

# Priory College Swindon

Independent specialist college

## Inspection dates

15–17 November 2016

Overall effectiveness		Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>	Provision for learners with high needs <b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>	
Outcomes for learners	<b>Good</b>	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Good

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Students make good progress as a result of highly effective teaching and support and a personalised learning programme.
- Good work-related activities help students make choices about their future and develop good employability skills.
- Very good partnership arrangements with other education and training providers enable the most able students to gain qualifications that help them progress to the next qualification level or into work.
- Students increase their independence and improve their daily living skills because education and residential staff work together very successfully.
- Therapists work very well with staff to help students lower their anxiety levels, manage their behaviour and cope with potentially stressful situations.
- Students develop skills well in a variety of different situations as a result of education and residential staff working together very effectively.
- Attendance at college is good; students who have been out of education for long periods of time quickly improve their attendance and punctuality.
- The achievement of qualifications is very good and progression on to higher levels of qualifications is good.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- Priory College Swindon was established in 2004. It is part of the Priory Group, an international provider of healthcare, education, children's services and adult care. The college provides residential and day placements for young people with social and communication barriers, in particular those with autism spectrum disorder; a minority of students have mental health difficulties as well. The local colleges of further education and a sixth-form college provide academic and vocational programmes for the college. Students from a wide geographical area, including two privately funded international students, attend the college. The vast majority of students are white British males.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Develop a leadership culture that brings together the range of quality improvement arrangements and management actions so that all staff are aware of the strategic direction of the college, its strengths, weaknesses and their role in increasing the effectiveness of the provision.
- As a matter of urgency, improve access to the internet so that students and staff can make best use of the wide range of resources and applications available.
- Ensure students who have speech, language and communication disorders receive appropriate therapeutic support to meet their needs.
- Implement the planned arrangements for supported internships so that, where relevant, students can quickly progress into sustainable employment.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal and senior managers have a clear vision and mission for the college. The themes and strands development document focuses on key aspects of the college's provision. The principal and senior leaders have identified strengths and weaknesses with appropriate actions to improve and develop the provision. However, the language used in the document is too complex and operational staff are unaware of its content.
- The leadership team has successfully improved the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. The emphasis on learning is stronger and feedback to tutors is evaluative and identifies what they need to do to increase their effectiveness. However, observers do not evaluate the progress students make over time or, where appropriate, the standards they have achieved.
- Tutors benefit from a wide range of good continuing professional development to improve their skills, including specific training to improve their knowledge and understanding of the needs of the student group. Performance management, through staff supervision sessions, takes place each term and focuses well on the performance of tutors. Managers encourage reflective practice; they set and review clear and specific improvement targets for tutors. Tutors are self-critical and strive to improve their practice. However, the recorded actions from observations do not formally contribute to annual appraisals.
- A wide range of individual quality assurance and improvement activities take place; tutors review their courses, identify strengths and weaknesses. Managers use the views of students and their parents to improve provision, where practical and possible. Although college leaders implement improvement activities, they rarely record their impact on students.
- Senior leaders developed good subcontracting arrangements that are carefully quality-assured. The relationship between Priory College and subcontractors is productive with good communication. As a result, students complete qualifications and training that meet their needs and future career aspirations as the college widens the curriculum offer.
- Senior managers give high priority to the provision for English and mathematics including the use of subcontracted provision as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. The literacy strategy clearly sets out the expectations of the college and the importance of literacy as a life skill. The majority of students achieve functional skills qualifications at Level 1 and below. College managers make good use of subcontracted provision to offer higher-level qualifications, such as GCSEs, to ensure a sufficient progression route for students.
- Senior managers are improving their recording and analysis of data. This includes data collected on the achievements of different groups; as a result, senior leaders can view the achievements of students by gender, ethnicity and their specific disability and/or learning difficulty. However, it is unclear what managers or tutors do with this information and whether they are closing any achievement gaps, between for example 16 to 18-year-olds and those aged over 19.
- The principal and senior leaders successfully record the destinations of students when they leave the college. Current data shows a good improvement in reducing the

percentage of students who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). College staff contact students who leave the college prior to completing their courses, record details of their circumstances and discuss ways they can improve how they support students when they leave college.

- The development of supported internships is a priority area for senior leaders. The recent appointment of an employer engagement consultant has started the process, but at the time of the inspection no students were placed on a supported internship.
- Students show care and respect for each other and understand the importance of valuing diversity and being fair. Senior leaders and managers acknowledge students' spiritual and religious beliefs. Staff make appropriate arrangements to ensure students have access to a place of worship, if required.
- Tutors, learning support and residential staff promote fundamental British values well through a range of activities in classes and wider enrichment activities. For example, a poppy display for Armistice Day and visit to the local war memorial, discussions about democracy and what it means to vote, the rule of law and the criminal justice system.

