

Inspection of The Priory Centre

St. Georges Road, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 8BB

Inspection dates: 28–29 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are low. This school does not equip pupils with the knowledge and skills needed for their next steps. The curriculum is not ambitious enough for pupils. Pupils experience a limited range of subjects. For too many pupils, a move to another pupil referral unit is the outcome of their time at the school.

Pupils are routinely late to the school. Frequent exclusions and part-time timetables make it hard for pupils to develop good attendance habits.

Leaders have failed to set out clearly the standards of behaviour they expect. Staff expectations of how pupils should behave are too low. Too often, pupils pay scant regard to the feelings of staff and classmates. Abusive and derogatory language is endemic. Behaviour around the school is poor, particularly at unstructured times.

Leaders' lax approach to safeguarding means risks to pupils are not well managed. Pupils who spoke to inspectors felt staff care about them. However, some pupils do not feel comfortable about sharing any worries with an adult in the school. There are instances of bullying. Staff do try to resolve these issues but are not always successful.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The quality of education is very poor. There is no consensus between leaders on the essential knowledge and skills their pupils need. Few subjects are taught. These subject choices are often random. Even in those few subjects which are taught, huge tracts of key knowledge are missed out. Consequently, pupils do not achieve well.

Leaders have not equipped subject leaders with the training, support, time and resources to do their jobs well. These staff have little understanding of the content of the national curriculum programmes of study. There are no curriculum plans in place which set out what pupils at this school should learn and when.

Leaders leave teachers to their own devices. This makes it hard for both specialist and non-subject-specialist teachers. Staff have not had the training or support to do their jobs well. Most rely on searching for online resources to help them plan lessons. In 'topic' and 'creative' lessons, teachers pick and choose at random what they think might interest their pupils. In design technology, lack of specialist equipment, facilities and support limits what can be taught. Science is not taught at all.

Leaders assert that English and mathematics are the core of the school's curriculum. However, even these subjects are 'slimmed down'. For example, in English, there are few opportunities for pupils to read plays, poetry and classic works. In some classes,

pupils do not have the opportunity to read whole books. Few pupils develop a love of reading.

There is no on-site provision for key stage 2 pupils. The entirety of these pupils' education currently is a few hours a week of home tuition.

The school's assessment systems are weak. The information from on-entry English and mathematics assessments is not used effectively by teachers to help them plan sequences of lessons. This means teachers do not build on what pupils already know and can do. The school's ongoing assessments do not check whether pupils have remembered what they have been taught. Moreover, assessments are only carried out in English and mathematics.

Teachers do not plan the right opportunities for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to achieve well. There is limited support to help these pupils overcome their barriers to learning. This exacerbates pupils' underachievement.

The school is chaotic. Classroom doors are locked to prevent pupils disrupting lessons. During the school day, there are pupils out of class shouting, swearing and kicking doors. Pupils frequently refuse or ignore adult instructions. Staff have had training to help them better manage pupils' behaviour. However, leaders do not make sure this learning is put into practice consistently across the school.

Leaders do not have a coherent, well-thought-out programme to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils go on plenty of trips, linked to the school's reward system. These are almost exclusively sport related, such as trampolining. However, pupils do not have opportunities to develop these activities into hobbies and interests. The school offers no extra-curricular clubs and activities. Pupils do not access the wealth of theatres, galleries and museums that are on their doorstep. There is neither a careers lead nor a careers programme at this school. Any advice or information provided by staff about pupils' future plans is ad hoc. The introduction of the Prince's Trust 'Achieve' programme is giving pupils opportunities to lend a hand in their community and take part in enterprise projects. However, this is a very recent initiative.

Over the past two years, leaders and the management committee members have overseen a further decline in the school's effectiveness. There are no clear lines of responsibility and accountability. Despite a recent in-depth review which pointed out the inherent serious weaknesses, leaders have an overly rosy view of the school's effectiveness. They have failed to address the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have not given staff the training, support and resources needed to do their jobs well. Leaders have failed to adequately protect the vulnerable pupils who attend this school. Moreover, they have failed to provide these pupils with the high quality of education they desperately need if they are to achieve well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not carried out all the required checks to reassure themselves that staff are suitable to work with pupils.

Many pupils, including some of the most vulnerable, are excluded from the school. The use of part-time timetables is routine. There are no arrangements for welfare checks on these pupils to ensure that they are safe. In addition, leaders do not carry out checks on the suitability of alternative providers used by the school.

