

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **PRIORY SCHOOL**

Bury St Edmunds

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124901

Headteacher: Mrs L Preece

Reporting inspector: Mr M G Whitehead  
21061

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> January 2003

Inspection number: 249415

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	9 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed

School address:	Mount Road Bury St Edmunds Suffolk
Postcode:	IP32 7BH
Telephone number:	01284 761934
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Griffiths

Date of previous inspection:	19 <sup>th</sup> May 1997
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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21061	M G Whitehead	Registered inspector	Citizenship	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
19650	S Thomas	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
23412	A Jeffs	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Music Residential provision	
8056	H Probert	Team inspector	Mathematics Art and design Physical education Educational inclusion, including race equality	
21899	G Lawson	Team inspector	Science Design and technology Religious education Special educational needs	
17530	M Cureton	Team inspector	Humanities Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Priory School is a day/residential special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and a range of associated emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are also some pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, physical difficulties, hearing impairment and severe learning difficulties. There are 96 pupils on roll comprising 67 boys and 29 girls whose ages range from 9 to 16 years. Twenty-four of the pupils are weekly boarders and the remainder attend on a daily basis. All except seven pupils are white British. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school serves the western area of Suffolk which is largely rural and is interspersed with small villages and towns. The average earnings for families living in these areas are well below the national average and there are some cases of extremely low income. Eighteen per cent of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The attainment levels of pupils are below the national average because of their special educational needs.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Priory School is a very good school that runs very efficiently. The leadership and management of the headteacher, her deputy headteacher and the head of care are excellent. Pupils make good progress and achieve well because of the very high quality of teaching that they receive and the excellent care that is provided for them. Taking account of the very high quality of education and care that they receive, the progress that they make and the cost per pupil, this school provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher provide extremely high standards of leadership and management for the school.
- The leadership and management by the head of care and the residential provision are excellent.
- The school's procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are excellent.
- Relationships throughout the school, between staff and pupils and between pupils and their peers are excellent.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- The roles of some curriculum co-ordinators and the links with subject specialists could be strengthened and developed further.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support the subjects being taught could be improved even further.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.*

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in 1997 and, since then, it has made good improvements. The key issues raised at the time of the last inspection have been addressed successfully. Literacy and numeracy strategies have been introduced and this has had a very positive impact on all lessons. Religious education is now taught as a separate subject on the timetable as well as being supported during other areas of study and activities such as citizenship and school assemblies.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year 6	by Year 11	<b>Key</b>  very good      A  good              B  satisfactory      C  unsatisfactory   D  poor               E
speaking and listening	B	B	
reading	B	B	
writing	B	B	
mathematics	B	B	
personal, social and health education	C	C	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	

\* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs

Pupils make very good progress throughout the school in music. Progress is also very good in citizenship, art and design, and design and technology, including food technology. Progress in humanities subjects is satisfactory for pupils in Years 5 to 9, but is very good for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In all other subjects, pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve well. Music and physical education are particular strengths and the pupils benefit greatly from the very high standards of teaching.

The attainment levels of all pupils are below the national average because of their learning difficulties and, therefore, achievement is judged according to the gains that pupils make in their knowledge and understanding in each subject. In many cases, a small improvement can represent a very good achievement.

All pupils who left Priory School last year were successful in their studies. There were 15 passes in the Diploma of Vocational Education, 15 passes in Skillpower. OCR Entry Level exams were also taken; 15 passes in English and 14 passes in mathematics. Pupils also took AQA Entry Level exams in physical education and 14 passes were awarded. There were 15 passes in the French Foundation Level examination; 15 awards were made for National Record of Achievement/Progress Files and their work was commended.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive. Pupils enjoy their work and the many activities in and outside school very much.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils move around the school in a purposeful and orderly manner. There are very few instances of bullying.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent relationships abound throughout the school. Staff set very good examples for the pupils to follow.



Attendance	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school.
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Pupils concentrate as well as they are able in lessons. Most are keen to answer questions and enjoy lessons. They are highly motivated to learn and are polite and courteous. Pupils show respect for each other and for the adults; they follow the very good example set for them by the adults.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 5 – 6	Years 7 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

The quality of teaching in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education is good overall. There are many occasions when the teaching is very good. The teachers and support staff work very well together and, with their very good knowledge of the pupils and their individual differences and needs, are able to make sure that pupils make good progress during lessons. Teachers and support staff have high expectations of the pupils who do their very best to live up to those expectations. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and this is a major strength of the school. Pupils show the greatest respect towards staff and staff treat all pupils with care, respect and dignity at all times. Teachers take every opportunity to develop the literacy and communication skills of the pupils both in and out of lessons. Similarly, skills of numeracy are taught well and promoted across different areas of study. In the one lesson that was less than satisfactory, the pace of the humanities lesson was slow, there was insufficient planning and the objectives of the lesson were unclear. This is the exception and does not reflect the general practice within the school. Overall, the school works extremely well to meet the needs of all pupils and enables them to learn very well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good and provides a broad range of worthwhile opportunities, which meet fully the interests, attitudes and complex special needs of all pupils. Preparation for careers and life after school is an extremely strong feature of this provision. There are very good opportunities for extra-curricular activities, including residential activities in both England and France. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. At every opportunity, staff reinforce an understanding of right and wrong and provide very good role models.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pupils' welfare is of the highest importance. The school has a good and effective range of procedures to assess pupils'

