

Priory School

Mount Road, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 7BH

Inspection dates

5–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1
Overall effectiveness of the residential experience		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher, other senior leaders and teachers with leadership responsibilities provide outstanding leadership and management. There is good support from the governors and academy trustees and this has led to rapid improvement in teaching and achievement since the last inspection.
- The academy continues to improve. The proportion of outstanding teaching has increased and pupils are achieving a wider range of qualifications, including more GCSEs, than at the previous inspection.
- The support for local schools, through the academy's outreach service, is outstanding.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They attend well and they have excellent attitudes to learning. The academy's efforts to ensure that pupils are safe are also outstanding.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding because they make outstanding progress in the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy across the academy.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time is outstanding because all teachers have good subject knowledge and have high expectations for learning and behaviour. They make excellent use of on-going assessment to move learning forward.
- Teaching assistants provide highly effective support for different pupils. Staff have excellent relationships with pupils, and manage behaviour consistently well.
- Pupils in Year 11 make outstanding progress towards a wide range of examination courses. They are exceptionally well prepared for transfer to college or the new sixth form because they develop excellent life and work-related learning skills.
- Outstanding leadership of the sixth form has led to outstanding teaching and achievement.
- The effectiveness of the residential provision is outstanding with effective plans in place to improve the accommodation. The academy meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 15 lessons to determine the impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time. Nearly all teachers were seen and all observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work from across the academy and listened to a few pupils read. Inspectors joined residential pupils for breakfast and spent time with them as they participated in their evening activities.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, the residential care team, four governors (who are also the trustees), a group of pupils, and a group of students in the sixth form. Informal discussions were also held with pupils at lunch time and break time.
- Inspectors considered parents' views. They looked at the 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) including 10 written comments. The lead inspector held a meeting with a group of six parents. The social care inspector took account of the views of parents in the residential provision. Inspectors also took account of 38 completed questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including the academy's self-evaluation, the academy's improvement plan, care plans for pupils in the residential provision, safeguarding policies and documents, minutes of governing body meetings, records of pupils' progress over time, the destinations of students leaving the sixth form, attendance figures and behaviour records.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Yates	Additional Inspector
Deidra Keating	Social Care Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy currently provides for pupils and students, aged from eight to 19, with moderate learning difficulties and additional complex needs. Nearly 50% of pupils have autistic spectrum disorder, approximately 15% have Down's syndrome and a few have severe learning difficulties. Other additional complex needs include communication difficulties, behavioural emotional and social difficulties, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and sensory impairments.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Most pupils and students in the sixth form are White British and a very small number speak English as an additional language.
- An above average proportion of pupils, 36%, are eligible for pupil premium funding, which is additional government funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- There is residential provision for up to 23 pupils at any one time. Currently 49 pupils stay part-time between one to four nights per week in residential accommodation.
- The academy does not make use of any alternative schools or locations to provide education for its pupils.
- The academy provides a small outreach service for local schools.
- In September 2013 the current headteacher was appointed and the sixth form opened, with Year 12 students. The academy also admitted its first intake of Year 4 pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Complete the development of the new curriculum and systems of assessment and implement these by September 2015.
- Implement the plan to improve the residential accommodation.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher the academy has continued to improve the culture for strong teaching and learning, where good behaviour flourishes. Senior leaders, and teachers with leadership responsibilities, are providing outstanding support for the new headteacher in fully meeting the area of improvement identified at the last inspection by increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching across the academy and raising pupils' achievements.
- Leadership of teaching is outstanding. The arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are robust with systematic, regular and highly effective monitoring of teaching. The headteacher and senior leaders are providing excellent support and training opportunities in order to improve teaching still further.
- The academy has successfully implemented the first phase of the new arrangements for transferring pupils from statements of special educational needs to education, health and care plans.
- Subject leaders are very effective in developing teaching and learning. They are closely monitoring the promotion of literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects and working effectively with senior leaders to develop the new curriculum and arrangements for assessment. Subject leaders are on course to implement these by the beginning of the next academic year.
- Outstanding leadership of the sixth form is preparing students exceptionally well for the next stage of their lives and ensuring outstanding teaching learning and students well-being.
- The outreach team are providing outstanding support for local schools enabling pupils to successfully sustain their places in mainstream classes. Feedback for headteachers who use this service reflect the high quality and value the service provides.
- The head of care provides outstanding leadership of the residential provision maintaining strong support from parents and ensuring safeguarding requirements are fully met within the residential accommodation and across the academy.
- The academy has an accurate view of itself through the rigorous and robust monitoring and analysis of all aspects of its work. It makes excellent use of the monitoring process to identify precise and well-chosen priorities for improvement aimed at raising pupils' achievements.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and highly relevant to each pupils' need. A wide variety of rich experiences to stimulate pupils learning have been developed, including outdoor activities which promote pupils' awe and wonder. There is strong emphasis on developing pupils' basic skills and enabling them to relate these to real life situations. Older pupils benefit from excellent opportunities to take a wide range of qualifications, such as newly introduced GCSEs.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' independence and personal development well, through the programme of personal social health education, citizenship and also through the newly introduced Duke of Edinburgh Silver and Bronze awards. The oldest pupils benefit from excellent careers education and opportunities for work experience. This has led to successful transfers to college courses, apprenticeships and to the new sixth form.
- Excellent partnerships with outside professionals, such as speech and language therapists who work very closely with teachers to plan effective programmes, have a strong impact on pupils' progress and well-being.
- The rich opportunities for learning within the curriculum, such as the wide range of visits and trips (including residential visits) promotes pupils' spiritual moral social and cultural development exceptionally well. For example, pupils developed resilience in planning and organising their own residential trip to

