

Priory City of Lincoln Academy

Skellingthorpe Road, Lincoln LN6 0EP

Inspection dates

8–9 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Good

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16–19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, alongside governors, trust members and the senior leadership team are driving forward the improvement agenda successfully. Teaching, attendance, behaviour and outcomes are all improving.
- Recent developments around curriculum and assessment changes are well thought out and being implemented with commitment from staff at all levels in the academy.
- Teachers are promoting good learning habits among pupils and this is driving learning forward. Pupils receive clear directions on what they need to do, and homework systems are helping to consolidate learning.
- Pupils are loyal and proud of their academy. They listen to and follow teachers' instructions. Where encouraged, they develop an interest in their learning, ask questions and seek out new knowledge; attitudes to learning are positive.
- Outcomes in the academy are now good. They have improved across a wide range of subjects, including for English and mathematics. From different starting points, pupil progress is reaching national averages.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good, with learners who follow some vocational subjects doing exceptionally well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Across a range of subjects, a sufficient number of pupils are not exceeding the progress expected of them.
- In the sixth form, learners following academic courses and some vocational ones are not securely making good or better progress.
- Not all teachers push pupils to make the most of the feedback they receive nor challenging them to make connections with other learning so they can apply their knowledge to unfamiliar situations.
- A small number of new initiatives started in the academy have yet to have their full impact on learning and standards.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to secure better outcomes for pupils by ensuring that teachers:
 - use information on pupils' progress and gaps in learning to focus activities so that all pupils make clear, rapid gains in knowledge, understanding and skills and, in turn, are confident to deal with questions they have not come across before
 - consistently provide feedback to pupils, in line with the academy policy, to help them understand what they need to do to improve and provide them with the opportunity to do so
 - use questioning to deepen pupils' understanding and help them to make connections with other learning.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that the impact of new initiatives is checked in a timely manner so that adjustments can be made to ensure the greatest possible benefit.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher believes in the ability of her staff and ensures that they are appropriately supported to make significant improvements across all aspects of the academy's work. This is resulting in the dedication of all staff, particularly leaders at different levels, to driving forward an improvement agenda. Staff are committed to making a success of a number of new initiatives implemented in the academy.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement for the academy. They have successfully taken steps to address weaknesses and this is reflected in the current good progress of pupils.
- Senior leaders are securing the consistently good teaching through effective professional development. A professional development team offers, alongside the trust's opportunities, a wide range of further training. A newly qualified teacher conveyed this, saying that the support and opportunities received are 'awesome'. Observations show that staff across the academy are implementing a policy that discourages the putting up of hands to answer questions. This is encouraging pupils to remain alert and concentrate more as they cannot rely on the teacher only picking on those who have their hands up.
- Newly established assessment systems are being driven well by staff. The academy has established new criteria for setting pupil targets. These are raising pupils' aspirations. Pupils and parents are getting used to this and while targets are usually on pupils' books, their understanding of what it means is understandably in a developmental phase.
- The academy is using a curriculum that focuses on the gaining of subject-specific skills in Years 7 to 9. This is a sensible approach, as it makes sure pupils are well prepared to make their GCSE and vocational option choices. Curriculum options are developed to meet pupils' wishes but this is leading to only a small number of pupils opting for languages. As a result, the proportion achieving the English Baccalaureate is below the national average. Leaders have taken the decision to ensure that while more GCSE courses are available, pupils have access to a range of vocational options to meet career choices. Careers events raise pupils' aspirations early. For example, Year 7 pupils have opportunities to visit a local university. Pupils are involved in wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer and this is contributing well to their personal development.
- The trust has invested in a purpose-built vocational centre which is about to open and will provide more specialised facilities for practical options. Pupils have access to good progression opportunities for both academic and vocational options in the sixth form. As a result, almost all pupils progress to education, employment or training at the end of Year 11 studies.
- Pupils have numerous opportunities to take on responsibilities and on occasions, they have to make their case to their peers. This system of elections, with hustings meetings, is contributing to the development of British values. Pupils listen to each other respectfully in lessons. Assemblies in the school focused on recent terrorist events in Paris, but some teachers did not use the opportunity to discuss issues around extremism. There are, however, well-thought-out plans to build this into programmes from Years 7 to 13.
- Senior leaders and governors monitor the impact of pupil premium expenditure regularly. There is evidence that the gap between the performance of these pupil and others nationally is reducing quickly.
- **The governance of the school**
 - There is an effective partnership between the Priory Federation of Academies Trust members and the academy's governing body. Governors and trust members provide support for, and call to account, senior leaders for performance across the academy. A trustee with significant educational experience, the trust quality assurer and the Chair of the Governing Body meet on a regular basis with the Principal and, when relevant, with senior leaders, to evaluate the performance of the academy in all that it does.
 - There is scrutiny of the expenditure of the pupil premium funding and the progress of different groups of pupils. Senior leaders and governors do not reward poor performance, maintaining robust arrangements to monitor the performance of staff.
 - The trust has also been effective in providing support in dealing with a large deficit that has been significantly reduced since the last inspection. New buildings and trust-wide opportunities for staff training and support are well embedded and are making it possible for the academy to secure good progress for pupils.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils feel safe and have many adults they can turn to if needed. Parents, in their responses to questionnaires, overwhelmingly feel that the academy keeps their children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment is good overall. Teachers are developing a consistency in the way they promote learning across the academy.
- All teachers ensure that pupils have something to do as soon as they arrive in the lesson. For example, in Years 7 to 9, teachers check the homework booklets, which are based on 'practice making permanent' principles, and through tests or evaluations at the beginning of lessons. In other years, teachers are providing pupils with opportunities to explore answers to examination questions and research topics for future learning.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers are using their good subject knowledge and enthusiasm to capture pupils' curiosity. Teachers' high expectations of pupils' engagement are evident from the habits established around paying attention and following instructions. Teachers plan an appropriate sequence of activities that explore the topic in depth and have strategies in place to further challenge and support according to need. For example, a teacher in a science lesson captured pupils' interest through an investigation that led to them understanding the different rates of reactions of metals.
- Learning is less effective when teachers fail to take account of pupils' prior learning and fail to take account of gaps in their learning. This leads to some pupils finding the work too easy or too hard. Expectations are not clear and the focus is more on task completion than learning. In these cases, pupils' work is often less detailed, incomplete and poorly organised. Assessment of pupils' progress through questioning is superficial or limited to only those who answer, and this gives the teacher a false sense of progress across the group.
- Teachers carry out the assessment of pupils' work regularly across the academy. Where it is most effective, teachers offer clear guidance. They let pupils know how well they are doing and what they can do to improve further, and then give them a chance to do so. Teachers, however, are not yet consistently doing this across the academy, resulting in pupils missing opportunities to learn from feedback.
- Teaching in English is a strength in the academy. Mathematics is following a trust-wide trial. This trial focuses on mathematics mastery, a system by which pupils' understanding of mathematics is promoted so that they can apply their learning to unfamiliar situations. The academy is in an early phase of this project. Teachers are successfully addressing gaps in learning through repeated exploration of skills needed for different topics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are eager to learn and willingly do as asked by teachers. Their attitudes to learning are positive and developed even further when they do something they like. This allows teachers to challenge them to do more. This was in evidence in a computing lesson when boys in particular demonstrated their enthusiasm to write programs.
- Pupils readily engage with visitors. They are courteous and polite when engaging in conversation, wait for their peers to take their turn and listen to the opinions of others.
- Most pupils like their academy and come prepared to learn. They dress smartly and most take pride in their work, although a few do not. For these few, their work is poorly organised and presented and sometimes incomplete.
- The academy has numerous opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and this contributes to their personal development. Assemblies help them to empathise with others, as do a 'current affairs' focus every Friday in tutor time. Pupils know right from wrong. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development is well supported.

