

Princes Risborough School

Merton Road, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire HP27 0DT

Inspection dates

16–17 May 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders and governors have not acted quickly or effectively enough to secure a good standard of education.
- Historically the progress pupils have made from their starting points by the end of key stage 4 has been well below national figures. Current pupils do not make consistent progress across the curriculum, particularly at key stage 3.
- In the past, the curriculum was not broad enough. Too few pupils studied GCSE courses in science, humanities and modern foreign languages. Leaders have only recently implemented changes which are beginning to address this.
- Although leaders check on the standard of teaching, their self-evaluation over time has been over-generous. Improvement activities have not yet ensured that teaching is consistently good.
- Assessment systems do not track pupils' progress accurately enough. Consequently, middle leaders are not holding teachers to account for the progress that all groups of pupils make over time in their subject areas.
- Not all teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are high enough. In some classes, pupils, particularly the most able, are not stretched fully.
- Some teachers do not check pupils' work closely enough to be able to use it to inform the next steps in learning.
- Governors are dedicated and have undergone training to improve their skills. However, they have not challenged the top level of leadership sufficiently. They are too accepting of the information they receive about the school's performance.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders' recent work, supported by external consultants, has motivated teachers in some subject areas to make improvements to teaching and learning.
- Recent work to improve overall attendance, and that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is having a positive impact.
- Pupils, staff and most parents report that behaviour has improved significantly this year. Leaders ensure effective support for vulnerable pupils.
- Strong relationships and higher quality teaching and learning in the sixth form enable A-level students to make good progress.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and governors to improve outcomes by:
 - ensuring that the proportions of pupils who have access to GCSE courses in modern foreign languages, science and the humanities are in line with national figures
 - improving assessment and tracking systems, particularly in key stage 3, to more accurately monitor the progress of different groups of pupils
 - ensuring that they have an accurate view of the school's performance and the progress that pupils make from their starting points
 - holding all middle leaders more firmly to account for the quality of teaching in their subject areas
 - ensuring that governors become skilled at using progress information to challenge senior leaders and hold them more effectively to account for the quality of teaching and achievement of all groups of pupils.
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in key stage 3, by ensuring that teachers consistently and in all subjects:
 - provide suitably high levels of challenge appropriate to pupils' needs
 - ensure that regular feedback to pupils provides precise guidance on what to improve, in line with the school's policy, and that pupils are given time to respond to improve their work
 - use sharply focused interventions and skilful questions to enable all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, to make rapid progress.
- Secure further improvements to the progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
 - ensuring that the attendance of these groups continues to improve
 - prioritising their achievement across all year groups.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to see how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because senior leaders' and governors' actions have failed to meet many of the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. Leaders and governors have been too slow in tackling underperformance. While there has been some staffing turbulence in some subject areas, leaders' ineffective monitoring and evaluation of actions taken, particularly in key stage 3, have been insufficient.
- Senior leaders' self-evaluation is over-generous because too little account is taken of the progress pupils have made in the past from their starting points against national benchmarks.
- Working with external consultants, leaders have correctly identified many of the priorities for improvement in the school. However, they have been too slow to implement their plans. Senior leaders' evaluations of the impact of their actions on pupils' learning and progress are inaccurate because tracking systems are not yet effective. As a result, the progress made by pupils is variable, particularly in English, science and geography.
- Subject leaders recognise that assessment in key stage 3 is not yet accurate enough to enable them to analyse information effectively about pupils' progress over time. As a result, they are not able to hold teachers to account. Their monitoring of the quality of teaching is not robust or frequent enough in all areas across the curriculum. Pupils' progress, particularly that of middle-ability pupils and the most able, in some subjects, is limited due to the variable quality of teaching.
- There have been recent improvements in English and mathematics. However, top-level senior leaders and governors acknowledge that too few pupils have been entered for a sufficiently broad range of GCSE courses, including science and modern foreign languages in the past. Recent changes have been introduced to broaden the curriculum offer in Year 9, and to a limited degree in Years 10 and 11. However, inspection evidence does not agree with leaders' analysis of significantly increased outcomes for these cohorts across the curriculum.
- Leaders have worked effectively with consultants to develop new plans and systems to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This year, more detailed plans are in place for the use of additional funding. Teachers are provided with useful information to identify barriers to learning and support meeting the needs of these groups. However, leaders' monitoring and actions have not been effective enough because teachers are not consistently using this information to adapt learning activities to meet these needs. As a result, the progress made by these vulnerable pupils varies in line with that of their peers in some subjects.