London. They learn about British values, democracy and respect for the law through well-chosen assembly themes based on Christian principles and within the citizenship programme. They learn to appreciate and respect other cultures through subjects such as religious education, art, music and geography together with the celebration of world religious festivals. Pupils have many opportunities for reflection, through for example outdoor learning. Pupils' moral development is promoted exceptionally well through the consistent application of the code of conduct across the academy.

- Leaders have made very good use of the additional primary school sports funding, which has been used to increase the range of physical education programmes available, outdoor and adventurous activities and after school clubs such as archery with a significant increase in uptake of pupils' participation in these clubs.
- Good use of Year 7 catch-up funding to provide extra one-to-one support for literacy and numeracy has led to pupils making rapid progress in these areas.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding exceptionally well to fund extra outdoor learning activities, including additional mentoring sessions, small group music tuition and small group enhanced literacy and numeracy programmes. These have had a significant impact of pupils' learning and wellbeing.
- Leaders are promoting equality of opportunity exceptionally well by ensuring that all groups of pupils are making outstanding progress from their different starting points. They ensure discrimination of any kind including racism is tackled very effectively.
- Strong links with parents are reflected in the positive views they expressed on Parent View, with nearly all parents indicating that they would recommend the academy to others. In discussion, a group of parents praised the excellent communication between the academy and home. They spoke very highly of the staff and felt that they listened to their views and concerns and acted upon them immediately.
- The trustees, who are also the governors of the academy, are providing strong support and challenge for staff, through regular reviews and the setting of challenging targets.
- Leaders promote safeguarding exceptionally well. Procedures for checking the suitability of staff and visitors are exemplary. All training in child protection and safeguarding is fully in place. High levels of staff supervision and engagement with pupils in their activities in the academy and in the residential accommodation ensure pupils always stay safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a thorough knowledge of its own strengths and areas for development through the regular review of its own work. Governors provide very good oversight of the academy's work and excellent support for staff. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning through regular visits and by examining data and considering headteacher's reports on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. They have overseen the arrangements for managing the performance of the new headteacher exceptionally well and have ensured that the most effective teaching is rewarded.
 - Governors are rigorous in ensuring that the legal requirements for safeguarding are met. They regularly check that procedures for vetting staff are robust, that training and policies are all up-to-date. They ensure that the academy promotes British values through effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They challenge the academy's leaders well on the impact of the additional funding that is received for the pupil premium, the Year 7 catch-up and primary sports funding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are always well behaved and often exceptionally well behaved in lessons and around the academy. Pupils with more extreme behaviour make excellent progress in their conduct during their time in the academy. Exclusions are extremely rare and there are no recorded incidents of harassment or racism. Pupils respond very positively to the excellent management of their

behaviour by staff, who systematically reward good behaviour and apply appropriate sanctions on the very rare occasions when inappropriate behaviour might occur.