	progress. These are used well to plan future work.
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The school works very well in partnership with parents and this is clearly reflected in the responses that were made to the questionnaire. The school has very good links with parents and provides them with very high quality information. This is greatly appreciated by them. The school curriculum is good and is created especially to cater for the special needs of the pupils. It has a variety of subjects, sufficient to meet the statutory requirements, and they are each awarded an appropriate amount of time. There are some special courses for the older pupils, which enable them to follow accredited courses and gain some formal recognition of their success. The school's procedures for caring for pupils are exceptionally good and procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are excellent.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is an excellent leader, as are her deputy headteacher and head of care. They are extremely effective managers of people and events within the school. The key stage co-ordinators are very good and, as part of the newly formed middle management team, are developing very well, gaining in strength and effectiveness. Subject co-ordination is also good on the whole with the humanities in need of some development.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is very effective in its support for the school and the ways in which it monitors the work of the school. It gives guidance in its leadership role through the skills of its members and helps the school to work towards its targets.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and her senior staff work well to make sure that the school's performance is carefully monitored and that the information gained is used to help bring about improvement in performance.
The strategic use of resources	Staff make good use of resources in most subjects which has a positive effect on pupils' learning.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources have all developed well to make sure that appropriate, sensitive support is available for all pupils. This applies to both day and residential pupils whether they are in lessons or during break-times. The headteacher has excellent leadership qualities and has changed the staffing structure and responsibilities since her appointment. Her deputy headteacher and head of care are exceptional in their qualities and are very effective in their support of the headteacher, other staff and all pupils in the school. Senior management staff work extremely well together and share each other's skills and experience for the benefit of the school.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The calm and happy atmosphere in the school.</li><li>• Staff are approachable.</li><li>• Their children make good progress.</li><li>• The behaviour of their children is good.</li><li>• They receive a good amount of information.</li><li>• There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The amount of homework.</li></ul>

The inspectors agree with the very positive views of the parents. The school is well led and managed. This creates the calm, happy atmosphere in the school. The school provides the right amount of homework.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Throughout the school, achievement and progress are good. During individual lessons and over longer periods of time, pupils make clear progress in speaking and listening skills and in their reading and writing skills. The school is very effective in making sure that all pupils learn well regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity or ability. This very positive result comes as a result of the dedication and commitment of the staff.
2. Achievement and progress are very good in music, art and design and physical education. Progress and achievement in humanities are satisfactory whilst, in all other subjects, pupils make good progress and achieve well.
3. The school offers some accredited courses for senior pupils including City and Guilds vocational courses. There were 15 passes in the Diploma of Vocational Education, 15 passes in Skillpower. OCR Entry Level exams were also taken; 15 passes in English and 14 passes in mathematics. Pupils also took AQA Entry Level exams in physical education and 14 passes were awarded. There were 15 passes in the French Foundation Level examination; 15 awards were made for National Record of Achievement/Progress Files and their work was commended. Pupils are also subject to the national assessment tasks and are graded accordingly. The vocational programme is linked to the National Record of Achievement and the new 'Progress File'. The school is offering three 'Entry Level' awards and is aiming to increase this to five. There is also an 'Independent Living Skills' programme, which provides a group of senior resident pupils the opportunities to develop these independence skills and gain credit for doing so. They receive a special certificate produced by the school.

#### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

4. Pupils' attitudes to their work and their behaviour in and around school are strengths. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. They show respect for others and for property. The residential areas are clean and tidy. There is no litter or graffiti anywhere. Pupils value their surroundings and treat them appropriately. In class, they concentrate as much as their difficulties allow. They are well motivated and keen to take part in lessons. Where pupils particularly enjoy sessions, their response is enthusiastic. They were absorbed in the puppet show performed by a local theatre group. Older pupils did not wish to go for break, preferring instead to talk to the puppeteers about their work. Younger pupils left the performance singing the tunes they had heard in the show.
5. The school successfully promotes pupils' independence and self-respect. Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils and their peers are excellent. Staff value pupils as individuals and respect the contributions each makes to school life. Pupils show respect for adults and for each other. They help each other whenever they see a need. Throughout the school there is a strong sense of individuals caring for each other.
6. Behaviour is very good in and out of lessons. Pupils usually move around the school in an orderly manner. They take notice of teachers' instructions to observe quiet while other classes are working. During break-times, play can sometimes be boisterous but is usually good-natured. Pupils enthusiastically enjoyed the playground table football,

playing well together. Bullying is not tolerated. Any incidents are dealt with promptly by very effective play leaders and followed through with teaching staff.

