

The Priory School

Neville Avenue, Spalding, PE11 2EH

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress given their age and starting point.
- They make good progress in developing reading, writing, communication skills and outstanding progress in mathematics.
- Pupils make very good progress in their personal and social development.
- Most teaching is of good or outstanding quality. Teaching assistants provide very valuable support.
- Pupils behave well and try hard to do their best. They are polite and help one another.
- Pupils feel very safe at school. They are well cared for and supported.
- The school is well led by the headteacher and senior leadership team. They work well with staff and governors to develop teaching and improve pupils' progress across the school.
- The curriculum prepares pupils very well for when they move to college, especially through the work experience and work-related studies.
- Parents are very pleased with the school and would recommend it to others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of pupils who make more than expected progress is not high enough for achievement to be judged as outstanding.
- Teachers do not always check that pupils are learning as well as they can or help them to be as independent as possible.
- Staff do not check thoroughly enough how well they improve the behaviour of pupils for whom this is a special educational need.
- Parents are not as involved as they could be in their children's education.

Information about this inspection

- Nineteen lessons were observed and pupils' learning and progress were also evaluated by looking at their work.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, three members of the governing body, teachers and teaching assistants.
- The views of staff were obtained through a questionnaire completed by 25 staff. Pupils' views were gained in meetings with two groups, involving members of the school council, and informal conversations with other pupils during the inspection. The views of parents and carers were obtained from eight responses to the Parent View survey, one parent who wrote to inspectors and the school's own annual survey of parents' views.
- A wide range of documents were looked at carefully, including the school's data about pupils' progress and behaviour, the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, and the school's monitoring of teaching.