- Pupils' outstanding behaviour means that lessons always flow very smoothly as pupils concentrate and focus on their learning. Their excellent attitudes to learning are reflected in the way they take great pride in presenting their work neatly and how they always listen carefully to others, focus on their learning in lessons and do their very best. They thoroughly enjoy all the academy offers including the residential experience.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour has a very positive impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they grow in maturity and responsibility, developing very good relationships with one another and with staff as they progress through the academy.
- Students in the sixth form behave extremely well in lessons and around the academy. They provide good role models of behaviour for other pupils.
- Residential care staff are outstanding in their support of improvements in pupils managing their own behaviour. This is strongly acknowledged by parents.
- Parents, staff and governors believe that behaviour is at least good and often outstanding throughout the academy.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Staff ensure that all potential risks for trips, visits and activities within the academy and residential accommodation are thoroughly assessed. High levels of staff supervision and engagement with pupils in their activities ensure that pupils are safe. As a result pupils always stay safe in the academy and in the residential accommodation.
- Bullying of any kind is very rare and when it occurs it is dealt with effectively by staff. This was confirmed in discussion with parents and pupils. Pupils have developed a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying.
- Pupils use practical equipment and computers safely. They use protective headgear when riding their bikes and use kitchen utensils and gardening equipment safely.
- Older pupils and students in the sixth form develop a good understanding of the harmful effects of smoking, drugs, alcohol and unsafe sex.
- Attendance and punctuality are good with the levels of unauthorised absence from the academy very low.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is always at least good and most is outstanding with a higher proportion of outstanding teaching recorded by the academy, and reflected in pupils' work and whole academy data, since the previous inspection. Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding and leads to students making excellent progress.
- High expectations for learning and good subject knowledge were seen in all lessons visited, confirmed by the academy's own monitoring of teaching and reflected in pupils' books. For example in mathematics books, pupils in Year 11 were solving quadratic equations accurately and taking a great pride in their work.
- Excellent management of behaviour was seen in all lessons and identified as a key strength through the academy's monitoring of teaching over time. As a result, pupils' outstanding behaviour has a positive impact on their learning and progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants skilfully extend pupils' thinking in lessons through good use of

questioning, as seen in a food technology lesson where pupils were challenged to transfer data on healthy lunchboxes from tally charts in to pie charts. All staff create an extremely positive ethos for learning where pupils are doing their best to succeed and complete their tasks.

- Teaching assistants provide excellent support for pupils with additional complex needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder and Down's syndrome, and for disadvantaged pupils. They make good use of well-chosen resources such as symbols and photographs, visual timetables and lap top computers to ensure all pupils can fully engage in their learning. They break tasks down into smaller steps and focus on developing pupils' understanding of technical words to clarify their misunderstandings.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make excellent use of on-going assessment in lessons and offer good feedback to pupils on the progress that they are making against their targets. This was seen in pupils' books where the next steps for learning are clearly identified.
- Excellent teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy was seen in many lessons and clearly evidenced in pupils' books. For example, literacy was well promoted in the story of the Bear Hunt which was read to pupils during their outdoor learning activity involving exploration of the woodland area. Numeracy and the use of computers were very well promoted in science, geography and food technology.
- Homework is set regularly by teachers to extend learning and this is supported by staff in residential accommodation exceptionally well.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress in English and mathematics from their very low points on entry to the academy.
- The youngest pupils make outstanding progress in communication, reading, writing and numeracy because the teaching of these subjects is outstanding. For example, reading records and home school diaries show pupils are provided with good feedback on how well they are reading and making use of letter sounds to identify unfamiliar words.
- Older pupils make outstanding progress towards their examination courses and in developing work related learning skills. The proportion of pupils in Year 11 who gained eight or more examination courses, including the proportion who achieved GCSE at Grade A to G has risen markedly from the previous inspection.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in independent living skills because these are promoted exceptionally well in the residential provision and within personal social and health education programmes such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme where for the first time all students gained the silver awards in July 2014.
- Different groups of pupils, such as the least able with severe learning difficulties or Down's syndrome make the same outstanding progress as their classmates in communication, literacy and numeracy. Excellent individual support is provided for them and assessment is used effectively to build on their previous learning.
- The academy's data and the work of the most able pupils, including a significant number with moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder, shows they are making the same outstanding progress as their classmates. They also achieve significantly more nationally recognised qualifications than at the previous inspection.
- Students in the sixth form make outstanding progress in developing independent living skills and in successfully transferring to college or apprenticeships with a range of relevant qualifications. All students have sustained their placements one year on.