- The academy places a small number of pupils who are at risk of not succeeding into alternative provision. Here they study courses not available in the academy and have individualised support. Teachers monitor arrangements for their safety and attendance closely as well as their progress. Most of these pupils receive appropriate guidance and move on to further education, training or work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attendance since the last inspection has improved significantly and is currently close to the 2015 average for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. A special focus on pupils with disabilities and special educational needs has ensured that their attendance is above that for similar pupils nationally. Work by staff in the academy has ensured that persistent absence has fallen year on year, though it is still above the national average at present.
- Behaviour has also improved since the last inspection. Fewer fixed-term exclusions are taking place. This is as a result of appropriate training for staff, early intervention because staff are vigilant, and a new temporary isolation facility, alongside increased rewards for positive behaviour.
- The absence of bells in the academy has helped to develop pupils' sense of responsibility as they move off quickly to lessons when asked to do so by staff. Pupils are punctual to their lessons.
- Conduct of pupils during breaktimes is sensible.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Outcomes for pupils currently in the school are good. Across a wide range of subjects and in English and mathematics, expected progress and more than expected progress are close to national averages. Teachers are predicting a further rise in standards at the end of this academic year. The academy's tracking of progress shows that pupils are making strong progress in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 12 and 13. In Years 10 and 11, progress is in line with national averages for English and mathematics. There is strong evidence in pupils' books and in lessons to support these predictions.
- Mathematics has been a concern for the academy in the past. New staffing and the recent adoption of what is known as the 'mastery curriculum' are having a positive impact. Inspectors observed this methodology in practice in lessons. It is effectively addressing the gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge. Teachers focus on getting pupils to explain how they arrive at answers and this is promoting better understanding. Staff in the mathematics department and those supporting this development are committed to making a success of this initiative. Teachers regularly test pupils' understanding and revisit skills if there are misunderstandings. As a result, progress in mathematics is much stronger now than last year.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress and this is rapidly helping to close the gap with others nationally. Last year, disadvantaged pupils were a grade behind in English and one and a half grades behind in mathematics compared with others nationally. The academy's tracking information is suggesting that this gap will reach half a grade behind for English and a grade behind for mathematics at the end of this academic year. Effective interventions and teacher focus on those falling behind are helping to make this happen.
- Teachers are challenging higher ability pupils in lessons, and progress seen in books suggests that they are making the progress expected of them. In almost every subject last year, the proportion of A* and A grades increased and for a proportion it was above national averages.
- Arrangements to support pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are in the process of being adjusted. Some receive dedicated one-to-one support through withdrawal, while others get support in lessons. Observations suggest that some support is more effective than in other cases. However, the impact overall is securing better progress, and outcomes for these pupils are on track to improve on last year's to be in line with similar pupils nationally.
- Changes in the content of the curriculum have been made in some subjects to address the poorer performance of boys compared with girls. More 'boy-friendly texts' are made available to encourage their involvement in English. The policy of discouraging pupils from putting their hands up to answer a question is allowing teachers to select individuals to contribute and this is offering more opportunities for boys to participate. Teachers are also careful to give pupils the time to respond and do not move away