Inspection team

Charlie Henry, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter McKenzie

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Priory School meets a wide range of special educational needs including moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Many pupils have associated communication or behavioural difficulties.
- The school serves a large part of South Lincolnshire, with the majority of pupils travelling between five and 40 miles to get to school.
- Approximately half of the Year 7 entrants come from the same, nearby special school; others transfer from mainstream primary schools. A few pupils enter as older pupils from mainstream secondary schools or pupil referral units, or as new arrivals into the county.
- No pupils are currently educated through alternative provision away from the school site.
- Almost all pupils are of White British background. A larger than average proportion of pupils are supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium, which in this school is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and a small number who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school is part of a federation with the other special school in Spalding. The two schools share the same governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who make more than expected progress for their age and starting points by:
 - improving the checking of how well each pupil is learning during every lesson, to ensure they are challenged to do as well as they possibly can
 - increasing pupils' independence as learners by giving them more opportunities to show how much they know and can do, and more times when they can suggest ways in which they can do even better
 - more thoroughly checking the effectiveness of behaviour improvement strategies
 - increasing parental involvement in their children's learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most pupils make at least the progress expected given their age and starting point. Some pupils make more than expected progress, but not enough for achievement to be judged as outstanding.
- Although there is some year-on-year variation, pupils make good progress in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Progress in mathematics has improved substantially over the last three years, especially in using and applying mathematics, and is now outstanding. Similarly, pupils' progress in science, particularly in scientific enquiry, has improved following careful monitoring and improved teaching and is now good.
- Pupils make very good gains in their personal and social development. They learn valuable work-related skills and this, together with their experience of attending college during their final year, means they are well prepared for when they leave school and go on to further education at college.
- Progress made by pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium has increased, and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals now do better than other pupils. Similarly, pupils who receive speech and language therapy support make increased progress. There is no marked difference in the progress made by girls or boys, or by pupils with different special educational needs.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved and a greater proportion of lessons are now good or outstanding. Joint observations undertaken by senior leaders with inspectors confirmed that the school's own judgement about the improvement in quality over time is accurate. There are, however, too many lessons where pupils' learning is not extended as much as it could be for the overall judgement of teaching to be outstanding.
- Teaching of literacy and communication is effective and as a result pupils make good progress. Particularly good teaching of numeracy helps pupils make outstanding progress in this subject area. Teachers closely monitor how well pupils are making progress and give additional support to any who are making less than expected progress.
- Teachers explain very clearly what they want pupils to learn. However, in a few lessons they spend too long explaining or telling the pupils what to do. As a consequence pupils are not given enough chance to develop their independence and their progress slows.
- Teachers plan effectively for the wide range of their pupils' needs. They prepare and use interesting resources that capture pupils' interest and help them learn. Teachers use new technology well to support learning, particularly the interactive whiteboards.
- Questions are used effectively to check whether pupils have understood their main points in a lesson. However, too often this ongoing assessment does not go far enough to extend their learning still further, as teachers' expectations for what pupils can learn and contribute are sometimes not high enough.
- Teaching assistants support very well the work of teachers and they are also effective when they take responsibility for groups of pupils.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and this contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of their time at school.
- All staff consistently and effectively use low-key approaches to help pupils behave well. Any slips below the high standards expected are quickly spotted and quietly and successfully addressed.
- Parents' replies to the online survey, Parent View, and the school's own surveys agree that teaching is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school is an orderly place and pupils behave well. Pupils are confident and show good attitudes to their learning. They want to do well. Where there are dips in the very high standards of behaviour these are usually where pupils are not sufficiently active in their lessons or when they are not sure about what they should be doing.
- Pupils are courteous and polite. They help one another and are pleased when one of their friends does well.
- Parents, staff and governors all agree pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils feel very safe and know that if they have any problems they can speak with members of staff and their concerns will be acted upon. They are not at all worried about bullying. Incidents of prejudice-based bullying are very rare. Parents too are confident that their children are safe and very well cared for. All of the parents who replied to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to other parents.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet and social networking. They explained to inspectors how much they had learned from their lessons on these important topics.
- Many pupils who have identified behavioural difficulties make very good progress. However, the school does not collect and analyse information thoroughly enough to show the extent of improvements. For example, as part of their individual behaviour improvement plans some pupils are able to take short breaks during lessons when they are anxious and feel that their behaviour may worsen. This strategy helps keep high standards in lessons and minimises interruption for the rest of the class. However, the school does not keep track of how often the strategy is used or how effective it is, or explore how it might be improved.
- Temporary or permanent exclusions from school are rare and well below the levels of most schools.
- Attendance is at similar levels to other schools.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher is supported very effectively by the senior leadership team. They have a clear view of how to improve the school further so that every pupil receives the highest quality education. This ambition is shared by the staff team and keenly supported by governors too.
- The school's self-evaluation provides a detailed analysis and is a good basis for improvement planning. Pupils' progress towards achieving their targets is very carefully monitored. Effective action is taken where there are areas of the curriculum where the rate of progress dips. This process has brought about improvement in aspects of English, science and especially mathematics, where very marked gains have been made. The school works closely with other schools in the authority to make sure its data on pupils' attainments are accurate.
- New ways have been introduced for recording information about pupils' behaviour. However, these are not yet analysed in enough detail to inform improvement planning.
- Performance management of staff is effective. A thorough approach to monitoring and, where necessary, improving teaching has been successful and has resulted in overall improvement. External support is well used to moderate the accuracy of the school's own judgements. Additional training has been used well to respond to changes in the needs of pupils attending the school, as well as to curriculum developments and new learning resources. The senior leaders are aware that a few aspects of teaching remain inconsistent and are focusing appropriate training and support on these areas.
- The school has effective links with parents. The annual survey of parents' views shows they are very positive, as are the comments received from new parents about the effectiveness of transition arrangements as pupils start at the school. As a result of feedback, staff have increased the information they provide about what pupils are doing by the use of monthly

newsletters. The school also provides a range of support opportunities for parents. The school is considering other ways to increase parents' involvement, given that take-up of this support is not high and most parents do not respond to surveys.

- The curriculum is very good and meets the needs of pupils very effectively. There is an appropriate emphasis on improving pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills, especially as they are used in everyday activities. Work-related learning, including work experience and vocational studies, is a strength, and alongside the time spent at a local further education college, prepares pupils very well for when they leave school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors provide an effective strategic lead for the school and ask searching questions to challenge its performance. They have a very good understanding of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, and how these might be improved further. They use performance management effectively to improve the school, for example by linking teachers' pay to pupils' progress and ensuring that additional funding such as pupil premium money is used wisely. They ensure that statutory responsibilities are met, including training and recruitment checks to ensure that children are safeguarded.

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	120750
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	400379

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Corcoran
Headteacher	Daran Bland
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2010
Telephone number	01775 724080
Fax number	01775 713860
Email address	enquiries@priory.lincs.sch.uk

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