- Disadvantaged pupils achieve equally well as their classmates in reading writing and numeracy because highly effective additional on-to-one and small groups support is provided for them. Pupils in Year 7 are also making rapid gains in literacy and numeracy because the additional funding is used well to provide extra support for learning in reading writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' participation in a wide range of extra physical education activities including swimming, football, archery and outdoor and adventurous activities has increased significantly since the last inspection due to very good use of primary sports funding.

The sixth form provision**is outstanding**

- Outstanding leadership of the sixth form has led to outstanding teaching and outstanding achievement. Leadership has also assured outstanding safety and well-being of students through, for example, the rigorous assessments of any potential risks when students are learning to travel independently to and from the academy.
- Students make outstanding progress towards their highly relevant examination courses which are leading to successful placements in colleges of further education or apprenticeships for all students.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the academy is exemplary and as a result they have excellent attitudes to learning. Students go out of their way to support one another and support younger pupils in the academy. Their books show that they take a great pride in the neat presentation of their work and this was reflected in discussion when they spoke very proudly of their achievements within the academy.
- Students benefit from a very effective careers education programme which includes regular careers advice, running a small business and enterprise unit, the café, and opportunities for work experience within the community. This prepares them very well for adult education and the world of work, enabling them to make realistic choices for their chosen pathways. The strong focus on developing independence skills, which are greatly enhanced in the residential provisions, also prepares them exceptionally well when they leave the academy.

Outcomes for residential pupils	are outstanding
Quality of residential provision and care	is outstanding
Residential pupils' safety	is outstanding
Leadership and management of the residential provision	are outstanding

- The residential provision has a significant impact on pupils' lives. Pupils previously unable to attend school enjoy the residential school experience, realise their potential and hold aspirations for the future. One parent said: 'I now have hope, at last, he has a future.' Pupils flourish at the school and develop many new skills that promote their self-confidence and independence. A parent said: 'He has come on in leaps and bounds; the residential provision of the school brings it all together.' Another said: 'I would like to say how good they are. I would recommend the school to anybody.'
- Behaviour and conduct are exemplary, pupils are confident and courteous. Pupils show understanding; acceptance and tolerance of one another's differences. Occasional incidents of poor behaviour are managed by skilled staff.
- The safety of residential pupils is given the highest priority. The atmosphere is calm and nurturing, enabling pupils to feel safe and relaxed. Staff are clear and competent about their individual roles and responsibilities in safeguarding pupils. The embedded systems and reporting procedures protect pupils and support their wellbeing extremely well.
- Positive feedback on the outstanding quality of residential provision and care is in abundance. Parents and pupils are unanimously positive about the school and highlight the considerable impact on the wider family. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the residential provision and thoroughly enjoy the residential experience. A parent said: 'She enjoys it, she's happy and always eager to go.' Another said 'he seems very happy and if he is happy I am happy.'
- Pupils have an active voice in the school. Their views are actively sought and used to implement change. Staff and Governors consult with pupils on a regular basis. Select groups provide forums for specific feedback and suggestions.
- The residential provision is managed with efficiency, tenacity and drive by the outstanding head of care. There are very strong links between the school and the residential provision. The cohesive staff team are consistent in prioritising pupils' needs. Robust independent monitoring drives forward improvement. Managers share an ambitious vision and relentless drive to improve and expand the provision. The residential school provides a beacon model and shares its good practice with other schools.
- All national minimum standards are met. The school and the residential provision have been successful in sustaining an overall judgment of outstanding since the previous inspection.

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>

Residential provision		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	137433
Social care unique reference number	SC024610
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	447779

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of residential provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for residential special schools.

Type of school	Academy special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	133
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	16
Number of boarders on roll	23
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosie Varley
Headteacher	Lawrence Chapman
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2013
Telephone number	01284 761934
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