

Burscough Priory Science College

Trevor Road, Burscough, Ormskirk, Lancashire L40 7RZ

Inspection dates

14–15 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Senior leaders do not provide effective strategic leadership. They do not systematically monitor the quality of what happens in the school.
- Governors do not have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Consequently, they have failed to challenge school leaders effectively.
- Disadvantaged pupils who attend this school do not get a good deal. Leaders and governors have not taken their responsibilities for these pupils seriously enough.
- During their time in the school, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils.
- Too many pupils do not benefit from routinely good teaching. This has a detrimental effect on the progress that they make. This is particularly the case for pupils in low- and middle-ability sets.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve.
- Leaders do not have a coherent system for tracking pupils' progress across the school. Consequently, they do not have an accurate picture of how well pupils across the school are performing.
- Low-level disruption has a detrimental effect on pupils' learning in too many lessons. This is more prevalent in low- and middle-ability sets.
- Leaders are not taking effective action to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Leaders and teachers do not use the behaviour management system consistently. There have been a high number of fixed-term exclusions already this year. Of particular concern is that leaders exclude a large number of disadvantaged pupils.
- The curriculum does not effectively meet the needs of all pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The care and well-being of pupils is a high priority for leaders.
- Pupils are generally polite and friendly. They behave well during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Some of the most able pupils attain good GCSE grades across a wide range of subjects.

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?

- Ensure that senior leaders provide effective strategic leadership across all areas of the school by:
 - modelling good practice for the rest of the staff
 - developing systematic quality assurance procedures
 - evaluating the impact of their actions
 - developing a system, that is understood by all, to track pupils' progress effectively
 - swiftly acting upon the recommendations outlined in the recent review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding
 - redesigning the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils and enables them to make the best possible progress
 - having clear systems and protocols across all areas of the school that all staff apply consistently.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that all teachers:
 - have high expectations of what their pupils can achieve
 - provide the right level of challenge for their pupils, including those in middle- and low-ability sets
 - use questioning effectively to probe and develop pupils' understanding
 - use assessment information to plan learning that enables pupils to make the best possible progress.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by ensuring that, in all subjects, pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, make good progress relative to their starting points.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - eliminating disruption to learning in all lessons
 - ensuring that all leaders and teachers apply the school's behaviour management policy consistently
 - increasing the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - reducing the number of disadvantaged pupils who are excluded from school.
- Ensure that governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school so that they can effectively challenge leaders to carry out

improvements.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how governors can improve their work.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Senior leaders, in all areas of the school, do not provide effective strategic leadership. This has a detrimental effect on the quality of work of middle leaders and classroom teachers. Staff do not benefit from strong, coherent leadership. The headteacher recognises that he has not been successful in making sure that his senior leadership team 'works proactively'.
- Systematic quality assurance procedures do not exist. Consequently, leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their own evaluation of the school's performance bears little relation to the true picture. This means that the school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose. It does not provide a clear strategy for improvement as its starting point does not reflect the school's current position.
- Leaders do not routinely monitor and evaluate the impact of their actions. Consequently, they do not know whether what they are doing is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. This is particularly the case in relation to how they have spent the pupil premium funding in recent years. Leaders and governors have not used this money effectively to enable disadvantaged pupils to achieve their potential. In this school, disadvantaged pupils have low attendance, are excluded frequently and make much less progress than other pupils. At the time of the inspection, an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding had just taken place. The draft copy of the report was shared with the lead inspector. This thorough report provides clear recommendations for leaders to act upon with great urgency.
- Leaders and governors do not ensure that all staff are ambitious for all pupils. Leaders do not have high enough expectations of staff. As a result, staff do not have high enough expectations of all their pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged.
- Leaders do not have a coherent system for tracking pupils' progress across all year groups and subjects. The leadership of this area is weak. Senior leaders do not know how middle leaders track and analyse pupils' performance. There is no systematic monitoring of the quality and accuracy of assessments across the school.
- Notices around the school refer to a core purpose: 'We all give our best'. There is no evidence that this has unified the school community. Senior leaders do not routinely model the good practice that they expect from their staff. While the majority of the responses to the staff online questionnaire were positive, there were some significant concerns expressed. Eleven of the 45 respondents do not feel that the school is well led and managed. Fifteen of them feel that leaders do not do enough to ensure that teachers are motivated and respected. Some staff expressed concerns about inconsistency and a lack of direction, passion and enthusiasm from senior leaders. Similar concerns were expressed by staff who spoke to inspectors. They feel that senior leaders are not visible or proactive enough. They feel that senior leaders do not give them enough support when problems arise.
- A very high number of parents took the time to respond in the free-text section of the online questionnaire. While many wrote to praise the school, over half of the responses were negative. Parents' concerns related to: a lack of confidence in the school's