7. Pupils' personal development is very positive. Staff encourage pupils to be responsible for their own decisions and actions, which develops their maturity. Older pupils make very good gains in independence and social skills which benefit their life in the community. All pupils are learning to take care of the environment and to recycle when possible.
8. Attendance is very good and above the national average for special schools. Unauthorised absence is extremely low. The number of exclusions is low. Pupils enjoy coming to school.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

9. The qualities of teaching and learning at Priory School are good for pupils in Years 5 and 6, whilst the teaching for pupils in Years 7 to 11 is very good. In over four-fifths of lessons observed, the teaching was good or better; in over half the lessons observed the teaching was very good or better. This is a great strength of the school and an area that is constantly developing thanks to the professionalism of the staff and their commitment to succeed. In the small but significant proportion of lessons judged to be excellent, the teaching was exemplary. Teachers had very high expectations and a very good understanding of the individual needs of the pupils. Lessons were carefully planned to motivate the pupils and to make sure that the work was appropriate to each individual. All pupils were keen to take part and eager to ask and answer questions. There was spontaneous discussion of the topics and excellent development of communication skills of speaking and listening. Pupils were pleased with their success and the success of others as they made excellent progress gaining new understanding and skills.
10. The teaching of English is very good for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and good for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and the teachers are very effective in the ways in which they manage the pupils and any challenging behaviour that they present. The school has successfully adopted the National Literacy Strategy and this is now very much a part of everyday teaching and learning.
11. The teaching of mathematics is good for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and very good for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Lessons are often very good. Teaching is lively and very well planned. Pupils are helped to understand exactly what they have learned during lessons as they give verbal feedback at the end of lessons. Pupils tell each other what they have done during the lesson and explain the new concepts that they have learned. This is very effective in reinforcing the new learning. The National Numeracy Strategy is working successfully and helping all staff to maintain good practice in their teaching, whether or not they are specialist mathematics teachers.
12. The teaching of science is good for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and very good for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 encounter science components in their City and Guilds courses which are planned by the school as being more appropriate to meet the needs of the older pupils. Pupils are managed very well and teachers have high expectations of the pupils. Consequently, the progress that they make is good and often very good. The appointment of a science specialist teacher has been of great benefit to the school and is clearly reflected in the high quality of planning and teaching in the subject.

13. Citizenship and personal, social and health education are taught to a satisfactory standard throughout the school. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and there is often good and very good teaching. The courses are carefully planned to meet statutory requirements and provide a valuable extra dimension to the school curriculum. The quality of teaching in some lessons is very high thanks to the expertise of the staff in working with pupils with special educational needs. There are teachers who are very highly skilled in working with pupils with exceptional needs and here their strengths pay off. Pupils respond well to their teaching and make very good progress as a consequence.
14. The teaching of art and design and physical education is very good and the pupils benefit greatly from these very well-prepared and delivered lessons. The physical education teacher is a specialist and is extremely efficient in her management of the subject as well as the actual teaching. Consequently, pupils are very highly motivated and make very good progress.
15. All teachers are supported very well by the special support assistants (SSAs) who work unstintingly for the benefit of the pupils and teachers. They work in close harmony with the teachers and share roles and responsibilities very effectively. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of the individual special educational needs of the pupils and make sure that they are all able to take a full part in every lesson. Pupils who have special difficulties, such as hearing impairment or autistic spectrum disorders, have a curriculum that is tailored to meet their needs and helps them to be just as much a part of the school as anyone else. In these ways, the staff of the school are very successful in ensuring that all pupils have a full and varied education and are able to enjoy the full curriculum that is on offer to them. The relationships between the teachers and the assistants are very good indeed.

#### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

16. The curriculum is good and provides a broad range of worthwhile opportunities which fully meet the interests, attitudes and complex special educational needs of pupils. An audit of special educational needs has been undertaken and particular difficulties of emotional and behavioural development, problems of communication, relationships and understanding are addressed well in all curricular planning. The school can demonstrate that the targets in pupils' individual education plans are well founded and promote maximum progress. This ensures all pupils have equal access to all areas of the curriculum. The level of accreditation is good and looks set to improve further.
17. Provision is appropriately balanced in favour of literacy and numeracy, with strategies well adapted and well emphasised at all stages of pupils' education through good daily programmes of English and mathematics. The school teaches a wide range of subjects, carefully and effectively adapted to reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum. Religious education is well addressed. Lessons in sex education and relationships, drugs awareness and anti-discrimination form part of a satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education. Careers education for all pupils is a significant strength. The school's curriculum philosophy is both appropriate and impressive in its emphasis on the teaching of ethical values, and its very good preparation of pupils for a future in which they are economically active and leading an independent life.