- Leaders have adapted their use of the pupil premium funding recently to target strategies to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils. While attendance for this group is showing signs of improving, more needs to be done to ensure that these pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities attend in line with their peers.
- While the newly qualified teachers met by inspectors reported that they feel well supported, the view was expressed within the middle leadership that some currently are 'struggling to cope'.
- Senior leaders have restructured the leadership of resource provision for vulnerable pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This has brought about improvements this year. Leaders ensure that suitable support enables effective integration of pupils with education, health and care plans from the resourced provision known as the 'communications base', into mainstream classes.
- Pupils, staff and the majority of parents report that leaders' new systems have supported an improvement in behaviour in the school this year. There has been a focus on improving attendance, and adequate records are kept about behaviour incidents. Pastoral staff support pupils' welfare well. This work is helping pupils to build positive relationships with staff.
- The transition from primary school into Princes Risborough is well managed. Leaders' strong relationships with primary schools help them ensure that pupils settle quickly and confidently into Year 7. Leadership of the sixth form is a strength. The leader responsible ensures that the quality of teaching across the range of subjects on offer is good. Sixth formers told inspectors that they value the support and guidance leaders provide.

Governance of the school

- Following the previous review of governance, there have been changes made and steps have been taken to recruit governors with a range of skills and expertise. However, governors report that they still feel new and have only recently completed their training. They do not have a clear enough picture of standards and progress in the school and have accepted the information provided by senior leaders too readily. Consequently, governors do not sufficiently challenge school leaders and do not hold them to account rigorously enough for the standards that pupils achieve.
- Governors are not monitoring the school's use of additional funding closely enough. Although governors recognised that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in 2016 were weak, they have not adjusted their approach in the light of this. They informed inspectors that they are unaware of the impact that the pupil premium grant in 2017 is having on the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Organised and appropriate systems are in place to ensure that leaders check on the suitability of staff and keep careful records. School leaders and governors are trained in safer recruitment procedures. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities with respect to keeping pupils safe. They receive regular training to ensure that their knowledge and understanding are up to date.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and know whom to talk to should they have any concerns. The work of 'the house', which offers pastoral support, advice and coaching for vulnerable pupils, is particularly valued. While a minority of parents expressed concerns, the majority said that their child was safe and well looked after at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Recent improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not yet had a sufficient impact in every classroom. The quality of teaching is not consistently good enough across the school, or within some subjects such as science, to secure good progress for all pupils.
- Some teachers in key stage 3 do not have high enough expectations of standards of behaviour and what pupils can achieve. In some classes, poor presentation and unfinished work remain unchallenged. While many teachers have improved how they plan for and assess pupils' work, weaknesses remain across the school, including in science, geography and English.
- Teachers are not using the school's 'star' feedback system consistently well. In some areas, teachers' feedback does not provide useful guidance for pupils to understand what they have done well and how they can enhance their work. However, where more effective, precise and subject-based feedback is provided, pupils routinely act on the suggestions made and improve their work.
- Teachers and subject leaders do not consistently make good use of information about pupils' prior attainment and recent assessment information well to plan appropriately challenging learning activities. Consequently, the work that pupils complete is not routinely matched to their needs, particularly for the most able pupils and those with low starting points.
- Recently, teachers have been given access to information on the barriers faced by disadvantaged pupils and strategies to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, not all teachers are making effective use of this information to tailor learning activities to enable these pupils to make rapid progress.
- The impact of teachers' questioning is variable. The strongest examples seen by inspectors occurred in the sixth form. Here, teachers use their good subject knowledge and assessment skills to design engaging learning tasks and then use probing questions to challenge learners' understanding. As a result, sixth formers make strong progress in lessons and over time. However, some teachers' questioning of pupils in key stage 4, and particularly in key stage 3, lacks depth and is less effective. Consequently, too few pupils are stretched sufficiently.

