

The Priory School

Tintagel Road, Orpington, Kent BR5 4LG

Inspection dates

8-9 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Requires improvement |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Inadequate |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Requires improvement |
| Outcomes for pupils | Inadequate |
| 16 to 19 study programmes | Requires improvement |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- School leaders and teachers do not have high enough aspirations for the progress pupils should make.
- Teachers do not set challenging enough tasks for pupils to help them consolidate their learning and acquire new skills.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with enough useful information about how they can improve their work or correct misconceptions. As a result, many pupils do not make good enough progress from their starting points in several subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Groups of pupils, including the most able, those who have special educational needs or disability and those who are disadvantaged, make far less progress than pupils nationally.
- The sixth form requires improvement because the advice and guidance given to learners do not always ensure that they start the most appropriate courses. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is inconsistent. Consequently, some learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- While pupils' behaviour has improved over time, there are still too many incidents of low-level disruption in lessons. The attendance of some pupils is too low.
- Leaders and governors have been slow to halt the decline in pupils' achievement. They have not ensured that whole-school initiatives to improve teaching and learning are consistently applied and that they are having a positive impact on pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, with the support of newly appointed senior leaders and a national leader of education (NLE), has begun to secure demonstrable improvements across the school.
- There is now a focus on dramatically improving teaching, learning and assessment. Systems for checking the quality of teaching and the impact on pupils' learning are more robust.
- Current pupils are beginning to make better progress, including those learners in the sixth form.
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They mix well together, enjoy coming to school and say that they feel safe.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders at all levels must ensure that pupils make accelerated progress from their starting points by:
 - setting high targets to reflect the potential of pupils to make much better progress
 - tackling the underperformance of particular groups rapidly, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disability
 - ensuring that new, whole-school initiatives are consistently followed by teachers and that they have a positive impact on pupils' progress
 - checking that literacy lessons are improving pupils' communication skills across a range of subjects
 - improving the attendance of pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use assessment information more sharply to plan activities that extend pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of the quality of pupils' work
 - teachers help pupils to make much better progress by giving them precise and clear feedback about how they can improve their work and deepen their learning
 - teachers encourage pupils to demonstrate very positive attitudes towards their own learning
 - the most effective practice is shared across the school so that all teaching is of a consistently high quality.
- Continue to reduce the variation in progress made by learners across subjects in the sixth form by:
 - providing information, advice and guidance that encourage learners onto courses where they will make good progress and that allow them to make informed choices about further employment, training or study
 - providing further opportunities for teachers to share best practice and receive guidance and support to improve their post-16 teaching skills.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have, over time, been too slow to halt the rapid decline in progress made by pupils across a range of subjects. This decline in standards has had a particularly negative impact on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs or disability, and the most able.
- The targets leaders set for some pupils are not aspirational enough. Many pupils need to make more rapid progress to catch up due to underachievement over time. However, teachers' expectations of what they can achieve are often too low and therefore, pupils do not make the progress they should.
- Since September 2015, the headteacher, with the support of newly appointed senior leaders and the NLE, has begun to secure improvements across the school that are beginning to have a demonstrable impact on pupils' progress.
- Leaders have an appropriate plan of action that addresses many of the weaknesses they have identified. Nevertheless, leaders' evaluation of standards in the school is over-generous.
- School leaders have spent time analysing pupils' outcomes over the past two years and this has been used to plan improvements. For instance, each department now has a teacher who marks GCSE examination papers externally to the school. School leaders ensure that this subject-specific knowledge is shared across the department to enable teachers to give up-to-date advice to pupils as they prepare for their examinations.
- Leaders know that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment needs to improve dramatically and have instigated an extensive continuing professional development programme. They have shared whole-school expectations about the quality of pupils' work and the feedback they receive. However, leaders do not check carefully enough that these initiatives are being routinely put in place. While they now systematically check teachers' performance in the classroom, they are not sufficiently vigilant in holding teachers to account when they do not apply these new expectations. Consequently, the progress made by some pupils is still not rapid enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils, in particular, make less progress than they should. School leaders use the pupil premium funding in a variety of ways and analyse the impact that some initiatives have on pupils' progress, particularly with regard to improving literacy. However, it is hard to see how some of the funding spent has had a direct impact on this group's progress over time.
- School leaders are rightly targeting pupils who arrive in Year 7 with low attainment. These pupils are identified by the school as 'not secondary ready'. They receive intensive, daily literacy support so that they can catch up with other pupils and can access the wider curriculum. This is having a positive impact, seen clearly in the accelerated progress made by pupils currently in Year 8 who have been through this new programme.
- While the progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is carefully tracked by leaders, links are not made between the quality of teaching they receive and their outcomes. Some pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Middle leaders, though relatively new in post, are committed and keen to make the necessary improvements. They work closely with senior leaders and are clear about their roles and responsibilities. They feel well supported, with some being given opportunities to be on the wider senior leadership team. Senior leaders have invested heavily in the training offered to middle leaders in order to improve the latter's capacity to deliver better results.
- School leaders are addressing the inconsistencies identified across subjects. An extensive programme of professional development that encourages teachers to reflect and share best practice was introduced in September 2015. Staff attend weekly, department-based 'core' sessions, focusing on sharing ideas, checking the consistency of their marking and reflecting on their practice. Staff are also encouraged to attend at least nine optional sessions that are mapped across the year, and weekly staff briefings to share good ideas. This programme is a strength and is already leading to improvements in teaching across subject areas.
- Though there is a newly introduced whole-school approach to providing pupils with feedback about their work, this is not consistently used by all teachers. As a result, some pupils receive very limited and irregular information about how they can improve their work. Many pupils are not given opportunities to reflect on how they can improve or given time to make amendments. Misconceptions are not always corrected, and consequently pupils have gaps in their learning.
- School leaders check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. They know where there are strengths and are aware of those teachers that require further support and development. However, they

