

The Priory Witham Academy

De Wint Avenue, Lincoln, LN6 7DT

Inspection dates

5–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress across the academy in all subjects. Recent improvements to the quality of teaching have not yet had time to raise pupils' achievement to a consistently good level.
- Pupils' progress and standards in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 4, are not yet good.
- Although it is improving, the quality of teaching is not yet consistently good.
- The quality of teachers' marking varies across the academy, and pupils do not always have the chance to respond to it.
- Teachers do not always encourage pupils to achieve high standards of spelling, handwriting and presentation of their work.
- Work is sometimes set which is not at the right level for pupils.
- Some younger pupils lack confidence in reading longer or unfamiliar words.
- Children are not yet making consistently good progress in early years, despite significant recent improvements in teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and the recently strengthened senior leadership team have made a strong positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attendance, on the quality of teaching, on the accuracy of teachers' assessments and on pupils' progress in many subjects.
- Academy leaders at all levels, including members of the academy trust, hold teachers to account well for the quality of their teaching and for the progress their pupils make. As a result the quality of teaching is improving.
- Pupils make rapid progress in English across the academy.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress on a range of courses which are well suited to their interests and abilities.
- The academy's curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the academy is good. They enjoy learning, feel safe and work hard. They are proud of their academy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons or part-lessons, including 11 which were jointly observed with academy leaders.
- Meetings were held with four groups of pupils, with senior and middle leaders and with staff, including teachers in charge of subjects. The lead inspector met with the Chief Executive Officer of the academy trust and with the Chair of the Governing Body, and spoke on the telephone to one of the trustees.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils’ books and listened to pupils read. They also spoke to pupils informally and observed them around the academy at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of parental communications with them, and of the 25 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They spoke to a small number of parents at the start of the school day and considered the academy’s own recent larger survey of parents and carers. Inspectors also took account of 27 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents including information about pupils’ achievement, records of their attendance and behaviour, documents related to safeguarding, and academy plans for improvement.