18. Pupils in Years 5 to 6 are given lots of opportunities to find their feet in their new environment, and feel secure enough to begin to learn effectively. Good, informal opportunities for supported play and social and emotional development have an important part in this process. At this key stage, there is an emphasis on physical education, in addition to numeracy and literacy in formal lessons. Provision is highly relevant to the needs of pupils in the systematic development of pupils' skills of social communication, learning skills and progress towards independence. For pupils in Years 7 to 9, these skills continue to receive systematic emphasis. Pupils are given more time to study science and design and technology and art and design. French is introduced to the pupils at this key stage.
19. The very good curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is a significant strength. By the end of their time at the school, pupils achieve entry-level qualifications in up to three subjects. In addition, all are given the opportunity to achieve a nationally recognised vocational qualification with accreditation in the key skills of communication, number, ICT, problem-solving, working with others and 'improving own learning'. This is excellent preparation for an important and useful period of work experience in which all pupils are enabled to participate. At this key stage, high quality specialist careers advice takes on particular importance as pupils are provided with a survey of their academic and personal achievements as a basis for future choices. This transition planning, as pupils consider what comes next in their lives, is very good and a significant strength. About a fifth of pupils go into paid employment, and the school keeps careful track of what they do. Constructive relationships with two local colleges fully support those who continue to study after school. A programme of self-help housekeeping skills supports pupils' progress towards independence.
20. The school has received a 'Sportsmark' award in its promotion of pupils' sport, recreation and leisure. Significant strengths in this provision are specialist therapeutic programmes of physical education, riding for the disabled and an impressive programme in which cycling is taught in conjunction with road-safety. All pupils in Year 9 who are capable take the ROSPA cycling proficiency test. Creative arts are well promoted in dramatic performances and the activities of a lively choir. There are good opportunities for pupils to visit local galleries and museums. Therapies provided for individuals include occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, music therapy and counselling.
21. Extra-curricular activities are another strength of the school. Pupils have visited the Houses of Parliament to support their vocational programme, and an art trip to Paris is being planned. In addition to a comprehensive programme of sport, recreation and leisure activities for all pupils, the school has regular matches with other schools, takes part in local and regional events and makes the most of all 'one off' opportunities for sport provision experience. There are excellent opportunities for residential experience, some of it in France. Early evening activities, available for boarders, are extended to some pupils who have access to independent transport.
22. The school links with a wide range of local businesses. This supports pupils' vocational education very well by providing educational visits to the workplace and good opportunities for pupils to undertake successful supported work experience. Staff from a local museum of aviation visit the school to support science, and a local football club helps with sports provision. The school has good and constructive relationships with two local colleges. The good quality of liaison enables pupils to derive the maximum benefit from the specially adapted courses most useful to them.

23. Since the last inspection, there has been a good level of improvement in overall planning. Taught time has been increased for pupils in Years 7 to 11. The number of accredited courses has been increased to include physical education and French as well as English and mathematics. Design and technology and art and design are now accredited as part of a 'learning for independence' programme. An important programme of key skills to support vocational education is also fully accredited. The accreditation of further courses in ICT, humanities, science and personal, social and health education are being actively considered. A co-ordinator of personal, social and health education has yet to be appointed. Sex education for all pupils, however, has now been successfully introduced into the curriculum and is frequently taught on an individual basis by the school nurse and two specially trained teachers. Co-ordination of the curriculum has been improved and is now a significant strength.
24. The school provision and strategies to ensure all pupils can access and participate fully in the school curriculum and extra-curricular activities are good. An analysis is made of each pupil's needs against the requirements of the new Code of Practice. Any additional needs identified in statements are carefully reviewed and steps taken to prevent these from limiting the access of these pupils to the whole curriculum. For example, the parent of a pupil with physical disability describes how he has gained confidence knowing that it is possible for him to achieve alongside his peers.
25. The school is aware that the numerous levels and steps in the construction of the building make it a difficult environment for any pupil with a physical disability. There are plans to improve the physical environment. In the meantime, the school is sensitive to the needs of a small number of pupils with physical disabilities and provides the necessary support to assist them to gain full access to the curriculum.
26. Full account of the views of parents and pupils is taken in the way in which information about the life of the school and events is exchanged. For example, pupils in Year 11 have been involved in creating the cover design for the school brochure and contributed ideas about its colour and graphics.
27. The school timetable and curriculum are constructed to ensure that all pupils work towards literacy, numeracy and social competence. Additional needs are not only identified but plans are made to provide extra support. In this way, pupils' experiences in school are academically and socially inclusive. For example, a British Sign Language communicator accompanies a pupil with hearing impairment.
28. The school makes very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. At the time of the last inspection, this aspect was judged to be a strength of the school. In spite of the increasingly diverse range of pupils with complex needs attending the school, the quality of this aspect has been maintained and improved. The caring atmosphere in the school and the examples set by staff are vital components in ensuring that pupils enjoy an environment where they can grow and flourish.
29. Spiritual development is very good. The very positive ethos of the school recognises and celebrates the value of each pupil as an individual. Throughout the school policies, there is an emphasis upon the respect and dignity for each pupil. School assemblies develop themes related to personal values, faith, commandments, rights and responsibilities. For example, in one assembly during the inspection, pupils were reflecting on the importance of 'doing unto others as you would like them to do unto you'. Pupils also learn about the key values that underpin Christian and other major world faiths. Teachers try to ensure that lessons in other subjects contribute to pupils' awareness and spirituality. In art and design, they learn to appreciate art in many forms,



for example in the natural environment and through visits to art galleries. Work in English and drama also makes a contribution to spiritual development. During the inspection, an unusual performance with puppets generated a sense of theatre and moments of awe and wonder.

