

Inspection of a good school: Priory School

Mountfield Road, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2XN

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 November 2023

Outcome

Priory School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy a broad, interesting, and engaging curriculum, which is demonstrative of the school's aim to be 'inclusive and creative'. The school is ambitious, and staff strive to deliver high quality education for all. Most pupils achieve well, and the majority go on to successful further education, employment or training. Pupils in the specially resourced provisions for those with complex special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive excellent support from well-trained staff.

Pupils feel safe. They are confident they can share concerns with an adult, and about how any worries are dealt with by staff. They understand and respect each other's differences and are accepting of different beliefs. Most pupils behave well and follow clear school rules. Learning is rarely disrupted. However, a small number of pupils do not behave as well as they should.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their talents and interests. They take part in a wide range of extra-curricular clubs. Many pupils also take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils can contribute to the life of the school by taking on responsibilities like being anti-bullying ambassadors or sitting on the student council.

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

The curriculum is well planned. Subject leaders have chosen content carefully to match the aims of the national curriculum and have sequenced it logically. This ensures that pupils gain important knowledge and build this over time. Pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers. Most pupils achieve well across the broad curriculum, with many learning the full English Baccalaureate suite of subjects. However, disadvantaged pupils, including those with SEND, do not achieve as well in public examinations at the end of Year 11.

Teachers deliver the curriculum effectively, using their strong subject knowledge. Where teaching is most effective, new learning is presented clearly and questioning used well to

check what pupils remember. In most subjects, learning activities help pupils to understand and remember the knowledge set out in the school's curriculum. However, this is not consistently the case. At times, work does not build well enough on what teachers have identified that pupils know and can remember. This leads to some pupils not being able to retain and recall some important knowledge.

There is some variability in the provision for pupils with SEND across the school. Those accessing the specialist resource bases get expert support, which helps them to thrive, both academically and socially. Provision in the rest of the school is less consistently effective. While needs are identified accurately, teaching sometimes does not meet these well enough. Therefore, not all pupils with SEND achieve as well as they could.

Leaders have taken steps to address challenges in behaviour that have arisen since the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff set high expectations. Low-level disruption in classrooms is rare and dealt with effectively, so that the learning of others is not interrupted. At social times, most pupils behave positively towards each other and staff. However, a small number of pupils struggle to do this, being truant from lessons and behaving anti-socially and defiantly around the site. Work to address this issue is ongoing.

The school prioritises pastoral care and support for pupils. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of attendance had declined, affecting some pupils' learning and achievement. Thanks to a range of supportive measures put in place by the school, attendance is now rising again.

The school ensures that pupils learn what they need to know to be prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils learn about the importance of treating everybody equally. They learn about different faiths and cultures and understand the importance of this knowledge. Pupils receive suitable careers guidance, which helps them to make well-informed decisions about their next steps.

Leaders are insightful. They are aware of the school's strengths and where development is needed. The governing board is strategic and challenges the school appropriately. Parents endorse the school's work. They commend the approachable, knowledgeable and encouraging staff, and appreciate the many opportunities that their children receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, assessment information is not used well enough to adapt future teaching. This means that some pupils struggle to remember what they have learned. The school should ensure that assessment information is used consistently well to

influence and direct future learning activities, so that pupils retain and develop their knowledge across the curriculum more successfully over time.

- In a few subjects, the work provided to pupils with SEND is sometimes not sufficiently adapted to enable them to access the full curriculum. When this is the case, these pupils do not learn important knowledge and skills. The school should ensure that teaching is adapted successfully so that pupils with SEND have their needs met consistently well across the curriculum.
- The behaviour and attitudes of a small number of pupils do not meet the school's high expectations. As a result, there is a minority of pupils who are sometimes defiant and anti-social in the corridors. The school should ensure that its ongoing work to raise standards successfully addresses truancy and unwanted behaviours exhibited by these pupils.

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 May 2018.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	114598
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10287870
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Colebourn
Headteacher	Jon Curtis-Brignell
Website	www.priory.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2018

Information about this school

- At the time of the inspection, the school was using five registered providers of alternative provision.
- This school has two specialist resourced provisions for pupils with education, health and care plans. The Oak Centre supports pupils with a primary diagnosis of autism. The Deaf Support Facility is a centrally funded provision, managed by the Sensory Needs Service for East Sussex County Council.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils, and spoke to members of the local governing board and a representative of the local authority.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, history and modern foreign languages. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also considered curriculum thinking and pupils' learning in religious education.
- Inspectors considered 376 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire. They took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey as well as the views of pupils that were gathered throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with the school's special educational needs co-ordinator.

Inspection team

James Stuart, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mike Boddington

Ofsted Inspector

Yvonne Garvey

Ofsted Inspector

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