Inspection team

Michael Phipps, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jonathan Taylor	Additional Inspector
Roger Whittall	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Mackenzie	Additional Inspector
John Mason	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Priory Witham Academy opened in 2008. It is one of four academies sponsored by the Priory Federation of Academies Trust.
- This all-through academy, with pupils aged from three to eighteen, is slightly larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The early years provision consists of part-time morning and afternoon Nursery classes and full-time Reception classes.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium at 47.4% is higher than average. The pupil premium is the additional funding provided by the government to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is 17.6% which is higher than average. The proportion who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is 10.2% which is also higher than average.
- There have been significant staff changes and a number of new leadership appointments, including that of a primary headteacher, since the last inspection.
- The academy makes use of some alternative off-site provision. A small number of pupils in Years 8 to 10 attend the Acorn Free School, and a small number in Key Stage 4 attend work-related courses at Lincoln College. A small number of sixth form students attend courses at other academies within the Priory Federation.
- The academy's own unvalidated data indicates that the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics, are met by pupils both at the end of Key Stage 2 and at the end of Key Stage 4.
- The Priory Witham Academy Day Care Centre and Family Centre operate on the academy's site. They are separately inspected, so were not included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that:
 - teachers' marking in all subjects, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4, tells pupils clearly how to improve their work; and pupils have the chance to respond to this advice
 - teachers encourage high standards of spelling, handwriting and presentation in all subjects and year groups.
- Raise standards across the academy by making sure that:
 - the knowledge of some pupils of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is strengthened, so they have the confidence and ability to read unfamiliar and longer words
 - the recent improvements which have been made in mathematics lead to pupils making faster progress and achieving higher standards
 - work is planned which is at the right level of difficulty for the ability of pupils in each class.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Academy leaders have succeeded since the last inspection in driving key improvements in pupils' behaviour and attendance, the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils make in most subjects. The recent appointment of a very effective primary headteacher has led to rapid improvements in this area of the academy. Although there is still further to go to make sure that teaching is consistently good, and that pupils catch up on previously lost ground, the academy is improving strongly, and leaders have good capacity to improve the academy further.
- Leaders make frequent and well-organised checks on all aspects of teaching. This is why teaching is improving. Teachers have clear targets based on how well their pupils achieve. Teachers are held to account, in regular meetings with leaders, for the quality of their teaching and for the progress their pupils make. There are good opportunities for teachers to improve their practice. School leaders have taken difficult decisions about staffing in order to improve the quality of teaching.
- Recent improvements have been made to the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work. Regular meetings to review pupils' progress mean that pupils, teachers and parents are clear whether pupils are making the progress they should. Effective support is given to pupils who fall behind.
- Staff in charge of subjects are enthusiastic, capable and committed. There are good links between teachers in charge of subjects in the primary and secondary schools. These leaders are making a positive impact on teaching and learning by, for example, increasing the chances for pupils to do practical problem-solving work in mathematics.
- Leaders have a very accurate and honest view of the academy's strengths and weaknesses. Plans for improvement concentrate on the right areas, and show clearly what steps are needed to make the academy better. Measures of success are very precisely linked to improvements in pupils' achievement.
- Parents are supportive of the academy and its leaders. The academy's recent survey shows that parents overwhelmingly think their children are safe and happy at school, and they would recommend the academy to others.
- Academy leaders at all levels make sure that all safeguarding requirements are met and that policies and practices to keep pupils safe are effective. All staff are suitably trained in child protection. The school does not tolerate discrimination. It works hard to make sure that pupils of all backgrounds and abilities have an equal chance to succeed.
- The national primary sports funding is used well to increase opportunities for pupils to take part in local sports events and has increased the range of after-school clubs. Pupils have access to high quality indoor and outdoor sports facilities. As a result, participation rates in a wide range of sports are high. This promotes pupils' healthy lifestyles well.
- An interesting and broad range of subjects across the academy help pupils to develop their English skills well, and increasingly is developing their mathematical skills effectively. Subjects and topics offered in Key Stages 1 and 2 are currently being reviewed in light of the new national primary curriculum. Pupils in Key Stage 4 study a core of academic subjects with a good choice of academic or work-related optional courses. Effective careers guidance helps pupils to make informed choices about their future options.
- A wide variety of additional clubs, activities and trips help pupils enjoy their learning and develops their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well. British values are promoted well, including through a programme of personal, social and health education, and through a series of events and visits. Recently, for example, pupils in Year 4 visited the Houses of Parliament, while pupils in Year 9 took part in a workshop on the criminal justice system.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the academy's local board of governors have an accurate view of the strengths and

weaknesses of the academy, and a good understanding of what data on pupils' performance tells them about how well the academy is doing in relation to other schools. They carry out their statutory duties well, and have a clear vision for the future of the academy.

- Governors know about the quality of teaching, how any underperformance in teaching is tackled and how decisions on teachers' pay are dependent on the progress made by their pupils. They make sure the academy's budget is spent effectively, and are aware of how additional funding, such as the pupil premium, is spent, and its impact on the achievement of eligible pupils.
- The Priory Federation of Academies Trust provides valuable support to the academy on finance, information and communications technology (ICT), human resources and safeguarding policy and practice.
- The academy trust holds leaders to account very effectively for the progress made by pupils. Regular meetings are held to review the data on pupils' progress. This provides a robust challenge for the academy's leaders to make further improvements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They enjoy learning and work hard. They are punctual to lessons, settle to work quickly and respond promptly to teachers' instructions. They look smart and wear their uniform with pride. They appreciate the rewards they get for working hard and behaving well.
- Pupils behave well around the school site, at break and lunchtimes. They are polite and courteous towards teachers, visitors and each other. Pupils are proud of their academy, and show respect for their surroundings. There is no litter or graffiti around the site, and pupils take good care of their impressive facilities.
- Students in the sixth form act as mentors for younger primary-aged pupils, a responsibility which they take seriously, and which enhances the good relationships between pupils across the academy. Other pupils take responsibilities such as membership of the academy council. They are proud to be elected to the council by their classmates, and enjoy planning how to improve the academy for the benefit of all pupils.
- Pupils' attendance has risen sharply since the last inspection, and is now slightly above average. Rates of exclusions are low, and falling.
- On occasions when teaching is less engaging, a small minority of pupils lose focus. On these occasions, pupils make slower progress in their learning. This is why pupils' behaviour is not outstanding.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The site is well maintained, safe and secure. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in the academy. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare. They know about different types of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber-bullying. Academy records confirm that bullying incidents rarely take place. When they do happen, they are dealt with effectively.
- Parents have no concerns about their children's safety in the academy. The very large majority of parents feel that the academy makes sure that pupils are well behaved.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because although it is getting better, it has not been consistently good enough over time to make sure that pupils make good progress across all year groups and subject areas, particularly in mathematics.