leadership; the headteacher not being visible or accessible enough; poor communication, particularly about their children's progress; variability in the quality of teaching; the number of supply teachers; and not enough support and challenge to enable their children to make good progress. Many of the positive comments were from parents of Year 7 pupils saying how well their children had settled and how happy they were in the school. There was also praise for the care that staff give to their children. Some parents commented on the academic success that their children had achieved at the school.

- The pupils' responses to the online questionnaire were also mixed. Of most concern is that only 12 of the 37 respondents said that they would recommend their school to others. This sentiment was shared by most of the pupils who spoke to inspectors.
- Leaders are not doing enough to address the wide variability in the quality of teaching. This significantly impairs the progress of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged. Pupils in top sets are more likely to benefit from good teaching than their peers in other sets.
- The senior leader who leads on teaching and learning is enthusiastic and staff are appreciative of her efforts to support them in this area. However, she has not had the necessary professional development to carry out this role effectively. Consequently, the strategic leadership of this area is weak. Quality assurance sits with middle leaders and there are major disparities between departments in how effectively this is done. More importantly, this means that senior leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching across the school and cannot effectively hold staff to account. Leaders do not use professional development well to improve teachers' classroom practice. There is no strategic plan for sharing good practice. It is therefore not appropriate for the school to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of all pupils or enable them to make the best possible progress. The existing curriculum enables some of the most able pupils to attain a large number of good GCSE grades across a wide range of subjects. However, leaders have ignored the fact that this same curriculum has prevented some pupils from achieving well. Too many pupils take too many subjects with too little time allocated to cover the content thoroughly. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding to achieve success. Leaders now accept the flaws in the existing curriculum and intend to redesign it. However, leaders have not demonstrated the required urgency in doing this. Consequently, the school continues to fail many pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged and who have low prior attainment.
- The school provides opportunities for pupils to be involved in extra-curricular physical education activities. Also, a significant proportion of pupils take up the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument. Leaders accept that beyond this, there are few other enrichment opportunities for pupils outside of their lessons. A perception of some pupils and parents is that pupils in top sets have more access to trips and opportunities to learn outside of the classroom than their peers in other sets. Leaders do not focus enough on disadvantaged pupils when allocating places on enrichment activities. For example, on a recent key stage 3 trip to a university for a mathematics challenge day, only two of the 22 pupils were disadvantaged.
- The programmes of study for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education

and citizenship are designed to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. This area is also covered in the tutor programme. However, variability in the quality of teaching across the school means that the quality of the teaching of this programme during form time is inconsistent. Leaders admit that the audit of how effectively the curriculum contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is now out of date.

- There is a mixed picture in terms of whether leaders use the SEN funding effectively. Some parents are full of praise for the way that the school supports their children and meets their specific needs. However, other parents have the opposite view. Leaders do not monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to help pupils to make better progress. Leaders do not systematically track the progress of these pupils so do not know how well they are doing.
- Leaders spend the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding to provide one-to-one support for pupils. They report that, in 2016–17, this helped pupils to improve their reading, writing and basic mathematical skills, but no evidence was provided to substantiate this.
- At the start of this academic year, the local authority implemented an intensive support package for the school. The local authority representative explained that this was because of the serious concerns that they had about the quality of leadership in the school and the impact that this was having on pupils' progress. The local authority had identified that the school was 'potentially vulnerable' a year ago. However, it does not appear that they realised the extent of the weaknesses in leadership.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Consequently, they have not been able to hold leaders to account or do anything to halt the school's decline over recent years. They have not focused enough on challenging leaders to ensure that all pupils make good progress. They are aware of some of the reasons why the leadership of the school is weak but have not taken action to remedy the situation.
- Governors have failed in their responsibilities towards disadvantaged pupils. Governors have not held leaders to account for how they spend the pupil premium funding. In some instances, they have allowed school leaders to make excuses as to why these pupils have not achieved well.
- Governors have worked with the headteacher to establish the vision for the school. However, they admit that they have not been effective in unifying the whole-school community around this. They know that they have been too passive and have just accepted things, rather than challenging and asking probing questions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leadership of this area is strong. The work that the school does to keep its pupils safe is of a very high standard.

