

Inspection of a good school: The Priory Witham Academy

De Wint Avenue, Lincoln, Lincolnshire LN6 7DT

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2023

Outcome

The Priory Witham Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a caring school with a strong community spirit. Pupils are happy here. Leaders and staff are ambitious for what all pupils can achieve. The curriculum aims to raise pupils' aspirations to help them grow into global citizens.

All pupils in the school are well prepared for their next stages in education and beyond. Children in the early years get off to a great start in a safe and happy environment. They enjoy swimming and visits to the forest school. Pupils in primary and secondary learn how to be safe and healthy. They understand fundamental British values and diversity. Students in the sixth form benefit from useful advice about their career and future education options. Teachers support the well-being of all pupils in the school. They provide a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and community events.

Teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Leaders and teachers use consistent routines that help pupils meet these expectations. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Teachers deal with any low-level disruption consistently and fairly when it happens. Bullying is rare in the school. When it does happen, leaders resolve issues quickly and effectively. Pupils say that they feel safe and cared for.

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

In all subjects, leaders have planned the curriculum well. They have identified the knowledge that pupils should learn and when. Leaders' plans are ambitious. They want to provide pupils with opportunities to understand the world they live in. Pupils in primary and key stage 3 study a wide range of subjects. In key stages 4 and 5, pupils choose from a variety of academic and vocational courses. All pupils in key stage 4 study either history or geography. The number of pupils choosing to study a language at key stage 4 is increasing.

Leaders have worked hard to develop the curriculum so that all pupils gain the knowledge they need to achieve well at all stages. This is not reflected in the current published

outcomes. Leaders are aware of this. They continue to adapt the curriculum so that all pupils can be successful.

In the early years, teachers provide a wide variety of opportunities for children to gain the skills they need for the next stage. There are lots of well-planned resources for children to explore and use their imagination. Children enjoy learning, playing and being creative. Teachers encourage them to talk and to develop their vocabulary.

The school places a high priority on teaching reading. In the early years and key stage 1, teachers expertly deliver phonics lessons. Pupils read often to practise what they have learned. Leaders check pupils' reading progress regularly in key stages 1, 2 and 3. When pupils need extra support, teachers and other adults make sure they get the help that they need to become confident readers.

In English lessons, pupils study a variety of fiction and non-fiction texts. Leaders have chosen texts to help grow pupils' cultural awareness. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss their ideas with each other. This helps pupils make sense of what they are learning. Teachers teach pupils the knowledge and skills they need to develop their writing. Pupils get lots of opportunities to practise writing. Teachers routinely check pupils' written work. They give pupils useful feedback that helps them to improve.

In mathematics and geography lessons, teachers deliver knowledge clearly. Teachers revisit topics often to help pupils remember what they have learned. Teachers question pupils well to check their understanding. They plan extra practice when pupils have gaps in their knowledge.

In some secondary lessons, teachers do not routinely check that pupils can remember what they have previously learned. Sometimes, pupils do not have the knowledge they need to take part in lesson activities. As a result, a minority of pupils do not always engage with learning as well as they should. Some pupils choose not to take part in class discussions. Sometimes, pupils do not have the confidence to work independently. When this happens, pupils do not learn and remember the important knowledge they need to achieve well.

Leaders and teachers know pupils well. They know how to identify when pupils need extra support. Leaders help teachers to adapt lessons for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that they can enjoy all the same lessons and activities as the other pupils. Pupils who need support for their social, emotional and mental health get quality help from experts in school and external providers.

Leaders have planned a high-quality curriculum for personal, social and health education. They provide support for teachers to deliver lessons that help pupils learn well. Pupils value these lessons.

Despite leaders working hard to engage with parents, and providing support to encourage all pupils to attend school well, too many pupils do not attend school often enough to benefit from the curriculum on offer.

Leaders in the school receive excellent support from the multi-academy trust. Leaders and teachers benefit from shared expertise and training opportunities. Staff at the school say that they are proud to work at the school. Leaders support all staff to manage their workload and are considerate of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff share the responsibility for keeping pupils safe in school. They know how to identify pupils that might be at risk or in need of support. They know how to report any concerns. Leaders respond to concerns quickly and appropriately. They work well with other agencies, such as children's services or the police, when they need to. Leaders keep accurate records. This helps them to make sure that pupils know about risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Leaders make all appropriate checks on members of staff and visitors. All staff receive routine safeguarding training.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Too many pupils are absent from school too often. They miss too many lessons. Over time, these pupils do not achieve as well as they might. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils attend school well.
- In some lessons, teachers do not check pupils' prior learning well enough. Gaps in knowledge and misconceptions are not addressed quickly. When pupils do not have the knowledge they need to take part in lesson activities confidently, they become disengaged. They do not learn as well as they should. Teachers need to ensure that they check pupils' prior learning and adapt lesson activities to meet pupils' needs.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2016.

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.

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	135563
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10211604
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,091
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	45
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Howard Gee
Headteacher	Denise Clarke
Website	www.priorywitham.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2022.
- The school has a nursery provision for two-year-olds.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers for a small number of pupils.
- Sixth-form students attend lessons in some subjects at The Priory Academy LSST.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the academy headteacher, the primary headteacher, the secondary headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer, the chair of trustees and other representatives of The Priory Federation of Academies.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, English, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils reading to their teacher.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum plans and visited lessons for some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with leaders from the early years, primary, secondary and sixth-form to discuss their plans to support pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors met with pupils from a range of year groups, including pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors discussed safeguarding with leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector viewed the single central record.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

John Spragg, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Aileen King

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