- The quality and frequency of teachers' marking varies across the academy. The marking of the work of primary-aged pupils is often detailed and frequent, and gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work. These younger pupils are regularly given the chance to respond to this advice. The quality of marking is less good by secondary teachers in some subjects.
- Some teachers do not always pitch the work at the right level of difficulty for pupils in the class. Inspectors saw work in mathematics in Key Stage 3 that was too easy for pupils, and work in science in Key Stage 4 and in English in Key Stage 2 that was too difficult.
- Sometimes teachers do not consistently encourage pupils to aim for the highest standards of spelling, handwriting and presentation in all subjects and year groups. Inspectors noted this both in lessons and when they examined a sample of pupils' work in both the primary and secondary phases.
- There are very positive relationships between teachers and pupils. This makes a clear contribution to the learning that takes place. Little time is wasted in dealing with low-level disruption.
- The quality of teaching is improving because leaders have invested heavily in developing the practice of all teachers. They receive both general and tailor-made training. As a result, teachers' confidence is high. The academy takes care to make sure that teachers are trained to assess pupils' work accurately. This means teachers can closely track the progress that pupils make.
- Homework is used well to extend pupils' learning. For example, pupils were motivated by an interesting humanities homework activity in which they were given a choice of both the type of task they had to complete and its level of difficulty.
- Inspectors saw good learning taking place in many subjects, particularly in English, where pupils are very clear about how they need to improve their work in order to reach the standards they are capable of.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils do not make consistently good progress in all subjects across all year groups.
- Pupils' progress and standards in mathematics across the academy, especially in Key Stage 4, are not yet good, although they are improving. Recent changes to staffing, leadership and the curriculum in mathematics mean that the quality of teaching is improving and pupils are now making faster progress.
- Pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are below average by the end of Key Stage 1, although they are now making faster progress than in the past.
- Pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 remain below average. Pupils make better progress in reading, but slower progress in mathematics. Pupils' standards in writing are below average. Although pupils have many chances to write across a range of subjects and for different purposes, their standards of spelling, handwriting and presentation are not high enough.
- Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 11 is improving, but remains variable. The proportion of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics rose sharply in 2013, and then rose again in 2014. Students' progress and standards in English, science, art and technology are stronger than those in mathematics, history, religious education and French. Work-related qualifications in Key Stage 4 are a strength: students made good progress and achieved well in a range of work-related subjects in 2013 and 2014.
- In the 2014 statutory tests pupils in Key Stage 2 supported by the pupil premium were three terms behind other pupils in mathematics, two terms behind in writing and one term behind in reading. Their rates of progress are improving, and all of these gaps are smaller than in 2013. Supported pupils in Key Stage 4 in

2014 were half a GCSE grade behind their peers in English, and one grade behind in mathematics. The academy's own figures indicate that these gaps across all year groups are set to reduce further in 2015.