- All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including protocols and practices for record-keeping. Systems to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with pupils in the school are secure. Staff receive regular training on potential areas of risk for young people. They know what to do should they have any concerns about a pupil. Leaders engage effectively with parents on safeguarding issues.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- In recent years, teaching has not enabled pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, to make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Again, this is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils and those with low and middle prior attainment. This lack of challenge prevents many pupils from making the best possible progress.
- Lack of challenge is a particular concern in key stage 3 where teachers do not have a strong enough grasp of pupils' prior learning or starting points. This prevents pupils from continuing the good progress that they have made in primary school. They also lose their enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers do not use questioning well enough to encourage pupils to think and explain their answers. Too often questioning remains at a basic level and is not used to probe and develop pupils' understanding.
- Teachers do not use assessment information effectively to plan learning that will enable pupils to make rapid progress. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of a whole-school system for tracking pupils' progress across all subjects. Senior leaders are not able to provide classroom teachers with accurate assessment information about their pupils.
- Many pupils have their learning disrupted because teachers do not use the behaviour management system consistently. This is particularly the case in middle- and low-ability sets where the poor behaviour of some pupils has a detrimental effect on the progress of others.
- Some pupils have little chance of benefiting from consistently high-quality teaching when they are taught so often by supply teachers. This means that there is little continuity in their learning, which affects their progress.
- There is wide variability in the quality of teaching across the school. Pupils in top sets are more likely to experience better teaching and less disruption to their learning. Senior leaders have not ensured that disadvantaged pupils are not disadvantaged even further by setting decisions made by middle leaders. This is particularly the case in mathematics where disadvantaged pupils make up only a very small proportion of those in top sets.
- Senior leaders do not have a whole-school marking policy, instead they allow middle leaders to decide how pupils receive feedback. This means that some pupils benefit more than others in terms of the quality and usefulness of the feedback that they receive. A scrutiny of pupils' books showed that, once again, it is often disadvantaged pupils who are losing out in this area.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors say that bullying is rare and that when it does happen staff deal with it effectively. However, this view is not shared by 13 of the 37 pupils who responded to the online questionnaire. They feel that staff are not effective in resolving bullying issues. Nearly a quarter of the 116 parents who responded to Parent View also feel that the school does not deal effectively with bullying.
- Pupils are confident and articulate but not enough of them understand how to be successful learners. Pupils' attitudes to learning vary considerably. Teachers do not routinely encourage pupils to develop their own resilience.
- Careers education is delivered through the PSHE programme. The school also works with an external careers service to provide information, education, advice and guidance, particularly to pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. However, nearly half of the respondents to the pupils' online questionnaire say that they have either had little or no information about their next steps. They would particularly welcome more help when applying to college.
- Staff know and care for their pupils extremely well, particularly those pupils who are vulnerable. Pupils particularly value the support that they receive from staff in the 'ECM' centre. Inspection evidence indicates that the school is a safe place where pupils are comfortable being themselves, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
- Leaders regularly check on the personal development, behaviour, welfare and attendance of those pupils attending alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Leaders have no strategic plan to bring about sustained improvement in the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. The overall and persistent absence figures for these groups of pupils are worse than they were this time last year. Ensuring that these pupils attend school regularly is not a high enough priority for leaders.
- When disadvantaged pupils do attend school, they are far more likely than their peers to be excluded. Already this term, 19 pupils have had at least one fixed-term exclusion and 10 of these are disadvantaged pupils. Leaders were unable to share with inspectors what they are doing to respond to this very worrying situation. Again, leaders do not have a strategic plan to reduce the number of disadvantaged pupils who are being excluded from school.
- Leaders do not ensure that all teachers are using the behaviour management system consistently. Many teachers do not follow the policy and consequently in too many

lessons pupils' learning is disrupted by poor behaviour. This is more prevalent in low- and middle-ability sets. Some pupils do not take pride in their work. A scrutiny of pupils' books shows that too often teachers do not challenge poor presentation or work that is rushed or unfinished.

