

Priory School

Tennison Road, South Norwood, London, SE25 5RR

Inspection dates 14–15 November 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.

- The new headteacher is ambitious for the school and is ably supported by the deputy headteacher in making improvements.
- Leadership of teaching is rigorous and has led to continuous improvement in its quality since the last inspection. This has led to students enjoying lessons more and making better rates of progress.
- All groups of students make good progress. They achieve particularly well in developing their social and communication skills.
- The sixth form is good. Students enjoy a seamless transition from younger classes and are joined by students from other schools. All students continue to make good progress and are well prepared for life beyond school.
- Students benefit from teaching which is mostly good and sometimes outstanding. A small amount of teaching requires improvement.
- Students enjoy their learning. They are courteous and behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Students with behavioural difficulties make continuous progress in developing more acceptable behaviour, as a result of sensitive and skilled support from all staff.
- The governing body is highly supportive of the school and knows it well. Through support and challenge, it helps improvement in all aspects of the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- While teaching is good not enough of it is yet outstanding.
- In some lessons students whose needs are on the autistic spectrum do not take part fully in learning.
- In some lessons, support staff do not enable all students to become more independent in their learning.
- Full opportunities to teach literacy and numeracy are not always made in some lessons across the curriculum.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 12 lessons. Seven of these lessons were jointly observed by one of four members of the senior leadership team. In addition inspectors undertook two learning walks, sampling teaching and records in a variety of classrooms.
- The inspectors looked at students' work and took the opportunity to hear them read.
- The inspection team took account of the school's own surveys of parents' and carers' views. A parent or carer requested to meet the team and was interviewed by the lead inspector. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for results to be published.
- The inspectors observed the school's practice and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, data on students' progress, documents used by leaders to check the school's work, governing body documentation and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- The lead inspector interviewed a group of sixth form students.
- Meetings were held with headteacher, deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, staff responsible for safeguarding, curriculum leaders, the head of sixth form and a representative from the local authority.

Inspection team

Peter Gabony, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jackie Blount	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Priory School is a special school that caters for students aged 11 to 19 with severe learning difficulties. Many of the students have associated complex difficulties. 43% of the students have needs that are on the autistic spectrum.
- All of the students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The students come from a range of ethnic backgrounds reflecting the composition of the borough. White British students make up approximately a quarter of the school roll and are the largest ethnic group. Most of the other students come from Black Caribbean, African or Asian heritages.
- Around 45% of the students are known to be eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium grant. The pupil premium is an additional sum of money provided by the government to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and those from service families; there were none from service families at the time of the inspection.
- The school is currently housed on two sites. The sixth form has been relocated to a site within walking distance of the provision for Key Stages 3 and 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching across the school by ensuring that:
 - in all lessons, students whose needs are on the autistic spectrum are supported to take a full part in learning
 - in all lessons support staff help students to learn as independently as possible
 - teachers plan thoroughly to promote literacy and numeracy in all lessons and subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The attainment of students is well below what would be expected for their age when they join the school. Students make good progress throughout the school. All achieve well regardless of their special educational needs or disabilities. Teachers use opportunities in all lessons to teach personal and social skills and, as a result, students learn how to communicate more effectively and behave appropriately. Students are very well prepared for the next stage of their education and life beyond school.
- Students with special educational needs on the autistic spectrum make good progress in developing social and communication skills. Many of these students are reluctant to take part in learning when they join the school and learn to take part and enjoy lessons as a result of teaching that is well planned and suited to their interests. Occasionally in some lessons, teaching is not successful in ensuring that all of them respond by taking part.
- As a result of well-targeted support students who are eligible for funding through the pupil premium make progress that is as good as that made by other students.
- Students learn to communicate with confidence and in a variety of ways, including speech and using sign language and symbols, as a result of staff teaching them directly and providing a variety of stimulating activities that encourage communication.
- Students are taught well in English and mathematics as a result of accurate assessments of their abilities, good planning and imaginative teaching. By the time they leave many are able to recognise initial sounds and read individual words and some are able to read and enjoy simple texts. Other students make good use of pictures and symbols in order to understand and communicate. Students make good progress in mathematics. By the time they leave many are able to count and recognise numerals and use these skills in practical settings.
- In the sixth form students learn to become more independent through gaining life skills such as cooking and shopping. They are well prepared for their next stage of work or education through the teaching of key skills such as communication and a well-planned programme of work experience. Teachers plan well with parents and carers in order to identify what each student needs when they leave school and produce detailed personalised programmes that help them achieve this. A number of students have been taught the necessary skills and have been enabled to live with a measure of independence in supported living arrangements.
- The school promotes equal opportunities very effectively. It checks the progress of every student regularly and accurately and makes sure that teaching and curriculum activities are adjusted in order to give them every opportunity to succeed.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good throughout the school and enables students to achieve well. Teachers assess the students' levels of understanding and skill development accurately and use this information to plan lessons that are suited to their needs. Lessons make good use of the interests of the students and are broken down into small steps, enabling them to understand and make progress.
- Staff make effective use of new technologies and visual supports, such as symbols, to help students understand lessons. They also use many opportunities to teach literacy and mathematics in other lessons, such as cooking and science. In an art lesson, a student proudly counted out aloud to 20 the number of beads he had threaded. In some lessons, however, teachers do not create sufficient opportunities to promote these basic skills.
- Teachers and support staff know all the students very well and in most cases are successful in helping them to take part and make progress. Although staff attempt at all times to engage those students on the autistic spectrum some do not take part fully in all lessons, as plans on how to help them engage are not sufficiently detailed.

