues and to consider alternative points of view.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students typically behave well around the academy and in classrooms. Most students attend regularly and want to succeed. Records show that few students are excluded from the academy and the number of students who are frequently absent has reduced markedly.
- A strength of the academy is the care that it provides for students and their families, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Close links with the on-site family and day care centres ensure that children are well known from an early age and are given very good support as they progress through the academy. All students, including those in the sixth form,

are appreciative of the personal support they receive.

- Students say they feel safe at the academy and are confident that any incidents of bullying will be swiftly dealt with. Year 11 students talked knowledgeably about how much behaviour at the academy had improved and were very appreciative of the help and support they receive from all staff.
- Students have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, particularly when using the internet. They also have a sensible attitude to risk taking.
- Students dress smartly and appreciate and look after the excellent facilities provided by the academy. Students take responsibility as prefects and house captains, and older students enjoy helping younger ones; for example, in organising sporting events.
- Of the very few parents who responded to the online questionnaire, a few had concerns about behaviour but inspectors found behaviour to be good and well managed by staff.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Recent improvement to the way in which students' progress is tracked, high-quality professional development, the appointment of new staff and closer monitoring of teaching are all contributing to academy improvement. However, leadership and management still require improvement because most of these improvements are recent, and leaders and managers have not yet fully ensured that new systems are used routinely and consistently across the academy.
- Leaders and managers have not yet checked how well the new systems are working and changed them where needed. Also, these recent improvements have not had time to have an impact on students' results in tests and examinations or to compensate for previous underachievement.
- The academy is improving because the newly-appointed headteacher, well supported by members of the governing committee, the Academy Improvement Partner and senior staff have accurately identified and begun to tackle weaknesses, particularly those in teaching and in students' achievement.
- Lessons are observed regularly and the academy has made good use of external consultants to help train staff and moderate their judgements on teaching quality. However, in spite of this, inspectors found the academy's judgement of the overall quality of teaching to be more generous than that seen during the inspection.
- Staff in the academy feel valued because their performance is well managed and they receive further training where this is needed. Consequently, morale is high and staff responses to questionnaires indicate they are pleased to be a part of the improving academy.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Staff are appropriately trained and fully informed about child protection and risk assessment issues.
- The courses the school offers, including those in the sixth form, reflect the academy's focus on raising standards in mathematics and English. Older students say that they appreciate the opportunity to take GCSE English and mathematics in the sixth form. The balance of courses offered includes a range of vocational courses which reflect the academy's specialist subjects. The courses the academy offers help to promote effectively students' spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development through assemblies, tutor periods and work in personal, social and health education.

- A wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities broaden the topics and subjects students' study and the experiences they have. All students have the opportunity to spend a week at the academy's residential centre in France. Students and their parents enjoy activities as varied as joining the academy's thriving cadet force, auditioning for a part in the academy pantomime and cooking in the family centre.
- The academy benefits from belonging to the Priory Federation. Expertise in finance, management and human resources, courses for sixth form students, the facilities at the Laughton Curriculum Centre and the Federation's residential centre in France are all shared and available to students of Witham Priory Academy.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Members of the academy's governing committee are well informed about its strengths and weaknesses and are increasingly aware of its performance compared to that of other schools nationally. They are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching, the management of staff performance and how pupil premium money is spent. They are aware of how good teachers are rewarded and how their pay is linked to performance. The budget is well managed. They are becoming increasingly well trained and informed about students' attainment and progress. Newly appointed members of the committee are taking a greater role in directly monitoring the academy's work.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135563
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	406606

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	935
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	62
Appropriate authority	The governing committee
Chair	Howard Gee
Headteacher	Andrew Madge
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2010
Telephone number	01522 882900
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