

The Priory Ruskin Academy

Rushcliffe Road, Grantham, NG31 8ED

Inspection dates 7–8 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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 large majority of teaching is good and some is outstanding. This is having a positive impact on the attainment and progress of students, which is improving quickly.
- The proportion of students making expected and good progress is rising and is now close to national expectations in a range of subjects including English and mathematics.
- Teachers are effective in helping students to improve their reading and writing skills and this is leading to greater success.
- Students feel safe in the academy and are well cared for. Parents support this view.
- Attendance is rising and is above the national average this year. Punctuality to the academy and to lessons is good.
- Students are proud of the academy. They are respectful to each other and their teachers. The behaviour of students is good and attitudes to learning are positive.
- Senior leaders have high expectations of students and teachers. They make accurate judgements and they are successfully improving both teaching and students' achievement. Governors are effective.
- The academy provides a rich programme of extra activities. This helps students to develop good social skills, and moral, spiritual and cultural understanding.
- The sixth form is good. It is well led and good teaching is leading to better results for students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is good. Some work is not planned well enough to make sure that all students, especially the more able, make enough progress.
- Teachers do not consistently check that students are acting on the advice they give when they mark books.
- Early entry to GCSE mathematics is holding back the most-able students.
- Checks to measure the impact of actions to bring about improvement are not precise enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons and parts of lessons, including eight with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, they visited an assembly and tutorial sessions.
- Discussions were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, and other senior leaders, and teachers who hold additional responsibilities. A discussion was held with a representative of the academy trust.
- Inspectors spoke to students in lessons, at breaks and at lunchtimes. They held meetings with four different groups of students representing all year groups, and met with a group of Year11 students who are being supported by the pupil premium.
- The inspectors looked at work in students’ books across a range of subjects and year groups and conducted a book scrutiny with a member of staff.
- Inspectors analysed data about current students’ performance and progress. They reviewed a range of documents, records and development plans. These included minutes of governing body meetings, staff performance management targets, and records about safeguarding, behaviour attendance and exclusions.
- Inspectors took account of the 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 29 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire as well as information supplied to the inspection team during the inspection.

Inspection team

Frances Le Pla, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Hopkins

Additional Inspector

Anne White

Additional Inspector

Harkireet Sohel

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is an average-sized secondary school with a small sixth form.
- It is part of The Priory Federation of Academies Trust which consists of three secondary schools and an all-through school in Lincolnshire.
- Almost three-quarters of students in the academy are boys.
- The great majority of students are White British.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. This additional funding is provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, are in local authority care, or have a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- There are currently six students who attend Grantham College full time to follow alternative courses.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The academy has 10 newly qualified teachers on the staff.
- The academy operates across two sites, Manthorpe and Queensway with the sixth form taught at the Queensway site. New accommodation for the whole academy is being constructed on the Manthorpe site and is nearing completion.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement by:
 - giving the most-able students the chance to reach the highest grades in GCSE mathematics examinations by not entering them early.
- Improve the quality of teaching by making sure that:
 - work is set at the right level for students so that it is neither too difficult nor too easy, particularly for the most able students
 - all teachers check regularly that students have acted upon the advice given when their work is marked.
- Ensure that the expected impact of the many actions being taken to bring about improvement in the academy development plan is made clear and that their success is carefully checked.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 4 is improving in the majority of subjects. Students enter the academy in Year 7 with skills in literacy and numeracy that are well below average. Over the last two years, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at A*-C including English and mathematics has risen. The school's current progress information, and the results of examination assessments taken during their course, show that students are on track to maintain this rate of improvement in 2014 and reach standards that are close to the national average.
- Academy leaders have set high expectations of what students can achieve. Better systems for giving additional support for those falling behind and continued improvements in teaching have led to better rates of progress. The proportion of students making expected and good progress in both English and mathematics is rising year-on-year. Students in the current Year 11 are on track to exceed the national average for expected progress and be close to the national average for better than expected progress in both English and mathematics.
- Current students are making good progress across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, humanities and arts subjects. Both boys and girls are making similar rates of progress. Very few students gain the highest A* and A grades. Students make good progress in BTEC work-related courses.
- The academy enters students early for GCSE mathematics at the end of Year 10 but in this examination, the highest grade they can achieve is a C. While the number gaining a grade C has shown good improvement, this approach has meant that too few of the most able students go on to reach their full potential and gain the highest A and A* grades.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress in their learning because of the extra help they receive from teaching assistants and additional individual support such as mentoring.
- The Year 7 catch-up programmes in English and mathematics are having a positive impact on helping younger students make better progress. Where required, a range of interventions is tailored to students' individual needs, leading to improvement in literacy and numeracy skills.
- Students read widely and often, because of the academy's strong emphasis on the importance of reading. Students read every day during tutor time and during the newly introduced 'reading week' they read at the start of every lesson.
- The gap in attainment and progress between students supported by the pupil premium and the others has, until recently, been too wide. In 2013 for example, these students' attainment was over a grade below that of the others in English and a grade below in mathematics. However, the academy is using its additional funding well to provide a range of initiatives to support these students including additional revision classes and individual tuition and the most recent data indicate that the gap is narrowing quickly and eligible students are making better progress.
- The achievement of students who attend Grantham College is good. The provision helps them to improve their work-based skills and potential employability.
- Achievement in the sixth form has improved rapidly and is now good. The great majority of students complete their courses and gain creditable grades at the end of their studies. In the

