

Priory City of Lincoln Academy

Skellingthorpe Road, Lincoln, LN6 0EP

Inspection dates 25–26 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Not all students are making the progress they should in mathematics from their different starting points.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Teachers do not always plan activities that meet the needs of every student. Many students in the various classes often complete the same work and are not sufficiently stretched.
- Marking is not consistently regular and feedback does not always give students the clear guidance on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Attendance is still below the national average and exclusion rates are above average.
- The sixth form requires improvement.
- The systems all leaders use to improve teaching and raise standards have not resulted in good achievement for all groups of students, particularly those who are most able.
- Not all leaders and teachers use information about students' progress to check whether their actions have really made a difference and improved achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has increased. A dip in progress in English has been dramatically reversed and it is now average. Sixth form results rose this year at A-level and AS-level.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching in English, drama, history and geography.
- Many students exhibit exemplary conduct. Behaviour and safety are good because students are and get on well with each other and staff.
- The headteacher focuses on the right priorities because she has a realistic understanding of the school's performance in relation to other schools. Successful actions have been taken to improve the quality of teaching and manage teachers' performance.
- The Trust and governing body robustly hold the academy to account. They have acted quickly and decisively to secure improvements.
- Attendance is rising and exclusions are decreasing quickly because of better behaviour.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 28 lessons, of which 11 were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, they made a number of shorter visits to lessons and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Chief Executive Officer of the Trust, the Chair of the Trust, the Chair of the Academy Governing Committee, a Trustee, the Headteacher, leaders and managers, and groups of staff.
- Inspectors held meetings with four groups of students, representing all age groups. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work and reviewed a range of documents, including the school’s own evaluation of how well it is doing, its improvement plan and statistical information about students’ achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- Inspectors considered the 18 responses to the online Parent View survey and 25 responses to the staff questionnaires were also considered. Additional comments were received from parents and carers, and consideration was given to the views expressed by parents and carers in response to the school’s own surveys completed by over one fifth of families attending the academy.

Inspection team

Robert Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Andrew Lagden	Additional Inspector
Sean McClafferty	Additional Inspector
Renee Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Priory City of Lincoln Academy is part of the Priory Federation of Academies Trust alongside Priory Witham Academy, the Priory Academy LSST and the Priory Ruskin Academy in Grantham.
- The academy's specialisms are engineering, sport and health.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Almost all of the students are from White British, Irish or Other White or Mixed White backgrounds and the vast majority speak English as their first language. A very small number of students are from other minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding to support particular groups of students, such as those known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is well above the national average.
- A small number of students spend part of their time studying in a purpose built centre serving the Federation or at the recently opened 'Acorn Free School' in Lincoln.
- The academy has gained a range of awards including Investors in People, National Healthy Schools Status, the Sportsmark, the Charter Mark, the Careers Mark, the Basic Skills Mark and the ECM Standards Award.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the improvements in teaching, so that it is at least consistently good, particularly in mathematics and in the sixth form, so levels of achievement raise further and more students secure at least the progress expected or better from their starting points by:
 - setting work at the right level of difficulty for each student with enough challenge, particularly for the most able students
 - improving the quality of marking and oral and written feedback so students know how well they are doing, what they have to do to improve their work and are given time to make the improvements
 - embedding the work on literacy such that it is seen in all lessons and impacts positively on the learning of all students.
- Improve attendance rates and lower exclusion rates by closely monitoring the impact of current systems to support good attendance and better behaviours, and refining these where necessary.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
 - all subject leaders consistently and robustly analyse and evaluate the impact of teaching on students' achievement and progress from their starting points
 - senior leaders use the information about students' progress to check that the actions taken to raise achievement have made a real difference
 - Academy Governing Committee receive the specific information they require about students' progress in every year group so that they can more effectively hold senior leaders to account for achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

Requires improvement

- Attainment has not risen from the below-average levels at which students start the school and it remains below-average overall when students leave. Too many students, particularly those with weak number skills, do not make as much progress as they should in mathematics.
- In 2012, students' achievement in English dipped sharply, performance in languages remained at a low level and the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, fell significantly.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Attainment remains below the national averages but achievement in most subjects at A and AS Level has risen this year due to the improvements in teaching and a better focus on supporting students to progress.
- In 2013, senior leaders took action to improve students' achievement, particularly in English and mathematics, including the use of the expertise existing within the Federation. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics has risen so that it meets national floor targets. Achievement in English is now close to national average and still improving.
- In other subjects, including science, history, geography, physical education and technology, students make good progress and their attainment is closer to the national averages.
- Early entry to GCSE is no longer employed by the academy.
- Data provided by the academy shows that an increasing proportion of current students, particularly those in Years 7 and 8, are making the progress expected of them.
- The achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is now broadly similar to that of other groups. Some make good progress and achieve well. The support they receive helps them to learn effectively and they often benefit from working alongside their peers especially where the teaching is good.
- Current data indicate that students eligible for the pupil premium are now making better progress. This is because the additional funding has been spent wisely to provide additional support in literacy and numeracy for eligible students. It has also been used to fund revision groups. In 2013, the attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals rose significantly from a very low level in 2012. The gap between the attainment of these students and their peers has since closed but is still about one grade below that of other students within the academy.
- The academy encourages students to read for pleasure during tutorial time and students have responded positively. Students' skills in reading have also improved as a result of the 'Love Literacy' initiative. Improvements in students reading ages are also the result of effective use of Year 7 catch-up funding and reading partners. Students in the targeted group are making at least expected progress or better.
- The small numbers of students who attend courses away from the school at the Acorn Free School are well monitored to make sure they are benefiting from the provision and gaining qualifications. Their attendance is good.

