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10 May 2019

Mr Daran Bland
Executive Headteacher
The Priory School
Neville Avenue
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Dear Mr Bland

Short inspection of The Priory School

Following my visit to the school on 19 March 2019 with Tracey Ydlibi, 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 your predecessor school was judged to be good in January 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I am of the opinion that the school has demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas. This may indicate that the school has improved significantly overall. Therefore, I am recommending that the school's next inspection be a section 5 inspection.

School leaders have improved the quality of education in the school. You and the school leadership team have created a positive learning community, where pupils make significant progress from their starting points. Ensuring the quality of pupils' employability skills is at the heart of all your practice and as a result, pupils are well prepared for their next steps in education.

The staff know the pupils well and activities are well thought out, in line with school priorities. As a result, pupils are motivated to succeed and receive a high-quality education. For example, pupils benefit from attentive staff who engage enthusiastically with them as they arrive in the morning. This motivates pupils to engage well with their learning. There is a genuine mutual respect across the school that creates a positive learning community for all.

The curriculum is extremely well thought out, providing pupils with the skills and qualifications for their next steps in education. A particular strength is the fact that

school leaders adjust the curriculum to ensure that it meets the individual needs of the pupils. All pupils successfully moved on to their intended destination last year. This is due to the carefully structured plan which helps pupils to prepare for life in post-16 education, including by attending work experience days. In achieving their goals, pupils receive outstanding support from staff, who are dedicated to achieving the very best for every pupil.

Leaders' and staff planning is meticulous, ensuring that the activities teachers set pupils help them meet their individual targets. This includes targets from pupils' education, health and care plans. As a result, pupils make strong progress from their starting points, and achieve well.

Staff create a wonderful learning experience. Carefully thought-out activities and a range of communication aids help pupils to develop their personal and communication skills well. The sensory circuit provides pupils with a stimulating start to their day, helping them with their physical development and self-confidence. Staff attend effectively to all pupils' medical needs.

When the predecessor school was last inspected, staff were asked to increase the proportion of pupils who make more than the progress expected of them. Current tracking of pupils' progress is thorough and school leaders, including governors, know exactly how much progress individual pupils are making. There are strong mechanisms for checking the validity of pupils' progress through effective moderation across a number of schools. The school's performance information and pupils' work indicate that a greater proportion of pupils are now making consistently strong progress.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and school leaders have effective systems in place to support pupils with their individual needs. This is a significant improvement since the previous school was inspected.

Staff keep parents and carers well informed of pupils' progress. Furthermore, staff support the pupils' families in a range of ways, including providing support at key meetings and liaising effectively with fellow professionals.

Safeguarding is effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture within the school. The leadership team has ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose. Leaders ensure that staff know the procedures for keeping pupils safe and are fully aware of their safeguarding roles and responsibilities. To this end, staff are well trained and receive regular and informative updates throughout the academic year.

School leaders take prompt action and have good mechanisms in place for highlighting and recording safeguarding concerns. Safeguarding logs are detailed and up to date. The annual safeguarding health check that the trust undertakes ensures that procedures are effective.

The attendance of all pupils is above the national average for special schools. Staff have worked effectively with external agencies to support pupils who are regularly absent to attend more frequently.

Procedures for staff recruitment are secure. All the required checks on adults who work at the school have been completed.

Inspection Findings

- Leaders ensure that outcomes for all pupils are strong by regularly checking the progress of individual pupils towards their education, health and care plan targets.
- Staff benefit from the outstanding professional development that school leaders and the trust provide. For example, staff have extensive knowledge of autism spectrum disorder. The professional development has helped staff to meet the needs of all pupils well.
- Leaders have ensured that there is an open-door policy across the school. Staff exchange ideas and are constantly looking for the best way to support pupils. Their passion for the school and for pupils has a significantly positive impact on pupils' outcomes and well-being.
- High-quality internal and external checks ensure that targets are accurate and appropriate to pupils' needs. School leaders collaborate effectively with teaching and support staff to ensure that pupils achieve highly. Teachers demonstrate great skill in their promotion and assessment of pupils' progress, although more work is required to meet the needs of the more challenging pupils and those with more complex needs.
- Governors and the trust provide regular challenge to school leaders. This ensures that there is a continuous focus on pupils' progress.
- The curriculum is carefully tailored towards adulthood, post-16 living, education and employment. School leaders ensure that there is well-targeted support for those pupils who require it to reach their goals. Checks on pupils' next steps continue once they have left the school, to ensure that these next steps are sustained.
- Reward systems are effective and motivate pupils to succeed. Teaching staff inspire pupils by providing activities which relate to the wider world. They use a variety of effective ways to ensure that pupils engage with, and remain focused on, their work at all times. Pupils appreciate the valuable support they receive.
- A dedicated team of staff helps to meet pupils' social and emotional needs. Home-school links are strong and have a significant impact on pupils' progress. Leaders have placed a strong emphasis on the wider support of pupils in school, including the introduction of a range of therapies. They continue to explore ways in which they can support the more challenging pupils effectively.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- school leaders continue to build on existing strong practice to meet the more challenging and complex needs of 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 Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jason Brooks
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, inspectors met with you, the executive headteacher, the head of school, the assistant headteacher and middle leaders. Inspectors held meetings with small groups of teachers and support staff. They observed learning throughout the school with leaders, reviewed pupils' work and met with pupils. Inspectors met with the chief executive officer of Community Inclusive Trust, the trust that owns the school, and representatives of the governing body. The lead inspector checked records with the executive headteacher and reviewed procedures for keeping children safe. Inspectors looked at the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation and the school's systems for recruiting staff.