lessons observed, students made rapid gains in their learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most subjects is typically good, and in some cases outstanding and this leads to good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and exude enthusiasm for their subjects.
- Teachers plan a variety of activities that engage the students' interest so they enjoy learning. In a Spanish lesson, the students made good progress in their listening skills when the teacher introduced a team competition because they all wanted to win.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very positive. Students say that they enjoy coming to school and they speak positively about their teachers' commitment to them. A group of Year 11 students supported by the pupil premium told the inspector that they were very appreciative of the way their teachers willingly gave their time to help with revision outside lessons, at lunch time, after school and in the holidays.
- Teachers are effective in promoting students' literacy skills in lessons. They spend time reminding students of key words for the lesson and check they understand what they mean. They encourage students to speak in full sentences giving reasons for their opinions, and then help them to write their ideas accurately. Students are encouraged to mark each other's work and correct spelling and punctuation mistakes. As a result, students' reading and writing skills are improving.
- In lessons where learning and progress are particularly good, teachers plan a variety of activities and use different resources so that, whatever their starting point, learning is at the right level for students. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher carefully planned the work so that it was adjusted to match the students' targets. As a result, all made rapid progress in their understanding of histograms.
- Teachers encourage students to think more deeply about their responses and listen to and build on each other's ideas, for example through careful questioning. Students do not waste time because teachers are well prepared to move learning forward.
- Teaching assistants provide good-quality support to disabled students and those who have special educational needs because they work closely with the class teachers to plan the work for these students.
- Most teachers mark students' work regularly and give feedback about what they have done well and what they need to do next to improve. Although students are encouraged to act upon the marking with their 'green pen comments' and corrections, teachers do not always check that this has happened.
- In some cases, teachers do set work at the right level, especially for the most-able students. In lessons where students lose concentration and do not pay enough attention, this is usually because the work is too difficult or too easy.
- Teaching in the sixth form has improved rapidly since the previous inspection and is now consistently good. It is underpinned by good subject knowledge and interesting approaches which engage and motivate students, producing improved results across a range of subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students wear their uniform with pride. This is a reflection of the academy's strong, positive ethos. The academy motto of 'Aim High and Show Respect' is very well supported by students because they are polite, well-mannered and courteous towards each other and the adults that work with them. Parents and staff agree that behaviour is good and their children enjoy school.
- Students arrive promptly to school and lessons, well prepared to learn and with the correct equipment. Behaviour in lessons is good and work in books is usually neat and well presented. Students' attitudes to learning are good in most lessons because teachers usually support, challenge and engage them in relevant activities. Occasionally, when the work is less interesting, a few students do not give their full attention to their work.
- Students respond quickly to the requests of teachers and they show good social skills when listening to each other in the classroom or when they are moving around the very crowded site at lunchtime and break time.
- The academy's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including the potential dangers of the internet and mobile phones. They value the personal development days that help them learn about how to keep safe and deal with bullying. Occurrences of bullying are rare and students explained that staff deal with them effectively.
- Attendance has risen and is now above average because of the actions of the academy. The appointment of an attendance officer has enabled the academy to support successfully potentially vulnerable students to improve their attendance.
- Students willingly take on responsibilities in the academy by becoming 'reading ambassadors' helping in the library, house and sports captains or members of the school council. They value the wide range of sports, music and other clubs that they can attend outside lessons. Year 7 students say that they are looking forward to their residential visit to the Federation centre in Normandy later in the term. These and many other opportunities such as 'culture days' promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders lead well and are committed to improving the academy. The headteacher communicates high expectations of staff and students. His ambition for the academy is clear and staff are fully supportive of his aims. As a result there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere where everyone wants to achieve their best.
- Information about students' attainment and progress is used well. Subject leaders are regularly held to account for students' progress with a clear expectation that they will support any students that are falling behind. This has led to the appointment of lead practitioners in English, mathematics and science who are responsible for providing additional support and intervention for students not meeting their targets. As a result, attainment gaps are reducing.
- Leaders and managers have focused relentlessly on improving the quality of teaching and training activities focus on ways of improving teaching in order to raise literacy standards and achievement overall. The academy's records on lesson observations are accurate and linked to the national 'Teachers' Standards'. Teachers only qualify for pay rises if their performance is good. Leaders appropriately challenge underperformance in teaching. As a result, all inadequate