from boys just because they have not answered immediately. Staying quiet is no longer an option in some lessons. All of this is having a positive impact on the progress boys are making which is now closer to that of girls.

16–19 study programmes

are good

- Leaders and managers in the sixth form have been effective in ensuring that learners are enrolled on appropriate courses and thrive in their learning through regular monitoring of teaching and learners' progress. The curriculum offers a wide range of academic and vocational courses, helped through a partnership with another of the trust schools, Priory Academy LSST. Leaders ensure that learners enrol on complete programmes that provide for their personal development and offer opportunities for work experience of careers-related activities. Some learners are fortunate in having the support of a business mentor and others a summer internship.
- Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Teachers appropriately encourage learners to develop the skills needed to work independently and then provide opportunities for them to do so. Inspectors observed learners taking charge of their own learning in a Year 13 health and social care lesson, independently applying their knowledge of success criteria to secure outstanding progress.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and aspirations that are leading many to higher education. Good careers guidance and support are increasing the number going on to higher education, with 66% doing so last year, many to top universities. Sixth formers contribute well to the life of the academy, acting as role models and supporting pupils in the main school when they have no contact lessons. Leaders ensure that opportunities to have debates and discuss current affairs, and consider finance issues, personal health and e-safety are contributing to learners' personal development.
- Learners' outcomes are positive on most vocational courses and improving towards national averages for the academic ones. Outcomes for both have improved on last year and evidence in learners' books and academy assessment information suggest this will continue this year. Overall outcomes on 16–19 study programmes are good, with individual vocational courses being outstanding. Learners on academic courses are making better progress but this is not securely good in all.
- Significantly, more learners in the academy than nationally are successful in gaining a C grade in English and mathematics when they retake their exams in the sixth form. A range of Level 2 vocational courses allows learners to prepare for occupations in construction, motor vehicle maintenance, childcare, and hair and beauty. Most learners on these courses are successful. Overall, fewer learners than nationally are not in education, employment or training.

School details

Unique reference number	135564
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10001830

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Sponsored academy
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16–19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	787
Of which, number on roll in 16–19 study programmes	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Richardson
Principal	Jane Hopkinson
Telephone number	01522 882800
Website	www.priorycity.co.uk
Email address	generalenquiries@priorycity.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 September 2013

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs is close to the national average.
- Almost all the pupils are from White British, Irish or other White or mixed White backgrounds and the vast majority speak English as their first language. A very small number of pupils are from other minority ethnic backgrounds.
- In 2015, the academy met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- A small number of pupils are enrolled in alternative provision provided by the Acorn Free School in Lincoln.
- The Priory City of Lincoln Academy is part of the Priory Federation of Academies Trust, alongside Priory Witham Academy, the Priory Academy LSST and the Priory Ruskin Academy in Grantham.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a wide range of subjects and year groups between Years 7 and 13. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior and subject leaders. Inspectors also visited a number of tutorial and support sessions.
- Inspectors looked at the academy's self-evaluation of its own performance, development plans, and records of checks on the quality of teaching, information on pupil progress, attendance and behaviour. Safeguarding documents and arrangements to keep pupils safe were also reviewed.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils, subject leaders and leaders responsible for different aspects of the academy's work. Meetings were also held with the Chief Executive, Chair and educational adviser of the Priory Federation of Academies Trust and the Chair of the Governing Body of the academy.
- Inspectors considered the views of 15 parents who had responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View and the academy's analysis of close to 550 parent returns around similar questions over the last year. The views of 26 staff and three pupils who also made electronic returns were considered.

Inspection team

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