- Year 7 catch-up funding has mostly been used to support pupils' learning in mathematics. This is beginning to have a positive effect on their learning and progress, but has not yet had time to make a significant impact on pupils' standards in mathematics.
- The small number of pupils who attend work-related courses away from the academy achieve well because these courses are well suited to their needs, and academy leaders make effective checks on pupils' attendance and behaviour, and on the quality of provision. The academy does not enter pupils early for GCSE courses.
- The academy's disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same progress as their peers. They are supported appropriately by teaching assistants in class.
- Standards in reading are rising as it is taught increasingly well. The academy has recently improved the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make), but some pupils are still unsure when reading longer or unfamiliar words. Reading has a high profile across the academy: for example a recent reading 'flash mob' event attracted much positive publicity. Teachers regularly share with pupils what they themselves are reading. Pupils read regularly in English lessons and during registration periods. They told inspectors they enjoy reading and appreciate the well-stocked library.
- Pupils make particularly strong progress in English in Key Stages 3 and 4. The proportions who make and exceed the progress that would be expected are high and continue to rise.
- The academy's most able pupils make progress that is in line with, and in many cases better than that of other pupils. In many subjects the proportion who reach the highest levels at GCSE compare favourably with national averages.
- The academy's own figures indicate that in 2015 pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of KS2 are set to improve on those achieved in 2014. Standards in English and mathematics by the end of KS4 are on course to rise in 2015 to above average levels. Checks made by inspectors of pupils' books support the academy's view that pupils' progress and standards continue to improve.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Despite recent improvements, children have not made enough consistently good progress in early years in the past for it to be judged as good. Many children enter both the Nursery and Reception Years with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. Their standards remain below average by the time they move into Year 1.
- Although the quality of teaching is improving, academy leaders are aware that there is not yet a consistent approach to questioning children, or to developing their problem-solving skills. Children's learning through play and finding out for themselves is now more carefully planned, so, for example, children have more opportunities to develop their mathematical thinking in their play.
- Teachers' assessment of what children can do is now frequent and accurate. It builds into a detailed electronic record of what children can do, which is shared with parents. Relationships with parents are good, and parents are encouraged to take an active part in their child's learning. Inspectors spoke to a number who came into the academy for a 'stay and play' session. They said they were very happy with how well their children are looked after.
- The recently-appointed early years leader is knowledgeable and effective, and has made a positive impact on the quality of teaching, the early years environment and on children's learning. Leaders have a clear idea of what needs to be improved further. Shared leadership with the day nursery on the same site means that there is a smooth transition for children when they move into the Nursery Year.

- Children behave well in the Nursery and Reception classes. They grow in confidence, and are happy to share with one another. They enjoy learning, particularly in the well-resourced outdoor area.
- Children with disabilities, special educational needs or with low levels of earlier learning are well supported so many make good progress, but their low start means they do not always achieve a good level of development. More-able children achieve well.
- Children are well cared for and kept safe in the early years. Relationships between adults and children are warm and harmonious. Safeguarding and welfare requirements are met.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students' prior attainment when they start the sixth form is below national average levels. A small number of students follow academic courses. The large majority follow work-related courses which are well matched to their interests and abilities.
- Students make good progress and achieve well, particularly in work-related courses. Progress measures both for work-related and academic courses are good. Retention rates are above average. Students' independent learning skills are well developed by the range of courses offered. Students work conscientiously in private study time to complete their assignments.
- The sixth form meets the national 16-19 interim minimum standards. Most students who entered the sixth form without a Grade C in English improved their grade.
- Students speak highly of the quality of careers information and guidance they receive. They have a clear idea of what their next steps will be. Sixth form students act as excellent role models for younger pupils.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are well supported in the sixth form and achieve well. Disadvantaged students make the same good progress as their peers.
- The links with other academies in the trust gives students a wider choice of subjects. Academy leaders make effective checks on the quality of teaching at these other sites.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good. Students are kept safe, including from extremism. Students' progress towards challenging targets is checked regularly. Leaders have an accurate idea of the sixth form's strengths and weaknesses and have good plans to improve it further.

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	135563
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	449050

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	990
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Howard Gee
Headteacher	Andrew Madge
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2012
Telephone number	01522 882900
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