teaching has been eradicated and achievement is improving.

- Leaders and managers make sure that newly qualified teachers are well supported at the early stages of their careers through a well-structured induction programme. These teachers valued greatly the support they had received from their mentors and managers. They particularly appreciated the recent opportunities to visit other teachers' classrooms to observe and share good practice. Across the academy, teachers work well together as a team and there is a shared commitment to raising standards.
- Leaders know the academy well, assess its performance accurately and have identified the strengths and the next steps needed to raise achievement further. The development plan is detailed and includes many activities to bring about improvement. However, the timing of these activities and the plans to measure their success are not sharply defined so it is not always clear that they are having the required impact.
- The academy has ensured that students benefit from a curriculum that is broad and balanced, meets their needs and enables them to make progress in the next stage of their learning. Students receive timely and helpful independent advice and guidance at the age of 16 and this helps them make informed choices. The academy has strong links with local colleges and this leads to effective support for the more vulnerable students as they move on to the next stage. In 2013, only a very few students did not go into education, employment and training.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Improved tracking systems have been introduced and regular checking of students' progress has led to improved outcomes in Year 12 across a range of subjects. The range of courses on offer has been broadened to include more work-related options as well as A level courses. As a result, the number of students showing an interest in joining the sixth form next year has increased significantly.
- The Federation regularly challenges the academy about performance and student progress and ensures the leaders and governors implement the Trust's 'Charter and Goals'. It arranges the performance management of the headteacher. It has led on the project management of the new building, allowing the leadership team to focus on raising standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to the academy and share the aspirations of the headteacher. They visit the academy regularly and report on what they have seen. They work with the senior leaders on shaping the strategic direction of the academy, for example, joining them for a day to discuss the academy development plan. Since the previous inspection, they have evaluated their effectiveness and identified where they need to improve their skills. They have received training from the Federation, and an external adviser. As a result, they now regularly challenge academy leaders on performance. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in performance and know how much progress is being made to reach the challenging targets that have been set for 2014. They know how the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is being spent and ask questions about the effectiveness of its use. Governors are aware of the link between students' achievement and teachers' salary progression and can explain why some teachers were rewarded with pay rises and others were not. Governors are committed to ensuring students are safe and meet their statutory duties including those for safeguarding. Working with the trustees, they ensure that the Federation policies are implemented and that academy finances are effectively managed.

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	136194
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	441955

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1020
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June Kirton
Headteacher	Clive Shepherd
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2012
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