30. Moral development is very good. All staff set good examples. Pupils have many opportunities for decision making in class. For example, it is common practice for teachers to invite them to judge for themselves whether or not they have earned their merit award at the end of the lesson. The very high quality of the relationships means that pupils develop a sense of awareness of their responsibilities as members of the community. Staff take every opportunity to explain the differences between right and wrong so that pupils understand the importance of treating each other fairly. For example, stressing the need to share, wait your turn and be aware of other people's needs and feelings.
31. Social development is very good. The inclusion policies mean that all pupils study all subjects and have opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities. These experiences all provide opportunities to socialise in small and large groups. Assemblies are used well to celebrate and share individual success and good news generally. For example, day and residential visits to places of interest and relevance to their studies provide excellent opportunities for social development. Visits to the Tate Modern gallery and the local art gallery provide rich opportunities for socialising in different settings. In most lessons, there are good opportunities for class, group and individual learning which develops and promotes social skills.
32. Cultural development is very good. The school celebrates festivals of the Christian church and other major faiths. Very well displayed artwork reflects the influence of artists, like Georgia O'Keefe and Van Gogh. In music lessons, pupils become familiar with a range of instruments from different cultures, for example, African and Greek. In geography and drama, links are made with the willow pattern plate and the Chinese culture. Visiting artists and groups enhance the curriculum and introduce pupils to a wide variety of cultural experiences. This illustrates and reinforces the school's commitment to inclusion.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

33. The high standards of care found at the last inspection have been maintained. The level of commitment of staff to pupils' welfare is very high. Pupils' wellbeing is of paramount importance. Senior staff are particularly conscientious in carrying out their duties even when circumstances are difficult. Health and safety have a high priority. Thorough and detailed risk assessments are made of all aspects of school life. All staff pay proper attention to health and safety in the classroom. The problems with the arrival and departure of pupils' transport identified in the last inspection have now been fully resolved. The new road and designated parking bays mean that arrival and departure are now orderly and safe.
34. Particular care is taken with annual reviews. They are managed well. All relevant staff, including residential staff, are required to attend and to report on the pupils' progress. Progress against academic and social targets is discussed in detail with parents and the pupil. The deputy headteacher is assiduous in ensuring that all present have sufficient opportunity to make their contribution.
35. Teachers write individual education plans for pupils and these contain individual targets for each pupil. These targets are reviewed each term or more frequently if required.

Data is collected concerning the progress of each pupil and this is carefully presented to parents in an annual school report. It is clear from these reports that pupils are making very good progress in meeting the targets set at annual review.

36. There are very good procedures for promoting discipline and good attendance. All teachers know their pupils well. Residential staff liaise closely with teachers to ensure school policy is followed consistently. Attendance is monitored daily. Where necessary, parents are contacted on the first day of a child's absence.
37. The school gives awards for all aspects of school life. Pupils value the merits and certificates they receive. To encourage responsibility, class councils have recently been introduced. Pupils have designated roles and are learning how their individual contribution can affect the life of the whole school community. This is also evident in the school's energy conservation programme. Year 7 pupils understood the reasons for recycling and conservation and were able to discuss these sensibly with their teacher.

### **Assessment**

38. The monitoring and support of academic progress are good. All new pupils follow an induction and assessment programme that leads to the early setting of relevant targets within all individual education plans. Initial assessment targets provide a benchmark against which pupils' progress is measured. Teachers keep good quality day-to-day records of progress, with evaluations of pupils' achievement in each area.
39. Procedures for assessment are good, and the outcomes are used well to influence planning. The school has a wealth of assessment data against which to measure pupils' progress. For example, the school uses P-scales (measurement of pre-National Curriculum attainment), alongside the National Curriculum attainment targets to measure pupils' progress in subjects. Pupils are subject to teacher assessments in Years 6 and 9; they sit their national tests as appropriate. Pupils follow nationally accredited courses in Year 11. Teachers use pupils' portfolios of annotated work well to support ongoing teacher assessment.
40. End-of-year teacher assessments and all test results are discussed as part of the end-of-year reports for parents and as part of the annual reviews. Pupils' results, particularly in literacy and numeracy, are computerised so that progress can be seen year-on-year. Progress in reading and spelling is measured carefully by regular tests and the results are used well to provide activities that promote further progress.
41. The annual review cycle is well established with very good involvement of parents, pupils and outside professionals. Statement reviews are of very high quality. They are thorough and detailed with clear involvement of the pupil and parents. Evidence collected through the annual review process shows a very high level of parental satisfaction when parents are asked to comment on their children's progress. Individual education plans are good. Most pupils' targets are specific and measurable and match the targets on annual reviews. Plans include personal and social development targets, which make a significant contribution to pupils' overall good achievement. Targets are set and reviewed regularly and are valuable in assessing how well pupils are achieving. This process helps to ensure that assessment informs future planning and teaching. Occasionally, targets lack precision and evaluative comments do not focus on skills achieved. The school is aware of the need to improve consistency and to build on existing good practice. There are increased opportunities for pupils' self-assessment and evaluation since the last inspection. Records of pupils' achievement are detailed

and well presented. They are of high quality, well maintained and show a considerable effort on the part of the school to keep them easily accessible and up to date.