- Through good use of visual support students are made aware of their learning goals and many are able to say what these are.
- Support staff have positive relationships with students. They offer encouragement and guidance that motivate students to try their best. However, in some lessons, planning does not give sufficient guidance on what support staff are to do and as a result they sometimes do not provide students with opportunities to learn more independently.
- The teaching of expressive arts is strong throughout the school. Students enjoy a rich variety of art, dance and musical activities and express themselves well in these subjects. Students enthusiastically recited a musical poem that they wrote with a visiting poet and are preparing to perform in a community venue.
- Parents and carers believe that their children are well taught and are particularly appreciative of the good manners and self-confidence that they develop during their time at the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students have a deep affection for school activities and trust staff on account of the respect that is shown to them. They behave well around the school and in lessons. They are polite to visitors and show greater maturity in their social behaviour as they progress through the school.
- In classes students work hard and try their best. They are taught to work individually and in small groups. On occasions they offer spontaneous help to each other. With the exception of some students on the autistic spectrum, they develop increasing levels of concentration as they progress through the school, working on tasks for longer periods. In lessons there is very little disruption to learning as on the occasions when a student becomes frustrated these are dealt with efficiently by staff.
- A number of the students exhibit challenging behaviour on joining the school. Through careful planning and review, positive relationships, thorough staff training and detailed interventions, most of them make excellent improvements in their behaviour. They start to use appropriate communication to express themselves and begin to join in lessons and the wider life of the school. Exclusions are rare and sanctions are seldom used. Staff consistently elect to help all students improve by modelling good behaviour, encouragement and using rewards that students value.
- Parents and carers are unreserved in their appreciation for the safe climate of the school. There is no bullying and students report that they feel safe.
- The school is committed to listening to the views of the students. The school council provides feedback to senior leaders on key aspects of the school; members recently expressed what they liked and did not like about the newly acquired building for the sixth form.
- Attendance is good and there are sound procedures for improvement followed by staff in cases where students are absent.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders share with the governing body an ambition that the school improves rapidly in all aspects of its work. This is reflected in their ambitious development planning, consistent application of policies and unwillingness to tolerate underperformance. Staff are loyal to, and supportive of, leaders and work well as a team in driving the school forward.
- The school's self-evaluation is based upon a realistic and informed analysis of information. Improvements in the key areas identified at the previous inspection, together with the faster rates of progress being made by students each year, show that leaders have a good capacity to continue to make improvement.
- Leaders monitor the progress of students closely and have enabled all teachers to use information on students' progress in order to set targets that enable them to learn more rapidly. As a result all teachers know whether students are doing as well as they can. This has led to

improvements in teaching and greater progress by students each year.

- The performance management of teachers has been well planned and implemented. This has contributed to the continuous improvement in the quality of teaching across the school. Teaching that is not good is tackled and this leads to improvements. Leaders provide training and professional development activities that help all staff meet the varying needs of the students.
- The pupil premium grant has been well used to provide extra personalised support for students who require it. For some students this has been in the form of portable computerised devices that have inspired students to communicate more frequently both in school and in the community.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this improving school, having appropriately provided more intensive support when it had less capacity to improve.
- Parents and carers are appreciative of the warmth of the staff, their professional approach and the progress made by students. The school has consulted well with parents and carers in developing the curriculum in order that it increasingly meets the needs of the students. The curriculum takes account of their needs for life after school and equips them well for this.
- Safeguarding of students is thorough in all aspects. Students feel safe and parents and carers have confidence in the school's policies and practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body is passionate in her drive to ensure that the students at the school have the very best resources. She has worked tirelessly with senior leaders in order to help bring to fruition a new building that the school is about to occupy. The governing body monitors the leading of teaching by senior leaders well and is aware of its quality. It understands the school's methods of measuring progress for students with special educational needs and is challenging and supportive of leaders in their drive to raise achievement. The governing body has a sound knowledge of the school's performance management systems and holds the school to account for the way in which teachers' performance is rewarded.

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	101856
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	425480

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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	82
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Furmanska
Headteacher	Simon Vines
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 October 2011
Telephone number	020 86538222
Fax number	020 87716761
Email address	secretary@priorycroydon.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

