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18 April 2013

Mr Andrew Madge  
Headteacher  
Priory Witham Academy  
De Wint Avenue  
Lincoln  
LN6 7DT

Dear Mr Madge

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Priory Witham Academy.**

Following my visit to your school on 17 April 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Priory Federation of Academies Trust and the Chief Executive Officer of the Trust. The academy improvement plan was evaluated. The academy's self-evaluations were discussed with senior leaders. In addition, short visits were made to a sample of lessons with the headteacher.

**Context**

Since the previous inspection in December 2012, there have been no significant changes in school leadership or staffing.

**Main findings**

The academy has responded swiftly to the findings of the last inspection and has re-directed its efforts accordingly. Senior staff and governors have a clear view of what is required in order to become a good school. Senior staff and other leaders understand that accelerating progress is key and are clear about how they intend to do that.

The academy improvement plan has been re-written to take into account the three areas that were identified for improvement. This includes success criteria which enable academy leaders and governors to monitor the progress being made in tackling the three priority areas. Some of the success criteria described are more qualitative than quantitative and so measurable success criteria were identified and agreed during my visit. The progress of actions undertaken is carefully noted on the plan using a red, orange and green traffic light monitoring system. It is clear from this monitoring that many of the actions required are already underway.

The academy has introduced a tracking system which provides assessment information at six-weekly intervals. This gives a clear picture of the progress pupils are making in order to spot patterns and trends as pupils move through the academy. Clear progress measures are used, which are calculated as gains in average points scores across each year group and key stage. Targets are based on all pupils gaining at least four points per year as this will ensure that pupils will make good or better progress as they move through the academy. This tracking system is essential in order to identify and deal with any underachievement as it arises and it is proving to be highly effective. The tracking data for the current year shows that pupils are making better progress this year compared to that made previously.

The monitoring of teaching by the headteacher and senior leaders has improved, and maintains a tight focus on learning in lessons. However, observations do not take into account pupils' attitudes to their learning, and the extent to which these affect the learning in lessons.

Other important actions already underway include:

- training in teaching and learning that shares and celebrates best practice
- the introduction and implementation of an 'improving teaching programme'
- improved arrangements for monitoring the quality of lessons to give a clear picture of the quality of teaching
- making heads of subject or departments responsible for the quality of provision in their area and equipping them to do so.

Senior leaders, governors and the academy trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- refine the success criteria in the academy improvement plan so that all are clear and measurable

- maintain a tight focus on evaluating pupils' attitudes to learning when observing lessons.



Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The academy receives very good and effective support from its school improvement partner who chairs the academy standards committee and monitors very closely the progress of each academy within the federation. He provides a true and objective view of the quality of all aspects of provision. He oversees the academy's self-evaluation summary to ensure that it is accurate and reflects the evidence gained during routine monitoring. This enables the academy to know itself well, to proceed with confidence, and to understand and deliver the required actions to become a good school within a reasonable timescale.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chief Executive Officer of the Priory Federation of Academies Trust.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**