

The Priory Centre

Pontefract Road, Crofton, Wakefield, WF4 1LL

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Students' achievement is good overall and has improved since the last inspection. This is because the school's senior leaders have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching throughout the centre.
- After a rigorous assessment when they first arrive, students are set precise targets; their progress towards them is then closely monitored, which represents an improvement since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is good overall because teachers plan lessons which are active and enjoyable. This engages students well as evidenced by the good quality of work seen in books.
- Students feel safe and describe the centre as a secure and friendly haven to which they enjoy coming.
- During their time at the centre students' confidence and self-esteem grows. As a result, their behaviour improves and they begin to re-engage with learning and, for the majority, attendance also improves.
- The executive headteacher and senior leaders have improved standards in both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement across the school. This continuous commitment has led to improvement since the previous inspection and shows the leaders' ability to make the school even better in the future.
- The support of both the management committee and the local authority contributes well to the work of the centre and its good levels of overall effectiveness.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in English are not as high as in mathematics because students are given too few opportunities to write longer pieces of work and improve their writing skills.
- Although data shows that attendance has improved since the previous inspection, it remains too low for a small group of the most vulnerable pupils.
- School leaders have yet to give staff sufficient guidance on a consistent style for marking students' work. As a result, the quality of marking and feedback to students is too variable across the centre.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons and parts of lessons taught by eight teachers. Joint lesson observations were undertaken with the executive headteacher and the deputy headteacher. The inspector also observed reading being taught to Year 8 students and examined the quality of work in the books of students from across the school.
- The inspector held meetings and had discussions with students, senior leaders, members of the school staff, a police officer, the chair of the management committee and a local authority representative.
- The inspector had informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day. She also took into account the views of 11 parents who had previously made their views known to the school. No parents made their views known through the on-line questionnaire (Parents View).
- Twelve members of staff also made their views known to the inspector.
- The inspector also studied health and safety documentation, teachers' curriculum planning, documents relating to the procedures to check the performance of staff and the quality of teaching, as well as the school's system for checking pupils' progress.

Inspection team

Marian Thomas, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The centre provides education for up to 30 Key Stage 3 students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools within the city of Wakefield and surrounding areas.
- The vast majority of students who attend the centre are of White British heritage with a small number from other ethnic backgrounds.
- Currently, the centre has 13 students on roll, the vast majority of whom, because of behavioural difficulties, have recognised disabilities or special educational needs which are supported through school action. A smaller number of students are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A small number of pupils are known to be eligible for pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from service families).
- The executive headteacher is also head of the Key Stage 4 pupil referral unit and there is a soft federation and close links between the centres although they are on different sites.
- Currently, no students attend alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attainment in English to that of mathematics by improving opportunities across the curriculum for students to practise their writing skills by undertaking longer pieces of written work.
- Improve the attendance of a small group of the most vulnerable students by:
 - ensuring that attendance targets set for pupils are sufficiently challenging
 - reviewing the distance travelled by individual pupils and offering effective support to increase the attendance of those who travel long distances in order to reach the centre.
- Improve the quality of the marking policy to ensure that teachers use a more consistent approach to marking students' work and telling them how to improve across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students who arrive at the centre have low attainment, often because of gaps in their education due to their behavioural difficulties. Once they have settled to the closely managed routines that the centre offers many re-engage with learning and begin to make good and sometimes better progress from their individual starting points. This good achievement over time was clearly reflected in the students' books reviewed during the inspection.
- Last year's results show that progress in mathematics was better than in English and that some are starting to reach attainment levels closer to those expected for their age.
- This improvement is more evident in mathematics than English. This is because although students have opportunities to record and write in different areas of the curriculum, the tasks too often require too little writing. As a result, students do not get sufficient opportunity to practise and improve their writing skills.
- Students frequently have gaps in the skills required for reading. In order to fill these gaps extra literacy sessions are organised. Run by teaching assistants, but monitored by the literacy co-ordinator, individuals or very small groups of students develop better reading and comprehension skills. These sessions were described by one student as: 'Really enjoyable. I never thought I would enjoy reading, but now I try to read books on my own.' As a result, attainment and progress in reading is now good.
- Studying challenging texts such as 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Of Mice and Men' ensures that students are well prepared for a return to mainstream school or to continue their studies in other settings.
- Approximately one third of the 34 students who attended the centre last year were supported by pupil premium and known to be eligible for free school meals. Their attainment in English and mathematics is close to that expected for their age. This group made very similar individual progress to that of their peers and on their successful return to mainstream school their progress was also equal to that of their peers.
- Current tracking information shows the good achievement of this group is continuing because school leaders are effective in their use of pupil premium funding to support the needs of students through, for example, extra support for reading.
- All students have behavioural needs and some also have additional learning difficulties. The centre's newly appointed special educational needs co-ordinator is making good progress in developing even more effective systems for supporting the needs of these students with additional needs. As a result, they make good progress.
- The most-able students and those from minority ethnic backgrounds who attend the centre also make good progress. This is because of the highly individualised approach taken by centre staff and the high expectations of teachers.
- The academic focus of the curriculum clearly reflects the centre's priority to return students to mainstream settings where ever possible. However, staff are also aware of the need to engage students and include an innovative range of vocational subjects. As a result, students last year gained accreditation in horse management, hair and beauty, and food safety.