42. The good accreditation for pupils in Year 11 has raised expectations of pupils' achievement in the senior department. The school carefully measures pupils' readiness for re-integration for the next stage of their education and uses this information skilfully with pupils and parents to plan for their future.
43. The school makes enormous efforts to assess and meet the needs of pupils with very complex profiles, who are often traumatised and behaviourally disturbed. Reintegration readiness assessment ensures pupils readiness for the next stage of their education. Inclusion planning measures the range of pupils' needs across a variety of services and educational provision. Assessment for specific special educational needs is obtained from a range of professionals with whom the school has good relationships.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

44. The school has developed a very good partnership with parents. The parents who returned the inspection questionnaire all had very positive views of the school. Most parents feel the school works closely with them. The school keeps parents well informed about their child's progress. Most parents attend annual reviews at the school. When they are not able to attend, the school will make alternative arrangements and, if appropriate, will go to the pupil's home for this purpose. The report for the annual review is detailed and gives parents a very clear picture of their child's progress. Full discussions are held with parents about their child's achievement against targets previously set and new targets are decided. End-of-year reports have also been introduced. These are more descriptive and tell parents what their child has studied throughout the year. The school's brochure and governors' annual report contain all the required information.
45. Generally, parents are very supportive of the school. Most do their best to support their child and his or her learning. Attendance by parents at school events, such as the summer celebration of pupils' work and the Christmas concert, is very good. Under the guidance of the school, the 'friends' group makes bids for development money.
46. Where appropriate, the school supports parents at home. It has been very active in plans to set up in the area a 'one-stop shop' for parents to discuss their problems. The school continually seeks ways to work with parents who are disaffected with the education process.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

47. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and head of care provide excellent leadership and guidance for the school. They are very well supported by the key stage co-ordinators. Subject co-ordinators work well on the whole to ensure that the school provides an appropriate and stimulating curriculum for its pupils. The school's forward planning is extremely thorough and is carefully monitored and costed by members of the governing body and the school's very efficient bursar.
48. The school is continually striving to improve as a result of the strength and vision of the headteacher who knows the school very well indeed and is fully aware of its many strengths and areas for development. Since her appointment, the headteacher has restructured the management within the school. Her extremely strong, yet sensitive leadership of the school has proven very effective and has generated a very positive and

industrious atmosphere within the school. There are many members of staff who now have important positions of responsibility and, in such positions, are able to exercise their skills and use their knowledge and experience for the benefit of the school. There is now a very strong team of professional people working very well together and making very significant improvements to the school.

49. The headteacher, her deputy headteacher and the senior management team monitor the teaching throughout the school very effectively. There is openness to improvement within the school, and staff are very positive about their work. The constant striving for the best is reflected throughout the work of the school which has recently been awarded 'Investor in People' status.
50. Overall, the governors are very good at supporting and monitoring the work of the school. They make very effective use of specialist skills and expertise to support the school, and the governors play a very significant role in shaping its strategic direction. The particular skills of individual governors are being used to the advantage of the school. This is particularly so in areas of data management and information storage and retrieval. The strengths and weaknesses of the school are very well understood by the governors, and appropriate targets for school development and improvement are set. Members of the governing body visit frequently and keep a careful watch over the school and make sure that they fulfil their statutory duties.
51. The headteacher and governors work very well together, each knowing and using the individual strengths of the others. This is excellent teamwork and is of great benefit to the school. The school also has the benefit of very experienced and knowledgeable educationalists on its governing body. This is a great asset and together they make sure that the school is always on the right track and progressing at a suitable pace. Changes are implemented when necessary to solve problems or improve provision, but they are always carefully considered in committee and carefully costed to make sure that they are workable.
52. Special educational needs are managed very well at this school, and one of the governors has been given specific responsibility for special educational needs, and this role has been supported by specific training and has a focus on the changing needs of many of the pupils. There are pupils coming to the school who are bringing new difficulties with them. In these cases, the special educational needs governor will make sure that the school works effectively in making the pupil a part of the school and helping staff to meet the new special educational needs.
53. The governing body is very effective in monitoring the effectiveness of spending throughout the school. This is done through the many figures and documents prepared and presented by the school bursar. The school bursar is also very efficient in managing the day-to-day expenditure within the school. The office manager and her clerical assistant also work very effectively in support of the staff and for the wellbeing of the pupils.
54. The school's procedures for appraisal and performance management are very good, and all the teaching staff have clear performance targets. The school's priorities for development are formulated around the needs of the staff and pupils. The actions taken to meet the school's targets are very effective. There are effective induction procedures for new staff, and arrangements for the professional development of existing staff is good as there are many opportunities. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection.

55. School resources, grants and other monies are used appropriately and they are carefully recorded and monitored by the bursar. The school has responded to the most recent auditor's report and all the issues, which were minor, have been addressed fully. The school has ensured that staff are trained in the use of new technology and such technology is used well to support the work of the school. However, some of the systems that are being used are becoming outdated, through no fault of the school. This is an area that is in need of constant discussion with the local education authority in order to make sure that the school stays abreast of all future development in the use of ICT in schools, especially in management and administration.
56. When the school embarks on any significant spending, careful checks are made to ensure that the school is buying good quality service or goods, the prices are competitive and that all aspects of the venture can be justified. Any major expenditure is always subject to considerable discussion.