do not always ensure that whole-school initiatives are consistently implemented across the school. Hence, there is still too much variation across and within subject areas.

- The NLE has an astute understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. Consequently, the NLE is offering high levels of strategic challenge and support, which is helping the headteacher and other senior leaders to make the necessary changes. Plans are in place to strengthen this support still further.
- School leaders work closely with other schools within the Realise Academy Partnership Trust and the Bromley Schools' Collegiate. This gives them the opportunity to share best practice, and school leaders value these external partners highly.
- Leaders monitor the progress, behaviour and attendance of those pupils studying at alternative provision. There is daily contact with these providers, and should any concerns be raised about a pupil's progress, a visit by the pastoral leader is arranged.
- Leaders work hard to promote British values and develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills. Discrete lessons are taught in Years 7 and 8, while 'drop-down days' throughout the year encourage pupils to reflect on different aspects of life in modern Britain. For instance, pupils are currently learning about Islam and there are links to an Islamic school. Nevertheless, pupils' understanding varies across teaching groups, for instance around the issue of radicalisation. The programme needs further time to embed, so that teachers are clear about how information is shared and explored.
- A 'pathways' approach to the curriculum ensures that the needs of pupils are addressed. Based on prior attainment, pupils are placed on one of five 'pathways' (courses of study) that prepare them for an early start to GCSE in Year 9 or support pupils more intensively to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- School leaders work hard to involve parents in the life of the school and listen to their views. This was endorsed by those parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body and trust directors did not challenge school leaders effectively enough to stem the declining trend in achievement over recent years. They did not hold school leaders sufficiently to account and were too willing to accept information provided by the school.
- The governing body is now fully aware of the decline in standards and the need for school leaders to act rapidly in order to bring about further improvements. They are clear about which pupil groups are still underachieving and have been involved in recent key appointments at both middle and senior leadership level. They have sought further support for school leaders to enable them to make the necessary improvements. These are beginning to have a demonstrable impact.
- An external review of governance and a skills audit were undertaken in October 2015. The trust directors and governing body are currently working with a national leader of governance to plan further improvements and ensure that they are suitably challenging to school leaders and hold them appropriately to account.
- Governors are fully committed to providing an educational service to the local community. The creation of the multi-academy trust, by linking with a local primary school, was intended to create an all-through approach to education. There are clear lines of communication between the directors of the trust and the board of governors. This enables them to understand their key areas of responsibility and create a productive working relationship.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The governing body understands its statutory responsibilities. Governors are suitably trained and ensure that school staff have received the most up-to-date training. They take this aspect of their work very seriously and regularly ensure that checks related to safer recruitment are undertaken.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Teachers do not systematically use information on pupils' prior ability to set tasks that are suitably challenging. Some planned activities do not extend pupils' understanding or give them opportunities to learn new skills. Many pupils practise skills that they have learned earlier in their education.
- Questioning by the teacher does not encourage pupils to think deeply enough or reflect on new ideas and concepts. Often, the questions require simple recall of learned facts, rather than extending pupils' knowledge and understanding. Consequently, many pupils do not make the accelerated progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not have consistently high aspirations for pupils' progress or high expectations about the

