

Inspection of Priory Park Community School

Meadow Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 3JY

Inspection dates: 1 to 3 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where adults go above and beyond to help pupils achieve. One pupil summed it up by saying, 'In my previous school no one cared if I didn't learn anything. Here it is completely different. I know that all the staff care about me.'

Pupils know and live by the school's core values of 'I can be kind, I can be resilient, I can be safe, I can be me.' A significant number of pupils join the school with a history of poor school attendance and engagement. Leaders understand this and work closely with pupils and their families to build trust and positive relationships.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils rise to these expectations. When pupils become angry or upset, staff skilfully support pupils to manage their behaviour. This means that pupils can quickly return to their learning. Incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils said they feel happy and safe in school because adults will listen to them and take their concerns seriously.

Pupils enjoy a wide variety of rich experiences that enhance their interests. Pupils learn boxing, mountain biking, cookery and vehicle maintenance. These activities support pupils to develop self-confidence and resilience.

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

Leaders are highly effective. The proprietor, who is also the headteacher, has established a school where all staff share the same vision of 'Include, Inspire, Empower'. There is a sense of teamwork among all staff. Staff are exceptionally proud to work at the school and value leaders' consideration of staff's well-being and workload.

Leaders have carefully designed the school's curriculum. Learning is well sequenced and builds up pupils' skills and knowledge over time. Pupils, most of whom have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are on appropriate pathways to ensure they achieve success. For example, pupils can access a range of qualifications, such as GCSEs, functional skills and vocational qualifications.

Many pupils arrive at Priory Park with significant gaps in their learning due to the amount of schooling they have missed. Teachers use a range of assessment systems to check what pupils know and can do. For example, in lessons, staff ask questions to check what pupils have remembered from previous learning. Staff use this information to adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs and quickly address any misconceptions. However, these checks do not pinpoint gaps in pupils' knowledge as well, or as quickly, as they could. This means that staff mainly have to address these gaps during lessons, rather than identifying what the gaps are before and planning learning accordingly.

All pupils are supported to be successful readers. Leaders encourage pupils to read for pleasure. Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of genres in the library. Leaders use

innovative ways to engage reluctant readers. One way was reading an autobiography of a well-known boxer. Pupils are now proud of their reading abilities.

Leaders have identified pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read. They have begun to put support in place. However, the plan to support struggling readers is not yet fully established across the school. This means that some pupils are not getting the precise support they need to be able to learn and apply phonics.

Pupils treat staff and each other with respect. Social times are usually harmonious. This is because pupils have a wide variety of games and activities to keep them engaged. For example, at breaktimes, pupils play board and card games, play pool and do art and science activities. There is a community feel at lunchtime. Pupils help to prepare their own lunches. Not only does this develop pupils' understanding of healthy eating, but it also gives pupils a sense of achievement. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of differences. They learn about different cultures and beliefs. Pupils said they do not hear racist or homophobic language in school.

Leaders prepare pupils well for their next steps. Pupils are introduced to a range of different employment opportunities through independent careers guidance. Leaders support pupils' aspirations by providing bespoke learning experiences. Leaders are developing relationships with local businesses so that pupils can gain an understanding of the world of work. Leaders are continuing to evolve their careers offer over time.

Leaders have worked exceptionally hard with the local community. When the school first opened, it was regularly vandalised. Leaders tackled this head on. They worked with the local community to promote engagement, for example by providing access to boxing classes. This work had an immense impact. Since this time, the school has not been vandalised, and community engagement with the school has been positive.

Leaders ensure that they meet all the independent school standards consistently. The school complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. All staff are vigilant for signs that could indicate that a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff report their concerns quickly. Leaders work well with external agencies to provide effective support for pupils and their families.

Pupils said they feel safe. They have lots of opportunities in the curriculum to learn about keeping safe, including keeping safe online.

Leaders' records of the checks carried out when employing staff are thorough and well maintained. Safer recruitment practices are secure. The current safeguarding policy is displayed on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and proprietor)

- In some subjects, leaders do not identify gaps in pupils' prior learning quickly enough. This means that teachers do not always build on what pupils already know, and this can hinder the progress that these pupils make. Leaders should ensure that assessment systems allow teachers to check what pupils remember so they can address gaps in learning before new learning is introduced.
- Leaders have begun to think about ways to support struggling readers to learn phonics. However, this is in the early stages of being implemented. This means that some pupils are not learning to read as quickly as they should. Leaders need to ensure that they train staff in the chosen phonics approach so they can quickly start to support those pupils who need it.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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.

School details

Unique reference number	148642
DfE registration number	332/6012
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10238163
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	30
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Priory Park Community School CIC
Chair	Paul Gough
Headteacher	Stuart Playford
Annual fees (day pupils)	£19,500 to £39,000
Telephone number	01384 813 640
Website	www.prioryparkschool.co.uk
Email address	office@prioryparkschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in January 2022.
- The school is an alternative provision independent school that provides support for pupils who are at significant risk of permanent exclusion from mainstream school.
- Most pupils have SEND. Most also have an educational, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Pupils are usually admitted to the school by Dudley local authority and some directly by mainstream schools.
- Leaders use one unregistered alternative provider, to support home tutoring. However, no pupils are currently accessing this service.
- The school does not have a religious character.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the special needs coordinator. Inspectors also met with teachers and teaching assistants.
- Inspectors met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding policy along with a range of safeguarding information. This work included scrutiny of the school's single central record of checks made on adults. Inspectors checked staff's safeguarding training and spoke to staff about safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including policies, curriculum plans, health and safety records, behaviour records and the school's improvement plan.
- Inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires. They also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Eve Morris, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Hermitt

Ofsted Inspector

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