

# The Priory Academy LSST

The Priory Federation of Academies

Cross O'Cliff Hill, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN5 8PW

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this boarding school

The Priory LSST is one of four academies that form the Priory Federation of Academies Trust. This is the only boarding school in the academy group, and offers mixed boarding to a maximum of 60 sixth-form students. It is within the city of Lincoln and opened in September 2012. There is one boarding house, with male and female accommodation on separate floors. It can offer fully accessible accommodation for four boarders who have physical disabilities. It has its own entrance away from the main school and is quite separate, but is located within the school's grounds. The majority of boarders are European Union residents, or are British citizens who live overseas.

**Inspection dates:** 9 to 11 May 2017

<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account</b>	<b>outstanding</b>
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	outstanding
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	outstanding
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The boarding school provides highly effective services that consistently exceed the standards of good. The actions of the school contribute to significantly improved outcomes and positive experiences for children and young people.

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** outstanding

**Date of last inspection:** 11 November 2014

## Key findings from this inspection

This boarding school is outstanding because:

- Young people are inspired to achieve, and subsequently excel in their academic studies as well as other areas such as sport.
- Young people benefit greatly from the outstanding opportunities and facilities available to them at this school.
- Young people are consulted on all aspects of boarding life.
- The highly effective management team provides strong leadership, and continually strives to improve the service offered to young people. Managers have an in-depth understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and have comprehensive plans to address any shortfalls.
- Staff have warm and nurturing relationships with young people. Young people feel able to talk to staff about any concerns they have. Parents appreciate the effective communication they have with staff.
- Safeguarding young people is central to all practice. Staff have an in-depth understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures and are effective at implementing them. They work in partnership with outside agencies to help keep young people safe, and have strong networking systems to share best practice.
- A parent said: 'A great school with first class boarding facilities.' Young people agreed that the boarding house is outstanding.
- The service has met all the national minimum standards.

The boarding school's areas for development:

- There are minor areas for development. These are with regards to a review of boarding practice with all staff who work in the boarding house, risk assessment and maintenance logs.

## What does the boarding school need to do to improve?

### Points for improvement

- Consider completing a regular review of boarding practice with each member of staff who works in the boarding house.
- Continue to improve activity risk assessments to ensure that they are more accessible to staff.
- Consider adding completion dates to maintenance logs.

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: outstanding**

Young people describe boarding at this school as, 'really cool', 'exciting' and 'amazing'.

Consulting with young people is part of the ethos of this school. A young person said: 'Everyone's willing to listen.' There are extensive arrangements for staff to consult with young people, including a boarding council, food council, head and deputy head boy and girl, a suggestion box and tutor meetings, as well as informal chats with staff. A young person said: 'I asked for strawberries once and got them!' Staff treat young people as young adults. This means that young people feel able to have mature discussions with staff. This helps young people with their transition to independent living and higher education.

Staff understand the challenges, both emotional and practical, of young people coming into boarding from abroad and nationally. If they wish, young people are able to stay in boarding for a few nights prior to moving in. Parents can also visit and spend time with their child. This is important to young people. Young people new to boarding are helped to develop relationships with established boarders. New boarders settle quickly due to the organisation, time and commitment put in by staff and managers during this critical time. A young person said: 'At the beginning I missed home a bit but now it's like a second home.'

Young people complete an educational baseline assessment when they first arrive, to enable staff to effectively track and plan young people's education and progress. Staff are ambitious and have high aspirations for young people. Young people consequently make significant progress and achieve their aims. The majority go on to university, including prestigious British universities. A parent said: 'As a parent of a young person boarding, I can honestly say that the holistic experience of being amongst his peers, and the opportunities that have been afforded to him, have enhanced his overall academic and social development. I can't praise the staff enough, particularly in the boarding house.'

The emotional and physical health needs of young people are a high priority for staff. Young people feel well looked after when they are ill, and have good access to healthcare professionals including a school counselling service. Staff also listen and are empathetic, which young people appreciate.

Young people say they enjoy the meals provided. They have plenty of choice, and staff cater for individual tastes, including religious or cultural preferences, vegetarians and vegans, as well as for young people with allergies. Meals are healthy and nutritious. Young people feel that they have a say in the menu through the food council. They say the council is effective and menus are changed.

Young people have excellent enrichment opportunities through activities and trips off-site. These include leisure activities and trips to local places of interest, as well as trips further afield to other cities and abroad. For example, the rugby team participated in a tour of South Africa in 2015 and plan to go again this year. A young person said: 'It's so overwhelming about how many opportunities you get here.' Activity risk assessments are currently being reviewed as most are complicated and confusing. This work should continue, to ensure that risk assessments are fully accessible.