work they produce. Consequently, though there is a newly introduced whole-school expectation regarding the presentation of pupils' work, the quality of work varies widely depending on the subject area and teacher. Some pupils do not display enough pride in their work; their exercise books are untidy, mistakes are not rectified and some work is unfinished.

- Teachers do not routinely share information with pupils about how they can improve their work and achieve the highest levels. Pupils complete set activities and many appear to enjoy their learning. However, sometimes, activities require very little thought or intellectual effort and consequently, progress is limited. This is particularly true for the most-able pupils, who are not given enough opportunities to deepen their knowledge and explore new concepts and ideas.
- In some areas, the quality of teaching is improving rapidly. Some teachers have excellent subject knowledge, high expectations and effective strategies to support pupils' progress. There are now planned opportunities for these teachers to share their ideas, experience and skills with those that are still developing their practice. As a result, the progress pupils make across the school is beginning to improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- While checks are done to ensure the suitability of new staff, some of the related record-keeping is not as robust as it should be.
- Pupils are actively involved in charity events and helped develop the school's values of 'individuality, excellence, resourcefulness, aspiration, resilience, values and endeavour'. They are encouraged to reflect on their role as citizens in modern society and to explore their responsibilities, including 'talking through' any disagreements and disputes they might have with each other.
- The school's 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying is having a positive impact. Pupils feel safe and say that they know how to keep themselves safe. They receive clear information about how to protect themselves from different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and know whom to turn to should they be concerned. Pupils feel well supported and cared for by their teachers.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Some pupils and groups of pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Senior leaders are aware of this and have recently started a whole-school campaign to encourage pupils to attend more regularly.
- At times, pupils' attitudes to learning are not good enough. Some pupils lose concentration or their behaviour is inappropriate. While pupils are keen to complete activities set by the teacher, sometimes, pupils do not engage as well as they could. They are less eager to answer questions or become actively involved in their own learning.
- While behaviour across the site and in lessons has improved dramatically over the last year, senior leaders know that more needs to be done. They have raised expectations around behaviour even higher and there is a clear rewards-and-sanctions system in place, which pupils understand. Generally, pupils' conduct around the large school site is calm and orderly. Many pupils enjoy coming to school and are polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors. They mix well and say that they enjoy being with other year groups in the 'vertical tutoring' system (where pupils of different ages come together). They are proud of their school and the 'colleges' they represent within the school.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is significantly below the national average. The proportion of pupils who achieved five GCSEs at grade C or above, including in English and mathematics, was significantly below the national average in 2014 and 2015.
- Overall, pupils from different starting points made progress that was significantly below the national average in 2015. Progress across a range of subjects, including in both English and mathematics, was

lower than average.

