

# Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Priestley Smith School

Perry Beeches Campus, Beeches Road, Great Barr, Birmingham, West Midlands B42 2PY

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 October 2024

## **Outcome**

Priestley Smith School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The Priestley Smith School is a wonderful place to learn. All pupils have a visual impairment. Through the school's work, all pupils flourish. Staff, parents, carers and pupils are proud to be part of the school. The school has high expectations for all pupils. Staff spend time getting to know each pupil. The quality of care and education is exceptional.

Innovative adaptations help pupils access learning. A reprographics team create resources that engage and excite pupils. Pupils use assistive technology to access the curriculum. For example, when visiting the local supermarket, pupils use apps to scan and identify different products. As a result of this, pupils venture into the community with determination and confidence.

Pupils access a range of enrichment activities. This includes swimming, individual Braille support, speech and language therapy, and instrumental lessons. Pupils take part in adventurous activities such as rock climbing, den building, abseiling and cave crawling. This impressive work helps develop pupils' resilience and strength of character.

Pupil and staff relationships are a strength. Pupils enjoy working together and playing together. Pupils feel safe and understood. The environment is purposeful and pupils are well supported in all areas of the school.

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

The curriculum is broad, balanced and ambitious. It supports the individual needs and interests of pupils. Leaders have identified what they want pupils to know and remember. Learning is delivered in small steps. This helps pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. For example, the early teaching of Tactile Discrimination Skills (TDS) is a strength. TDS helps pupils develop an awareness of different shapes, patterns and textures. The progressive TDS programme has transformed pupils' learning and independence.

The school has a clear plan in place to help pupils read. The knowledge pupils need to become fluent readers is set out in a logical order, with support from mainstream and specialist experts. For example, the lead braille teacher ensures that staff are confident in teaching braille. This forms the foundations in which reading is built on. Staff check that pupils can remember the intended sounds before they move on. As a result of this, from key stage 2, pupils were reading braille with fluency and accuracy.

Teachers select resources that help pupils remember. For example in science, pupils used practical materials that they could push and pull. This helped pupils understand the key vocabulary in the lesson. Teachers plan questions to engage pupils. For example, when reading 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory' pupils were asked, 'Who wants to leave the chocolate room?' This question excited pupils by stimulating their senses and imagination.

Teachers check carefully and identify accurately gaps in pupils' learning. Staff know when to intervene and address misconceptions. For example, in a Braille lesson, a pupil typed a letter incorrectly. The teacher quickly showed the pupil the correct way. As a result of this intervention, the subsequent attempts made by the pupil were accurate.

The school's personal social, health and economic education programme is well organised to build pupils' knowledge. Pupils understand the difference between safe and unsafe relationships. They can explain why consent is important. Pupils can give examples of how to stay safe online and offline. There is an effective careers programme, which starts from the early years. Pupils access work experience opportunities in key stage 4 and post-16. Through regular trips and visits, all pupils are active citizens in the local community. As a result of this, pupils are prepared for adulthood and life in modern Britain.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well. All pupils are expected to gain a range of qualifications by the time they move on, both academic and vocational.

Pupils' attendance is improving. Phone calls, home visits and multi-agency partnerships are key to this success. There is a calm and supportive school culture. As a result of this, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are kind and caring; they look after each other.

Leaders and governors are a driven and ambitious team. They continue to improve and transform pupils' lives and outcomes. This was evident in how leaders have improved reading and pupils' attendance. Leaders have made sure that everyone has a clear role to succeed and make a difference in the school. For example, the new middle leadership team add great value to school monitoring and development. This is a school that never stands still.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in January 2015.

## **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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103614
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322701
<b>Type of school</b>	All-through special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	84
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	16
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Annie Bearfield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanna Garvey
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.priestleysmith.com">www.priestleysmith.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Priestley Smith School is a specialist provider for pupils with visual impairment. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## 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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders, other leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors visited lessons across the curriculum, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors discussed the school's approach to early reading and visited some phonics lessons.
- 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 reviewed a range of school documentation relating to the work of the school. Inspectors spoke to leaders and staff about the wider work of the school. Inspectors took into account the views of parents, including reviewing the responses to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to the staff survey.

## Inspection team

David Lisowski, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Susan Hickerton

Ofsted Inspector

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