The school's protocols for responding to pupil absence are weak. Despite the vulnerability of some pupils, registers are not closed until an hour and 40 minutes after school starts. Text messages are sent to alert those parents and carers whose children have not arrived. However, the procedures for following up when there is no response from parents are lax. At one of the school sites, staff allow pupils to leave the school premises at break and lunchtimes.

Leaders do not make sure pupils are given the help they need to keep themselves safe.

Staff have had online safeguarding and child-protection training. However, high numbers of supply staff, lack of oversight by senior leaders and infrequent safeguarding updates for staff make the school's safeguarding arrangements fragile.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's safeguarding arrangements are not effective. There are a range of failures to comply with statutory guidance to keep pupils safe. Leaders have failed to establish a culture of safeguarding, and vulnerable pupils are placed at risk. Leaders must take immediate action to ensure that all pupils are safe, both on and off the site. Leaders should ensure that thorough checks are undertaken on the suitability of staff to work with children. Appropriate safeguarding and welfare checks should be made on pupils who are excluded, those who are on part-time timetables, those who fail to attend the school and those who attend alternative provision. The management committee must ensure that all staff, including leaders, receive regular training and updates so they understand and fulfil their safeguarding duties effectively.
- The curriculum is poorly planned and implemented. It is neither broad and balanced nor ambitious. It does not provide pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, with the knowledge and skills they need to be well prepared for their next steps. Pupils do not achieve well. As a matter of urgency, leaders must resolve the endemic weaknesses in the school's curriculum. Leaders should ensure that pupils are given access to a well-planned curriculum

which is commensurate with the expectations of the national curriculum. Staff should be provided with the training and support they need to implement the curriculum effectively.

- There is no on-site provision for key stage 2 pupils. The only education these pupils receive is a few hours of home tuition each week. This does not support pupils to achieve well. Leaders must make suitable arrangements for these pupils so they have access to a well-planned, suitably broad curriculum which meets their needs and entitlements.
- The school's behaviour policy and practices are not working. Staff do not implement the training they have received. Pupils' behaviour is unacceptable. Leaders should take urgent action to ensure that the right systems and support are in place and that the systems are implemented consistently by all staff, so pupils' behaviour improves rapidly.
- Pupils miss too many days of school. Much of their absence is due to part-time timetables and exclusions. Also, when they do attend the school, pupils routinely arrive late. Leaders should develop effective alternatives to exclusion and part-time timetables and improve punctuality in order to minimise disruption to pupils' learning.
- There is no careers provision at the school. Pupils do not receive independent advice and guidance about potential next steps or careers guidance. This leaves pupils ill-equipped to make these important decisions. Leaders must provide an effective careers programme, in line with the government's statutory guidance.
- Leaders have an overly generous view of the school's performance. They have failed to take the urgent and decisive actions needed to tackle the school's significant weaknesses. As a result, the school's effectiveness has declined since the previous inspection. Leaders are failing to provide these vulnerable pupils with an acceptable standard of education. Leaders should take urgent action to improve the quality of education, so that pupils can achieve well.
- The management committee members have not kept themselves well informed about the work of the school. Even when they have been made aware of the serious weaknesses, they have not taken the urgent and decisive action needed. The management committee must act promptly to resolve the school's serious failings.
- The school must not appoint any newly qualified teachers.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	130981
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	10121702
Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	7 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	68
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Nicola Brown
Headteacher	William Carpenter (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.wakefieldprus.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Almost all pupils have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools. Some pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils join the school at different points between the start of Year 3 and the end of Year 9. Most pupils join the school during key stage 3.
- The school operates on two sites. The main site is situated in Wakefield. There is a second site in Castleford. The address of this additional site is: The Castledene Centre, Pontefract Road, Castleford, West Yorkshire WF10 4JE.
- The school uses two alternative providers: Aspire 2 B Training Centre and ISpace5.
- Key stage 2 pupils do not attend the centre. These pupils receive one-to-one tuition at home.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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.

- During the inspection, we held meetings with senior leaders, middle leaders and class teachers. We spoke with the chair and two members of the management committee. We also spoke with the school improvement partner and a representative of the local authority.
- There were no responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- We considered the 20 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the nine responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. We met with groups of staff and pupils.
- We met with the designated safeguarding lead. We scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including case files. We spoke with staff and pupils and considered the survey responses from staff and pupils around safeguarding.
- We observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around the school. We spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour and leaders' expectations of them.
- As part of this inspection, we conducted deep dives into the English, mathematics, personal, social and health education, and design technology curriculums. We spoke to teachers and leaders. We visited lessons. We talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work in their books, as well as at other evidence of their learning.

Inspection team

Pippa Jackson Maitland, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Steve Shaw	Her Majesty's Inspector

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