- The most-able pupils made less progress than they should have in both English and mathematics. A lack of challenge in lessons and low expectations from some teachers meant that this group achieved high GCSE grades in science, but in few other subjects in 2014 and 2015.
- In 2014 and 2015, progress for disadvantaged pupils from different starting points was significantly below the national average. There were big gaps in the progress made between this group and other pupils at the school. Current information provided by school leaders indicates that these gaps will remain in 2016.
- In 2015, pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan exceeded the progress made by this group of pupils nationally in English and mathematics, but their progress was not as good as their peers..
- Improving literacy is a high priority for school leaders. As a consequence, all pupils in Years 7 to 10 have daily reading sessions linked to their specific ability and staff are trained to teach phonics (the sounds that letters represent) to aid those learning to read. Across the school, there is a focus on improving the quality of extended writing, though there is still some variability in the success of this initiative. The library is well stocked, particularly with fiction texts, and used regularly by pupils.
- Information provided by school leaders indicates that current pupils, overall, are beginning to make better progress across different subject areas. School leaders believe that pupils currently in Year 11 will exceed the progress and attainment made by previous cohorts of pupils. Progress in English and mathematics is predicted to rise to the national average. However, there will still be gaps between the performance of some groups at the school compared with these groups nationally. Most notable are the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. This is similarly true for the most able.
- Leaders check the progress made by the small number of pupils attending alternative provision carefully and it is in line with other pupils at the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Though recent examination results indicate an improving trend in terms of learners' progress on academic courses within the sixth form, variation across subjects remains. Some learners do not make the progress of which they are capable. This is due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, and at times, poor advice and guidance given to learners about appropriate courses. Teaching, as in the main school, is not of a consistently high enough quality to ensure that learners make good progress.
- Typically, only half of the school's Year 11 pupils apply to attend the sixth form. This is partly due to the number of post-16 options available. However, some pupils, particularly the most able, lack confidence in the school's ability to secure them high achievement.
- The head of sixth form is relatively new in post and is very clear about areas that require further development. He is fully supported by school leaders and has already made some positive changes to provision in the sixth form, which are already having an impact on learners' progress.
- Recent improvements have meant that the information, advice and guidance given to learners applying for a place in the sixth form ensure that more are on courses where they might achieve success. However, some learners are still attempting to study courses where they have a limited chance of doing well academically. This means that many do not stay on into Year 13.
- Advice and guidance for those applying for apprenticeships, employment or further education and training are improving. However, information on where learners go after leaving the sixth form is not routinely collected or analysed.
- Learners' progress on academic courses improved in 2015 and looks set to improve again this year. They make good progress on vocational courses.
- The sixth form, or Yalding College, is well resourced and the facilities, including a well-stocked sixth-form library, are good.
- Learners are well cared for and know whom they can turn to should they have any concerns. Many choose to study at the school due to the care and guidance they receive. They are smart, articulate and hard-working.
- There is a range of courses on offer, including four new vocational courses this year, to meet the growing demands of the intake. Extra-curricular opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme have been recently introduced by the head of sixth form, and a designated Wednesday enrichment slot ensures that learners get involved in different activities.
- The sports academy section of the sixth form offers both boxing and football to girls and boys and the level 3 courses are very popular with learners. School leaders provide a range of opportunities to extend learners' employability and enterprise skills. For instance, learners organise a business enterprise event for sports day.
- The head girl, head boy, prefects and other learners work closely with pupils in the main school. They are

given opportunities to mentor younger pupils and work in the local primary school. Four learners have recently started apprenticeships working in local primary schools.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 138114 |
| Local authority | Bromley |
| Inspection number | 10003104 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1,026 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 163 |
| Appropriate authority | The Priory Academy Trust |
| Chair of the trust | Jane Winter |
| Chair of the governing body | Richard Dungan |
| Headteacher | Gill Lamb |
| Telephone number | 01689 819219 |
| Website | www.priory.bromley.sch.uk |
| Email address | office@priory.bromley.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- The Priory School is part of The Priory Academy Trust. The trust comprises The Priory School and Hillside Primary School.
- The number of pupils at The Priory School is just above average for secondary schools.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- Just under half of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This government funding is used to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is higher than the national average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Burwood, the Nightingale Centre, The Bethlem and Maudsley Hospital School and The Learning Centre.
- Pupils enter Year 7 with attainment that is significantly below the national average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The Priory School opened as a new school in May 2012.
- When the predecessor school, also called The Priory School, was inspected in January 2012, it was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment across a range of year groups and subjects, including the sixth form. Some observations were carried out jointly with school leaders.
- Discussions were held with the chair of the governing body, director of the trust, chair of the trust, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils and learners, and a range of staff including newly qualified teachers.
- Inspectors took account of the 34 responses to Parent View, and looked at staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation which included: records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; minutes of meetings; and information on the progress made by pupils. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's self-evaluation, the strategic plan for raising attainment, and records relating to the quality of teaching and the performance of teachers.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, policies and procedures, including checks done on the suitability of staff.

Inspection team

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Helen Matthews, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Victoria Linsley | Seconded Inspector |
| Dennis Canty | Ofsted Inspector |
| Katerina Christodoulou | Ofsted Inspector |
| Pamela Fearnley | Ofsted Inspector |
| Dame Joan McVittie | Ofsted Inspector |

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