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15 November 2017

Mrs Julie Evans  
Headteacher  
Priory School  
Hermitage Road  
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London  
SE19 3QN

Dear Mrs Evans

### **Short inspection of Priory School**

Following my visit to the school on 31 October 2017 with Denise James-Mason, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in November 2013.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

Since taking up your appointment in September 2017, you have quickly gained an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. You have already put plans in action to strengthen leadership at middle and senior levels. This will create increased capacity for you to improve the school even further.

You and your team have a vision for the pupils of 'brilliant lives' and a mission 'to provide a learning community that inspires and empowers individuals to do amazing things'. This forms the character of the whole school and was apparent on the day of the inspection. The shared values of ambition, respect, courage, pride and happiness were evident in many areas of the school's work.

Pupils say that they enjoy school and are happy and safe. Parents and carers report that their children are excited to come to school and they are well taught. They also say that their children are safe and the staff welcoming, positive and supportive. Pupils are well behaved in lessons and when moving around the school. Exclusions are extremely rare and attendance is very closely monitored and analysed by leaders.

Governors and the local authority link adviser recognise the positive impact that

your leadership has already had upon the school. The governing body fully understand their strategic role and provide the right balance of support and challenge.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

There is a strong safeguarding culture within the school. Records clearly show how leaders effectively put policies into practice. The designated safeguarding lead and her deputy are thorough in their work. Staff know the correct procedures for reporting any concerns. All staff receive regular and appropriate training that covers all aspects of safeguarding including e-safety, female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation, radicalisation and the 'Prevent' duty.

Staff know their pupils well and are sensitive to any changes that they see in their behaviour. Any unusual patterns of behaviour that cause concern are recorded in detail and followed up appropriately. The behaviour support team works effectively to develop support plans that are shared with parents and carers. They deliver well-considered training to reduce incidents of extreme behaviour to keep both pupils and staff safe. New staff complete safeguarding and conflict management training as part of their induction.

Pupils say that they feel safe at school and would tell a member of staff if someone was being unkind. Breaktimes observed were well managed. The arrival of the pupils on transport at the start of the school day was calm, safe and well organised.

Staff recruitment processes are robust and safeguarding is highlighted at every stage. The single central record of pre-employment checks fully meets requirements.

### **Inspection findings**

- At the last inspection the school was asked to improve the quality of teaching by: support staff allowing pupils to learn as independently as possible; teachers planning thoroughly to promote literacy and numeracy in all lessons and subjects; and pupils with autism, in all lessons, being supported to take a full part in learning. We agreed to look at these three aspects and visited classrooms with senior leaders.
- In many lessons staff provided the right amount of support for pupils to keep focused on their learning and make progress as independently as possible. In a basketball lesson pupils successfully answered questions about equipment needed for the lesson with the support of symbols.
- We saw strong examples of pupils using their numeracy skills in different subjects. In a mathematics lesson pupils were engaged in games to recognise and match numbers. Pupils were also practising their counting skills in a forest school and physical education lesson. We also saw pupils given opportunities to develop their literacy skills in different lessons. In an information technology and handwriting lesson, pupils worked on a range of targets. Some practised writing their names and others worked on high-frequency words. Pupils learned about a

story in an English lesson and were joyfully performing a song about a turtle that danced with a crane. Teaching activities were well planned and pupils' pictures about the story displayed on the walls showed that pupils made good progress.

- In lessons where pupils were actively engaged, they clearly enjoyed themselves and achieved well. In a dance lesson, all pupils took part with enthusiasm as they learned a sequence of steps. In a food technology lesson, pupils were eager to say how they learned to make a vegetable wrap with ingredients they had shopped for that morning. However, in some lessons, tasks planned did not always meet the needs and abilities of all pupils. Support for pupils through signing and symbols was not consistent across classrooms. You are aware of the need to improve in this area and have already started your plan of action. In particular, you have identified the need to recruit a lead specialist for autism as this group is growing and their needs are becoming more complex.
- We also agreed to look at pupils' progress over time and how well the school prepares them for the next stage in their education and for life.
- There is a strong emphasis on transition, both into the school at secondary transfer and at 19. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their lives and all secure places in further education or training.
- There is a clear focus on developing pupils' independent living and employability skills. During the inspection, pupils made their own lunches and enjoyed eating them in the life skills flat.
- Post-16 pupils have many opportunities to complete a work experience placement such as working at a restaurant, farm, food bank and hairdressers. Enterprises like the tuck shop enable them to develop appropriate skills as they buy in stock and record sales. One pupil during the inspection was practising her communication skills by enthusiastically advertising the tuck shop opening at breaktime.
- The school's most recent progress information for core subjects shows strong outcomes for pupils at key stages 3 and 4. Scrutiny of the information you provided indicates no gaps in achievement for different groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Checks on pupils' skills and abilities when they join the school provide staff with a starting point for measuring academic progress. Progress is also measured using individual education plan targets but these are not always of consistent quality and sometimes do not clearly link to the work pupils are doing in lessons. You have identified this as an area for development and have a planned strategy to address it.
- The current systems in place for measuring progress over time are not as rigorous and robust as they should be. Without accurate and precise assessment information, teachers are unable to plan work that is not too hard or too easy for individual pupils. Consequently, pupils do not always make progress they are capable of during lessons. Equally, there are no opportunities for pupils to work towards external accreditation at the end of key stage 4 and one programme available in key stage 5. You recognise this and have prioritised the need to provide challenge to the most able pupils in the school.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- teachers plan tasks on an individual basis so all pupils have work which is closely matched to their ability, allowing them to make rapid progress
- a robust assessment framework is developed that can be regularly checked for accuracy and effectively tracks pupils' progress over time
- outcomes for pupils are improved by developing appropriate accreditation opportunities at key stages 4 and 5
- middle and senior leaders are clear about their newly refined roles and responsibilities in the next steps to further improve outcomes for pupils.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Croydon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Tarrant  
**Ofsted Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

The inspection team met with you, your senior leaders, family liaison officer, behaviour support team, teachers and teaching assistants. We met with the school business manager to review the school's single central record and recruitment procedures. We met with the school's link improvement adviser from the local authority and with members of the governing body, including the chair and the link governor for safeguarding. We visited classrooms accompanied by senior leaders to collect a range of evidence relating to teaching, learning and assessment. We met with the school council to talk about their experience of school and aspects of safeguarding. We also met with a group of parents to gather their views on a range of matters, including safeguarding and the progress of their children. We scrutinised a wide range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plan, individual education plans and pupil folders. We took account of the three text responses to Parent View. There were no responses to the staff or the pupil questionnaire.