- Pupils are generally polite and friendly and behave well around the school. During breaks and lunchtimes, their behaviour is mature and calm. They socialise well and show respect to each other.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- During the time that they spend in school, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable from their starting points. Over recent years, pupils' attainment has been broadly in line with national averages. However, since many of the pupils have high prior attainment this does not represent good progress.
- Leaders admit that they have been far too focused on pupils' attainment rather than their progress. This has created a culture of complacency rather than high aspirations for all. The very limited information that senior leaders have about current pupils' performance still relates to attainment. This information is for Years 10 and 11 only and states how many are 'on track' to achieve good GCSE grades in English, mathematics and five other subjects. These headline figures show that the number of Year 11 disadvantaged pupils who are 'on track' is much lower than that of other pupils. This is also the case for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and pupils with low prior attainment.
- Senior leaders were unable to share any other information with inspectors about the progress that pupils are making in year groups and subjects across the school. This means that leaders are not able to identify where pupils are falling behind or take action to help them to improve their progress.
- The senior leader responsible for assessment has devised a very complex target setting and tracking system. The system is not fit for purpose and is not understood by all staff and pupils. It therefore cannot be used to raise standards across the school or motivate individual pupils to reach aspirational targets.
- Weak strategic leadership of assessment has had a particularly detrimental effect on disadvantaged pupils over recent years and continues to do so. Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as others nationally or their peers in the school. The impact of leaders' actions to address the underachievement of these pupils has been negligible.
- In mathematics, in 2017, pupils' rate of progress was slightly above the national average. Of great concern, however, is that disadvantaged pupils in this subject made extremely poor progress, significantly below the national average. Pupils did not make good progress in English in 2017. Senior leaders believe that issues relating to staff absence and leadership capacity in the English department were the reasons for this.
- While some of the most able pupils have attained a range of good GCSE grades in recent years, leaders recognise that not enough have achieved the top grades. This is because too many teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. They do not stretch and challenge pupils to reach the highest standards. A lack of relevant professional development means that teachers do not necessarily know how to teach

their pupils to achieve the top grades in the new, more demanding examinations.

- Observations of learning and scrutiny of pupils' work show that many pupils, of all abilities, currently do not make good enough progress. This is because they do not benefit from consistently high-quality teaching.
- Leaders ensure that the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision study appropriate courses. They also monitor the progress that these pupils make.
- In 2017, 98% of Year 11 pupils progressed to further education, training or employment. Despite the concerns that some pupils have about the quality of careers education, this indicates that in their final year at school, pupils receive some helpful advice and guidance in this area.

School details

Unique reference number	119746
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10043209

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	701
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Brocken
Headteacher	Graham Clarke
Telephone number	01704 893 259
Website	www.prioryhigh.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	support@bpsc.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 October 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- A very small number of pupils either attend alternative provision at Acorns (a pupil referral unit) or are home educated.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards. The floor standards set the minimum expectations for progress and attainment at key stage 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a range of subjects, including joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors carried out a work scrutiny with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils. They also talked with others informally during breaks and lunchtimes. Discussions were held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and classroom teachers. A meeting was held with the chair and two other members of the governing body. The lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority and a national leader of education who had carried out the recent pupil premium review.
- Inspectors took account of the 116 responses to Ofsted’s online ‘Parent View’ survey, and the 75 free-text responses. Inspectors also took into consideration information from a small group of individual parents who made contact with Ofsted during the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account the 37 responses to the online pupil questionnaire and the 45 responses to the online staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included the school’s self-evaluation and development plan, information about the school’s performance and a selection of policies, including those relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

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Vicky Atherton	Ofsted Inspector
Alyson Middlemass	Ofsted Inspector
Fiona Burke-Jackson	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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