### **The governance of the provider**

- The governing body offers a wide range of skills and expertise and includes the principal's line manager and a range of executive members with responsibility for finance, human resource management, marketing, quality and education. This executive group knows the college well and understand its strengths and weaknesses. They routinely hold the principal and senior leaders to account for the performance of students and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- A recently formed further education steering group aims to offer the role of critical friend and a forum to share good practice and explore ideas for improvement. The establishment of a local advisory group with its roots in the community is in its early stages, but aims to develop stronger local partnerships and increase employment opportunities.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding arrangements are clear and comprehensive. Managers review and update disclosure and barring service checks every three years. They use the recommended safe recruitment practices to ensure newly recruited staff are appropriately vetted and are the right people for the job.
- Staff receive annual training and all know when and how to refer students to the designated safeguarding officer if they have concerns. Liaison with local authority staff and other agencies responsible for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children is strong and well established.
- As a result of good training, all relevant staff know when to use restraint, how to record its use and that de-escalation is the preferred option when faced with particularly challenging behaviour.
- Senior leaders have a very clear overview of safeguarding through thorough analysis of

incidents and accidents and a clear understanding of risk. The 'Prevent' duty policy and procedures are detailed and clearly acknowledge the vulnerability of the college's student group. Staff have received training on the prevention of involvement in extremism and radicalisation and use this very effectively to develop parents' and students' understanding.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Students at Priory College have a wide range of complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities; many also display high levels of anxiety and difficulties in handling social or unfamiliar situations. Tutors and learning support staff skilfully manage challenging behaviour; in the best cases giving students strategies to modify and improve their own behaviour. Trust between teaching staff and students develops quickly resulting in students becoming more willing to try new activities and increasingly motivated to learn.
- The range of provision is good. Leaders and managers have designed courses and activities that provide appropriate experiences, challenges and opportunities for learning. Each student has a personalised timetable that combines formal and informal learning. Tutors make very effective use of the local community to develop social, travel and independence skills. Strong partnerships with the local further education colleges and sixth-form college enable the most able learners to attend academic or vocational courses successfully.
- Tutors' assessments of students' knowledge and skills when they start college are detailed, thorough and provide a good analysis of students' strengths and the barriers they face when learning. Resulting pen portraits give tutors and learning support staff at Priory College and at partner colleges useful information that they use effectively to give students a positive start.
- The art therapist, counsellor and clinical psychologist make very good, practical contributions to the progress made by the students with whom they work. Their one-to-one sessions and guidance for tutors and learning support staff help students overcome the specific problems that affect their ability to learn. Therapists work well with education and residential staff to develop creative approaches to challenging behaviour, high levels of anxiety or relationship difficulties. However, college leaders have not been able to appoint a speech and language therapist. As a large majority of the students have either a communication disorder or other speech and language difficulties this a significant gap in the therapy team.
- Tutors and managers use creative and innovative approaches to help students improve their well-being and develop a healthier lifestyle. For example, the staff from the subcontractor iProvefit use their backgrounds in professional sport, health and fitness to work very successfully to motivate students to change any poor eating and leisure habits, overcome anger management difficulties as well as improve their social and personal skills.
- Most students improve their English and mathematics skills as a result of effective teaching and good reinforcement of skills in social and practical situations. However, in a small minority of cases, tutors do not emphasise the link between English and mathematics skills development and the long-term aims and aspirations of students.