The quality of teaching**Requires improvement**

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good enough across the academy to ensure that all students make good progress from their starting points.
- In lessons where teaching requires improvement, particularly in the sixth form, teachers do not take sufficient account of students' different abilities when setting them work or provide students with enough chances to practise thinking independently, to interact with each other or to work by themselves.
- Some teachers do not always plan activities which meet the differing needs of students. The majority of students complete the same work and, as a result, some are sometimes given work that is too simple for them. For example, in one science lesson observed during the inspection, all students were asked to plan an investigation but because some students did not find the task motivating or challenging they lost interest and did not make the progress of which they were capable.
- The quality of marking remains variable across the academy. Work is checked regularly but not all teachers provide feedback that helps students to understand what it is they need to improve or how.
- Relationships between students, their peers and their teachers in all lessons visited were very positive. Teachers used humour well and ensured that all students get on with their work because they feel their learning is important to them
- Some teachers use assessment activities extremely skilfully to support students' outstanding progress. For example, in a Year 10 drama lesson, students showed excellent attitudes towards learning and made outstanding progress when engaged in paired and group activities that encouraged them to explore and challenge each other's understanding and develop their confidence when speaking to an audience.
- Teaching is improving and inspectors observed much good and outstanding practice. Several good examples were seen. A history teacher skilfully questioned students to check their understanding fully and extend their learning. In a science lesson, the teacher provided oral and written feedback that celebrated success, identified areas for improvement and encouraged students to take charge of the next steps in their own learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**Is good**

- The conduct of students is a very positive feature of the academy. In lessons the majority of students are hard working, concentrate well, collaborate with others and take pride in their presentation and celebrate their achievements.
- Members of the sixth form are good role models for others. All students are polite, courteous and welcoming. They get on well with each other and with their teachers. They are respectful of the school environment and praise the new building and the amenities they enjoy. Behaviour and safety are typically good because students are enthusiastic and are keen to learn.
- Fixed-term exclusions have fallen significantly but remain above average. This is because the new leadership of the academy has focused on providing better learning opportunities for students and has placed closer attention on securing better behaviours. Persistent absence is

reducing as a result of the work done with all parents and especially the families of students whose circumstances mean they may be at risk. Overall attendance has improved significantly, but it remains below the national average despite the good work of the academy.

- Students say they feel safe at the academy and both parents and staff agree. Students have a good understanding of the different types of bullying. They are adamant that the school does not tolerate negative racist attitudes. Students strongly agree that senior leaders take bullying seriously and deal effectively with the very rare incidents when they occur.
- Students speak positively of the work of the school council and feel that their views are valued and acted upon. As a group, they have initiated changes to the way in which the academy operates including better provision for eating and the more effective use of their recreational time. Students enjoy the chance to participate in a wide range of sporting and dramatic activities during and outside school hours.
- A key factor in improving attendance and good behaviour has been the positive promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The leadership and management

Requires improvement

- In 2012, the new members of the trust and governing body focused the work of the academy to concentrate more on the achievement of all groups. They appointed a new headteacher later in the year and secured rapid improvements from a then low base.
- Whilst students are making better progress in classrooms because the quality of teaching is significantly better, this is not fully reflected in the academy's results yet. Therefore, leadership and management require improvement because the quality of teaching is not yet good as students are not making sufficient progress, particularly in mathematics or the sixth form.
- The headteacher is very realistic in her assessment of the school's performance and has a clear focus on the right priorities. Robust actions taken to monitor the performance of teachers are improving the quality of teaching and clearly demonstrate that senior leaders have the capacity to improve the school further. This has been enhanced by the Trust which has enlisted further support from the expertise within the Federation.
- Leaders have good plans for improvement but not all are systematically using the wealth of data available to assess if actions taken to improve students' achievement have really made a difference.
- Subject leaders have been working hard to revise schemes of work to improve the learning experience for students. They are familiar with data but do not monitor and evaluate the impact teaching has on student achievement closely enough.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides well for the needs of the students at the academy. Students enjoy access to a wide and diverse range of extra-curricular activities which they are able to contribute successfully.
- Sixth form students experience a high quality provision as it is supported by the Priory Academy LSST. This is well matched to their needs and enables them to successfully progress directly into employment or into higher education.
- Procedures for managing the performance of teachers have brought the school into line with

other schools. There are good links between classroom performance and salary progression. One senior leader sums up the academy's approach by saying that, 'Teachers work to the standards, do their job and fulfil their professional development,' whilst striving to secure higher levels of achievement.

- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching regularly and accurately. During the inspection, leaders gave high quality feedback to teachers about how teaching could be better. Senior leaders have not been afraid to tackle underperformance. Training time is used to share best practice.
- External support has been used well to validate senior leaders' assessment of the academy's strengths and areas for development.
- Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The reformed trust and governors bring a wealth of experience from education and business to the academy and have supported the headteacher in securing the rapid improvements needed over the last year resulting in improving teaching and standards. The new bodies are realistic about the future and have recently taken the appropriate and courageous decisions to ensure that the academy better provides for its students. The Trust has introduced the Academy Score Card as it recognises that it needs to be provided with clear information about the progress of students in every year group so that its members can better hold all school leaders to account for students' levels of progress. Governors understand the arrangements for the management of teachers' work and the link between good teaching and salary progression. Governors have managed the academy's finances well and are striving to enhance the sporting facilities further through strong local partnerships. They know how pupil premium funding is spent and the impact of the work done.

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	135564
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	425123

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Sponsored academy
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	750
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Richardson
Headteacher	Jane Hopkinson
Date of previous school inspection	17 - 18 November 2010
Telephone number	01522 882800
Fax number	01522 882801
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