The quality of teaching is good

- The vast majority of teachers make lessons interesting and learning fun. As a result, students engage well, often for the first time, and grow in confidence in their own abilities. This reduces the barriers they face and the vast majority make good and better progress.
- An example of this could clearly be seen in a physical education lesson where students developed their skills in playing badminton as part of an Entry Level sports accreditation. Students concentrated hard and improved their ability to deliver a 'smash shot'. Their calm approach to playing was impressive as was their acceptance of defeat when playing a game.

This, coupled with their accurate and honest evaluation of their own learning, clearly demonstrated the high expectations of teaching staff.

- Mathematics teaching is good because teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of students' work. Since the appointment of a literacy co-ordinator standards in English are rising. However, too often in the recent past students have been offered too little opportunity for writing longer pieces. For example, students have used worksheets which required single word answers, thus reducing opportunities for practising writing.
- The majority of teachers use effectively information about how well students are doing to plan future learning. Teaching assistants' time is used successfully to support behaviour and learning in lessons. As a result, the promotion of equal opportunities is effective and all students make equally good progress.
- Overall, parents who completed the school's own questionnaire feel that staff support their children well and go the extra mile to ensure that they make good progress.
- Teachers diligently mark students' books and students are encouraged to evaluate the quality of their own learning. However, teachers' written comments are inconsistent in quality. Marking, at its best, gives clear guidance to students on how to improve their work but this is not always the case. Similarly, examples of less effective feedback were seen during a small number of lessons where comments were positive and encouraging, but students received little guidance on how to make their work better. As a result, learning was less effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students learn to overcome their difficulties with managing their behaviour and it is good both inside and outside the classroom. Learning is rarely interrupted by difficult behaviour. This is because when incidents occur they are effectively managed by staff and learning for others continues. Students and their parents both regard the centre as a safe and happy place.
- Students say they enjoy coming to school and feel valued as members of the school community. Those spoken to during the inspection said that staff listened to their concerns. One student described arriving at the centre as 'like joining a family' others commented that they felt their views were 'respected' and suggested changes had been followed up by senior leaders.
- Students spoken to were clear about how to stay safe and knew about the different forms of bullying. They had good levels of understanding linked to the quality of information and guidance provided. For example, they demonstrated a good understanding on how to stay safe on the Internet and were clearly aware of the dangers of cyber-bullying and how to avoid it.
- Attendance has increased year on year since the previous inspection. Attendance improves for the majority of students once they join the centre compared to their time in mainstream school.
- However, attendance remains low for a small group of vulnerable students. This is because staff do not always have high enough expectations of these students' attendance and hence attendance targets are too low. As a result, attendance for these pupils does not increase sufficiently and they do not achieve as well as they could.
- In addition to this, a small number of students travel long distances to the centre. Their journeys often mean that students have to start early and include several changes of buses. Whilst staff are aware of this and offer support through, for example travel plans and direct telephone support to individual students, more needs to be done to improve the attendance of these students.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear vision of how to make the centre successful. They have an accurate view of the centre's strengths and ensure that priorities are linked closely to raising standards and achievement. Progress is closely managed and support provided for each individual. The school is well placed to improve.

- Priorities are clearly identified in the centre's development plans and acted upon effectively. However, systems to improve attendance have not been given sufficient priority and as a result attendance has not risen as fast as other aspects.
- Senior leaders monitor teaching robustly across the school and take effective action through the management of staff performance to improve areas of weakness. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. However, although work is marked diligently the quality of marking across different subject areas is inconsistent. This is because senior leaders have yet to implement successfully a whole-school marking policy which gives staff clear guidance on feedback to students.
- The leadership team ensure that staff are set performance targets that link directly to students' achievement and are identified within the school's development plan. Checks on the achievement of targets are undertaken rigorously and the headteacher uses this information to make effective decisions on teachers' pay.
- The curriculum is good and offers students a wide range of interesting and exciting experiences away from the classroom. A residential visit undertaken last year to an Outward Bound centre was described by one student as: 'The best thing I have ever done.' These experiences increase students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.
- Central to the success of the centre is the very strong relationships the centre has built with outside agencies. For example, close liaison with a local police officer has improved students' attitudes and understanding of law and order and the consequence of their actions.
- The excellent work of the safeguarding officer in partnership with the deputy headteacher has ensured that the centre's safeguarding practice and policies not only meet requirements but are of outstanding quality.
- The centre has benefitted from the good level of support offered by the local authority which has assisted senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee has, in response to recent guidance, begun to increase the membership of parents and leaders from other schools. Currently, members offer a good level of challenge to school leaders and are developing a better understanding of data relating to students' achievement. However, they have yet to ensure that systems currently in place to improve the attendance of some pupils are sufficiently robust. Working with senior leaders, they have developed an effective system for checking the performance of staff which rewards good teaching and addresses any underperformance of staff. A consistent and measured approach to the management of pupil premium funding has enabled them to give valuable support to eligible students which has increased their levels of attainment and progress.

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	130981
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	425712

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	13
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Ros Lund
Headteacher	William Carpenter
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2011
Telephone number	01924 303955
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	wcarpenter@wakefield.gov.uk

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