- Some teachers' use of group work is ineffective; as a result not all pupils fully understand the tasks they have been set. When the tasks set are not matched well enough to the needs of pupils of differing abilities, then some struggle to concentrate and stay engaged in the work that has been set. This can lead to chatter and slow the pace of learning.
- Many teachers forge strong relationships with pupils and model respectful behaviour. They have a calm, caring and friendly approach and create a positive learning atmosphere in lessons.
- Some Year 7 and Year 8 pupils are taught several subjects together in an 'alternative curriculum pathway'. Strong teaching, good relationships and probing questions ensure that these pupils make good progress. They are well supported to make rapid gains in their reading and spelling ages, so that they can gain improved access to the wider curriculum.
- In some subjects, such as modern foreign languages, history and most mathematics lessons, teaching is fast paced and intellectually challenging. Pupils engage well in these lessons and their books demonstrate strong progress over time. Typically, staff in these areas make good use of the school's feedback systems to support pupils in making improvements.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils are happy at school and like being part of the school community. They feel well supported by the pastoral team. Working relationships between these staff and pupils are strong. Pupils told inspectors that they value the extra time and support their teachers and staff in 'the house' willingly provide.
- Pupils are safe and secure in the school and most feel content here. Good systems are in place to offer help and support to vulnerable pupils, sometimes involving external agencies when appropriate. While some parents expressed reservations, the majority of parents responding to Parent View affirmed that their child is well looked after and happy at school. Parents' faith in the school is well founded: this is a very caring community.
- Pupils value the opportunities that they have to learn about keeping themselves safe in and around the school, as well as online. Learning about e-safety is given an appropriately high priority.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted through school via citizenship lessons and through assemblies, tutor time and enrichment time on Wednesdays. Provision for moral and social aspects is strong. Democracy, teamwork and equality are promoted well through activities such as the school council and the range of extra-curricular activities and clubs. However, key stage 4 pupils are less confident to discuss different faiths and cultures, and more needs to be done to better prepare them for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff and pupils are very clear that they believe behaviour has improved significantly over the past year, and the majority of parents agree. New systems and higher expectations have been recognised as having improved conduct around the school and in most lessons.
- Pupils enjoy each other's company at social times and value the good friendships they make here. They are respectful to each other, and to staff and visitors, and they enjoy the secure environment the school offers.
- Overall attendance has risen and is now slightly above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have contributed disproportionately to absence levels in the past. There are indications that this is being addressed, although gaps remain.
- Most pupils show an enthusiasm for their learning and engage well in the tasks they are given. Punctuality is generally good and the pupils come well equipped and ready to learn.
- In a minority of lessons, behaviour is not as impressive. In these lessons, some pupils do not receive the challenge they need to maintain their interest or keep them fully engaged in their work. Where this happens, pupils can disrupt the lesson with chatter or silly, off-task behaviour. Pupils say that this is much rarer now than it used to be and regard it as not in keeping with how they want their school to be.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have had higher exclusion rates than their peers, and this is still the case. School leaders have implemented better systems to support these groups of pupils, and behaviour and attitudes have improved.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The pupils who took their GCSE exams in 2016 arrived at the school with prior attainment that was in line with that of other pupils nationally. Outcomes for Year 11 pupils in 2016 show that pupils did not achieve as well as they should across a range of subjects, including science.
- As a result of inconsistent teaching, the progress made by pupils across a broad range of GCSE subjects was significantly below national figures in 2016. While the proportion of pupils gaining a grade C in GCSE modern foreign languages was higher than national averages, a low proportion of the year group took this subject. Similarly, lower proportions of pupils were entered for science GCSEs.
- The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*–C in English and mathematics GCSEs was above the national average in 2016. However, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made too little progress in these subjects.
- Pupil premium funding has not been used effectively to diminish the differences

between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally. In 2016, although disadvantaged pupils made expected progress in English, they made slow progress across the rest of the curriculum, including in mathematics and science.