- The promotion of students' moral and cultural development is good. Where appropriate, tutors take care to include practical activities or discussions that help students explore difference and celebrate diversity. The 'Awesome Autism' magazine produced by students demonstrates the creativity of young people with autism and their understanding of, and contribution to, local community and national events. All education and residential staff promote and reinforce a culture of mutual respect and tolerance in the college and residences with zero tolerance of inappropriate behaviour or bullying.
- Currently residential staff use education, health and care (EHC) plans to devise individual learning plans (ILPs) but these are not effective in planning learning and do not take full account of the good progress made by students. Staff frequently describe activities or tasks rather than set specific and measurable targets that relate to the long-term goals and aspirations of students. Despite the poor use of ILPs, students make good progress compared with their starting points.
- Poor access to the internet by students and staff restricts learning opportunities and fails to give them experiences needed to develop the necessary skills for using the internet in adult life. The parent organisation blocks access to major search engines, video chat, video sharing and social media sites resulting in students being unable to carry out research and improve their knowledge of keeping themselves safe online.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- All students are motivated to learn; they increase their independence and social skills well. As they progress through college, they become more confident in the workplace, classroom and community, developing strategies to adapt their behaviour to different situations. They increase their independence as a result of steadily reducing levels of support.
- Most students have a good awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Students on work experience follow appropriate health and safety guidance, for example, following correct procedures when handling animals, and using personal protective equipment when necessary.
- Many students arrive at college with previous poor, or very poor, levels of attendance and punctuality. As a result of high expectations and the use of a flexible and creative approach students significantly improve their attendance and punctuality.
- The work experience coordinator ensures students receive suitable, impartial advice and guidance on their next steps in learning and life. This includes access to transition to adult services, higher education or work. All students complete an online career guidance programme and use the results to discuss appropriate work experience and future career options.
- Work experience arrangements are good. Where appropriate, students complete work experience taster sessions to ensure the most appropriate work placement opportunity is put in place. Before starting a work placement students start to develop appropriate employability skills. Work experience opportunities are personalised and linked to students' plans for the future. Where possible, students gain qualifications linked to their work placements, for example in handling animals and creative media skills.
- Students achieve high standards during their work experience placements. They know

what is expected of them, follow procedures to complete work activities industriously and keep to conduct and behaviour guidance. Students take pride in their work experience achievements. Work experience providers feel supported and well informed regarding the needs of students attending work placements. Appropriate and challenging activities support individual needs, aspirations and interests.

- Residential students select and access a suitable range of enrichment activities that enable them to develop a wide range of personal and social skills. Activities cover both physical and mental well-being and include horse riding, swimming, cinema visits, use of the local gym and the local urban activities centre.
- Independence skills are a key focus of the curriculum. All students develop a good range of relevant independence skills including travel training and managing new situations. These skills enable students to access the community and take part in leisure activities in the local area.
- Communication between residential and education staff is good. Daily logs provide key staff with relevant information relating to support needs and strategies to support individual students. Students contribute to developing their own positive behaviour strategies, which are then shared with key workers who ensure continuity and consistency of approach across the college.
- Residential staff support the progression from college to supported or independent living accommodation very well. The highly structured approach enables students to experience a good range of the day-to-day activities necessary for students to be successful after college. Students learn to cook for themselves and for others in the residences, planning and producing healthy meals to a high standard. They take responsibility for cleaning their rooms and communal areas as well as managing personal budgets.
- Tutors use information and learning technology (ILT) effectively to improve students' creative and written English skills. Students attending partner colleges use ILT at an appropriate standard.
- Students feel safe and supported at college, in the work place and the local community. Despite the lack of comprehensive access to the internet, students demonstrate an understanding of e-safety and know how to keep themselves safe online. Staff use thorough risk assessments very effectively to help students remain safe.
- In small minority of sessions, tutors do not follow the college guidance in correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar. This limits the progress made in the development of English skills.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Students make good progress from their starting points. Overall, the vast majority of students achieve their learning goals and qualifications. Students produce work of a good standard, for example the 'Awesome Autism' monthly newsletter highlights students' information technology skills, creative writing and skills in journalism.
- Students enjoy their experiences at college and the variety of activities they undertake. Many students quickly gain the confidence to progress despite having missed out on a considerable part of education due to poor attendance or negative experiences at school.

- The vast majority of students achieve their long-term goals of progressing on to further or higher education or into employment. A small minority progress into adult day care provision. The proportion of students who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) when leaving college reduced to a small minority of students in 2015/16. This is an improvement on the previous year, when nearly a third of students were NEET.
- Students complete a suitable range of vocational qualifications and awards in independent living skills. All students entered for qualifications in 2015/16 achieved. This recognition and validation of the skills they have gained prepares them well for their next steps in life and learning.
- Overall, the rates for students achieving qualifications, including those attending partner organisations, are very good; achievement rates for English and mathematics are lower but still good. Students aged 16 to 18 years achieve particularly well compared to those aged 19 plus.



## Provider details

Unique reference number	131888
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	32
Principal	Martin Bentham
Telephone number	01793 719500
Website	<a href="http://www.priorygroup.com/location-results/item/farleigh-further-education-college-swindon">www.priorygroup.com/location-results/item/farleigh-further-education-college-swindon</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	8	1	4	6	4	2		
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	None							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	25							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Swindon College</li> <li>■ New College Swindon</li> <li>■ Commonweal School</li> <li>■ iProvefit</li> </ul>							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the head of learning, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and telephone calls to gather the views of learners and parents; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Nigel Evans, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rosy Belton	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gillian Paterson	Ofsted Inspector

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