Young people have access to outstanding facilities and accommodation. For example, there is a fully equipped gym, sports hall, swimming pool, climbing wall, inside and outside running tracks and en suite study bedrooms. The boarding accommodation is clean and well maintained. The organisation of maintenance tasks is effective. However, it is difficult to ascertain how quickly a task is completed as the records are not currently dated.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: outstanding**

Safeguarding young people is central to all practice. Young people feel safe, and robust procedures and practice help to keep them safe. Close working links with external professionals enables coordinated and effective proactive inter-agency working.

The school fully contributes to child protection and children-in-need processes with a view to providing early help and protection. The school fully understands the need for early help to prevent situations deteriorating. It takes an active role in being part of the team around each young person, which helps improve the lives of young people and their families. The school networks well with other schools and agencies, ensuring that best practice is shared.

Highly effective monitoring systems ensure that staff know where young people are. This helps to keep young people safe in the same way a good parent would. Young people sign in and out of the boarding house, telling staff where they are going and when they will return. They are also present for roll call three times a day unless they have told staff they will be out at that time. Parents provide consent for their child to leave the site or stay elsewhere overnight.

Highly positive relationships between staff and young people mean that young people always have someone they feel they can talk to. Young people are relaxed around staff and speak positively about them and other young people. Parents appreciate the effective communication they have with staff.

The staff fully understand, respect and value the diversity and individuality of young

people. They are interested in their culture and country of origin. Young people appreciate and respect the diversity within the boarding house, and do not report bullying as an issue.

Young people are mostly well behaved, respectful and helpful. They fully understand the rules, and possible consequences for breaking the rules. Therefore, there are very few incidents, and these tend to be low-level incidents.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: outstanding**

Young people benefit from outstanding and effective leadership and management of the boarding provision. The head of boarding drives continuous improvement, utilising to good effect a comprehensive analysis of boarding practice together with an action plan informed by relevant research, theory and practice.

The staff report feeling valued and supported. They know that their views matter to the managers and leaders of the school. Staff members receive training and development to equip them to provide the highest quality of care and support to young people. Regular staff meetings take place, both daily and weekly, to ensure that the staff are coordinated effectively, and that good communication is maintained across the staff team. This benefits young people. Informal meetings occur daily between staff and the head of boarding, but this process is not formalised to demonstrate a regular review of staff practice.

The leaders and managers of this school understand the benefit of robust governor oversight, and welcome it. Governors are enquiring, challenging and eager for the school to continually improve for the benefit of young people. The governorship is in the process of being further strengthened through the recruitment of additional governors. Governor's commission, when required, additional advice, guidance and support to keep them up to date in relation to boarding practice and safeguarding.

The management and leaders of the boarding provision are forward looking. They meet regularly and ensure that safeguarding young people in the school and boarding provision remains of primary importance. Managers ensure, through regular meetings, that the best interests of young people come first. Good communication takes place with parents, and they are kept fully updated regarding their children.

Managers are knowledgeable and insightful, and monitor the quality of provision effectively. A comprehensive review of the boarding provision was recently undertaken by a professional external to the school. This review was in-depth and thought-provoking for managers, and led to an action plan. Actions stemming from this plan were acted on immediately, and progress was monitored closely by the head of boarding provision. This benefits young people who are boarding, as the quality of care and support continues to improve.

The views and opinions of young people and their parents matter. The head of

boarding regularly canvases the views of young people and parents alike through the use of questionnaires. These views are overwhelmingly positive regarding the experiences and progress made by young people. Additionally, the head of boarding keeps in close contact with parents and carers to keep them informed regarding their children. Any concerns regarding young people are communicated immediately, and resolution to problems or concerns takes place in partnership with parents.

Managers and staff benefit from policies and procedures that are up to date and fully conversant with legal frameworks. Policies and procedures undergo regular review from senior managers, and they help to guide staff and managers in providing excellent care to young people. Recording practices are strong and effective, with records completed immediately. These records provide a good level of detail in relation to the day-to-day operation of the student boarding provision. Consequently, boarding practice is both transparent and accountable.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference made to the lives of children and young people. They watched how professional staff work with children and young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care provided. Wherever possible, they talked to children and young people and their families. In addition, the inspectors have tried to understand what the school knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people whom it is trying to help, protect and look after.

Using the 'Social care common inspection framework', this inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Boarding school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC470149

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Jane Hopkinson

**Type of school:** Boarding school

**Telephone number:** 01522 889977

**Email address:** [sfisher@prioryacademies.co.uk](mailto:sfisher@prioryacademies.co.uk)

## **Inspector(s)**

Joanne Vyas: social care inspector

Phillip Morris: social care inspector



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