- This year, a series of support programmes has enabled some improved progress to be made by current disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in key stage 4. However, progress remains inconsistent.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work across a range of subjects and year groups during the inspection. Pupils make variable rates of progress; this is particularly the case for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Outcomes for current pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are not yet good.
- The school's assessment information shows that current Year 11 pupils have made strong progress in English and mathematics this year. With a greater proportion of pupils entered for GCSE science and a slight increase in history this year, more pupils have made progress across a broader range of GCSE subjects than was the case last year.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is a strength of the school. Leaders use effective tracking systems to regularly check on students' progress towards their challenging targets. Teachers know their students well and offer targeted support for any who start to fall behind.
- Although the sixth form is small, it provides a selection of academic and some applied courses with clear routes to further study or employment. Sixth formers are ambitious; most progress to university, while others choose to gain access to further education, training or employment in their selected field through apprenticeships.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently stronger than elsewhere in the school. In biology and psychology A-level lessons, teachers have very high expectations and use their professional subject and assessment knowledge to design learning activities to engage and challenge students. Teachers regularly ask probing questions which demand that students think deeply and make connections between topics. Detailed feedback enables students to work independently to improve the quality of their work. As a result, they learn well in lessons and over time.
- Historically, sixth formers have made progress in line with national averages for A-level subjects and this continues to be the case. The historic underperformance of boys in applied courses has been addressed and their performance is much closer to that of the girls. Inspectors witnessed how well teachers are preparing students with the range of skills and in-depth understanding needed to attain their target grades in their exams.
- In the past, fewer boys attended the sixth form than girls; this is no longer the case in Year 12.
- Leaders ensure that the small numbers of students who re-take English or mathematics GCSEs successfully gain a grade C during their time on a 16 to 19 study programme.

- Sixth formers told inspectors that they particularly value the extra support and the useful and impartial careers information and guidance that the school offers. Some learners take up leadership roles, for example charity fund-raising, becoming student ambassadors or leading assemblies. This contributes well to their development as responsible citizens.
- Sixth formers are mature, tolerant and respectful of difference. They take a pride in their school and work quietly and independently during study periods. Students told inspectors that they appreciate the support teachers give them to reach their high aspirations. Sixth formers provide good role models for younger pupils.
- Students are given an effective programme of support and guidance which equips them with the skills required to progress to their chosen universities or apprenticeships. While work experience is made available, leaders acknowledge that more could be done to improve work experience and work-related learning.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 137372 |
| Local authority | Buckinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 10032896 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary modern |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 972 |
| Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes | 120 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Peg Hulse |
| Headteacher | Peter Rowe |
| Telephone number | 01844 345496 |
| Website | www.princesrisborough.bucks.sch.uk |
| Email address | office@princesrisborough.bucks.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 12–13 March 2015 |

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school with a sixth form.
- Shortly after the previous inspection, a new deputy headteacher joined the school. The members of the senior leadership team have all been in the school for over two years, with the exception of one of the six assistant headteachers who joined in September 2016.
- The school hosts a specially resourced provision, funded by the local authority, for pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder. For a large proportion of their lessons, these pupils are taught in mainstream classes.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an

education, health and care (EHC) plan is above the national average, whereas the proportion who have special educational needs and/or disabilities without a statement of special educational needs or an EHC plan is below average.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the articles of association of the academy trust.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, representatives of the governing body, leaders, teachers and support staff. Meetings were held with two of the school's improvement advisers from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 32 lessons across a range of subjects and year groups. Several of these visits were undertaken jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors made visits to tutor time, an assembly and the library, and observed pupils' conduct around the school at break- and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors extensively reviewed a sample of pupils' written work across a range of abilities, subjects and year groups.
- A range of school documents was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, information about managing teachers' performance, staff training records and the school's safeguarding procedures. Minutes of meetings of the governing body and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed.
- Inspectors reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.
- The inspection team considered the views expressed in 123 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, the school's own parent survey and 45 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Matthew Newberry, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| John BurrIDGE | Ofsted Inspector |
| Mark Duke | Ofsted Inspector |
| Paul Copping | Ofsted Inspector |

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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