### **Staffing, accommodation and resources**

57. Staffing is good in terms of both number and quality. There are enough suitably qualified staff to provide a high standard of teaching and classroom support in most subjects. There is a good programme of professional development and this has had a beneficial effect in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Imaginative developments have taken place with regard to enriching lunchtime provision. The new 'play leaders' provide very good support and are receiving a good professional development programme. In addition, very good BSL signing support was seen throughout the week. The school now works with pupils who have additional and complex needs, in particular within the autistic spectrum and in terms of language difficulties.
58. Accommodation is good, well maintained and with some very good features. Overall, the school presents itself as an attractive learning environment, light, spacious and colourfully decorated with displays. It is well maintained and repairs are made promptly to a very high standard which ensures that the high quality is maintained. The design of the building does not lend itself to the inclusion of pupils with physical or visual disabilities. The number and frequency of steps make movement through the school a tortuous process. The governing body is aware of this problem but will need to review provision in the light of the 'Disability Discrimination Act' to ensure that facilities are appropriate should such pupils, or staff, be admitted to the school. The curriculum is significantly enriched by the drama studio, the music room, the ICT suite and the gymnasium. These are facilities of high quality that make a very significant contribution to pupils' progress.
59. Resources are good, particularly within physical education, art and design, mathematics and citizenship. The resourcing of the literacy and numeracy developments has allowed good progress to be made in both of these areas. The recent development of ICT resources is beginning to have very beneficial effects on pupil progress in computing skills. The range and quality of musical instruments and CD's are positive aspects that contribute well to the success within the music curriculum. The library is barely adequate to support the full age range of pupils. It is well run and staffed with a highly qualified volunteer, but is not large or accessible enough to allow the effective development of library and reference skills.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

60. In order to improve the quality of education even further, the headteacher, senior management team and governors should:
- (1) Develop further the roles of some of the curriculum co-ordinators by sharing the experience and good practice of those who are most effective, and foster links with subject specialists in other schools. (Paragraph 123)
  - (2) Improve the use of information and communication technology to support the teaching and learning in all subjects being taught. (Paragraphs 75, 95, 117, 122)

## **RESIDENTIAL PROVISION**

60. This is a great strength of the school and an exemplar of this type of provision. The previous inspection report described it as 'very good'. The current team agreed that it is now far better than that and can be justifiably described as 'excellent'.
61. A quarter of pupils are weekly boarders. The purpose of the residential department is to provide pupils with stability, security and a high standard of care. Its organisation, leadership and care facilities ensure that all pupils receive the very highest standards of provision. Those pupils who stay at the school during the week live in a secure and caring environment which encourages trust, stability and growing independence. This contributes very well to the social skills of boarders. It also lays a very solid foundation upon which they can develop a positive picture of themselves and, in turn, find greater success in school work. Parents in general speak very highly of the provision and agree that pupils 'really look up to the boarding staff who help them a great deal'.
62. The leadership provided by the head of care is excellent. She and her senior care officer provide a model of very good practice. All appropriate procedures are in place with regard to legal requirements, the care needs of pupils and their individual education plan targets. A very good induction and training programme is in place for staff and this ensures that all aspects of child protection, security and personal relationships are well implemented and monitored. A very positive team ethos exists within the boarding department. All staff, (care, maintenance and catering), know the pupils well and are sensitive to individual needs. This assists in pupils feeling valued and secure.
63. There is excellent continuity provided by the residential staff. 'Boarding targets' are used very well to ensure that individual needs are met. Pupils' individual education plans are linked well to the social and developmental aspects of the residential provision. Care staff contribute regularly, and in very great detail, to the review and amendment of these plans. Documentation on individual pupils indicates that all care staff have a deep and sensitive knowledge of the pupils they support. They also bring a high level of professional expertise to identifying progress and challenges that have very positive effects on pupils' social and academic progress. The link between the daytime provision and the boarding facility is seamless. Residential and teaching staff exchange information on a regular basis and everyone is aware when a pupil has a problem, has succeeded in an activity or simply feels low. The head of care is fully involved in staff briefings and with senior management team decisions. This contributes to the very effective linkage between pupils' academic and care curricula.
64. The accommodation is very well looked after by both staff and pupils. The living areas are spacious and pleasant, allowing pupils to eat, relax and play. Sleeping

accommodation provides appropriate privacy. Pupils describe their sleeping arrangements and the flats in general as 'homely'. Overall, the fabric of the accommodation is well maintained, but a little dated. In particular, more could be done to individualise and improve bedroom and dormitory décor and display areas.

65. A major purpose of residential support is the provision of a '24-hour curriculum'. This is a very great strength of the provision at Priory. Boarders participate in a wide range of well-run activities, such as ICT, art, craft, music, football, cycling and gym. They have the opportunity to cook, and visit outside events, such as the local pantomime. They find these activities stimulating, taking part enthusiastically and in a very mature way. Within the residential flats there are many opportunities to watch television and videos and play music. Without doubt, the highlight of the provision is the 'Independent Living Skills' programme. This is an excellent course which requires pupils to develop self-help skills, live independently for short periods of time and develop a real understanding of what it means to look after oneself. During the inspection, many examples were seen of pupils having the opportunity to do just this by budgeting, cooking and providing for others. Pupils speak very highly of this course, which is only a structured reflection of the excellent care regime in place throughout their life at Priory. The course is one of the best that the inspection team has seen. At present, there is no accreditation for the course. Such a development would further increase the benefit to pupils.
66. Both the accommodation and accreditation developments are included within an appropriate and well-budgeted development plan for the residential department.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	73
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	34	21	12	1	0	0
Percentage	6.8	46.6	28.8	16.4	1.4	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	96
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	17

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.8

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.



### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
87	12	0
0	0	0
6	0	0
1	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

*The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded - the 13 fixed-term exclusions concerned 6 pupils in total.*

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y12**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.24
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.1
Average class size	13.4

#### **Education support staff: Y5 – Y12**

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	528.41

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	1,168,699
Total expenditure	1,038,105
Expenditure per pupil	11,044
Balance brought forward from previous year	90,744
Balance carried forward to next year	90,590

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.96

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	97
Number of questionnaires returned	33

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	24	3	9	6
My child is making good progress in school.	55	36	9	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	42	3	3	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	42	21	6	6
The teaching is good.	64	27	6	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	45	6	3	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	33	9	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	52	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	45	12	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	48	48	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	55	33	6	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	55	30	3	0	12

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH**

67. There has been significant improvement in this subject since the last inspection. Then, teaching was 'at least satisfactory', pupils' response to the subject was 'largely satisfactory' and there was a 'need for new resources'. As the result of very good leadership and a strong commitment by the school, all of these are now at least good, often very good and occasionally excellent. Pupils progress well as the result of imaginative teaching in lessons that have pace, are well resourced and build well on the needs of individual pupils.
68. English teaching is of a high standard throughout the school. It is characterised by detailed planning, good use of resources and it builds on very good staff/pupil relationships. Specialist English teachers make good use of time, work well as a team with SSAs and record in detail the progress made by individual pupils. Thus, in an excellent primary English set, the teacher explained clearly the outcomes she expected from the lesson. She then explored the difference between fiction and non-fiction, using excellent questioning to challenge each pupil in turn. Pupils' answers were further questioned and gradually pupils developed not only a clearer idea of what fiction was, but also progressed significantly in their ability to express their ideas. The class then created individual front pages for books on the care of pets. Throughout the lesson, the teacher took every opportunity to reinforce understanding of basic punctuation, how books work and the technical vocabulary involved, such as 'full stop', 'punctuation', 'cover' and 'author'. Excellent use was made of the interactive whiteboard to assist pupils in their handwriting development. All of the work was very well supported by SSAs and, as a result, the progress made by this group of lower attaining pupils was excellent within the short space of one lesson.
69. There are very good opportunities for pupils to speak and listen. Discussion, jokes and general conversation between staff and pupils are used well to encourage confidence in speaking. Every effort is made to extend speaking skills by making observations, predictions and expressing opinions. In a good Year 11 ICT lesson, for instance, pupils were asked which form of desktop publisher they wished to use. Pupils were then encouraged to explain why. Teacher questions were always aimed at challenging pupils to say more, say it clearly and use new words. By the end of Year 6, all pupils have increased their confidence when speaking to familiar and unfamiliar adults. Higher attainers talk and listen well in different contexts and can explore and communicate ideas. They begin to adapt what they say to their audience and are aware of standard English and when it should be used. This progress develops through the senior department and, by the age of 16, all pupils have the confidence to ask questions of visitors, explain clearly the rules and regulations and describe how they have progressed during their time at Priory School.
70. Drama makes a particularly strong contribution to the development of self-confidence and progress in speaking and listening. It is a subject that is well led, very well taught and highly valued by all pupils. The drama curriculum is a challenging one and, as a result, pupils often progress in ways that might have proved difficult in other subjects. Thus, in a very good Year 7 lesson, the teacher discussed a scenario with the pupils. A chemical dump was to be built in their village and they were to represent different points of view. To encourage the role-play, the teacher modelled one possible viewpoint. She then asked pupils to work in pairs to discuss the development in role. There was a

continual emphasis upon what constituted good communication, eye contact, gesture and attention. Pupils showed noticeable progress in this even within the lesson. They were focused because the teacher had started the lesson with a brief but detailed discussion of each pupil's targets, some arising from the drama curriculum, others from the individual education plans. By the end of the lesson, the pupils were all actively, and often heatedly, engaged in presenting points of view, using rational arguments, good interactive skills and a very real understanding of turn-taking. The development in social and communication skills had been very good indeed.

71. Progress in reading is always satisfactory and often good. The school's literacy strategy takes good account of national guidance; letter sounds are carefully taught, and this helps pupils to read and spell unfamiliar words. Pupils' reading records are completed well and usually provide a basis for future lessons. Within a secondary English set, the teacher had only planned for two days of the inspection week to ensure that the rest of the time could be planned on the basis of individual progress early on. This was very good use of assessment to move pupils on in the most appropriate way. Teachers regularly draw pupils' attention to features of books, so pupils become familiar with associated terms, such as 'author', 'illustrator' and 'publisher'. The school is well supplied with reading materials. There are good stocks of books in classrooms, as well as a small reference library. Care has been taken to develop appropriate reading materials for older pupils.
72. Pupils have very positive attitudes to reading, and are pleased to be asked to read out loud in class. They work well in pairs and individually, always being willing to assist friends, ask for help and read to visitors. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils have a small vocabulary of common words, their understanding of punctuation is developing well and they read with intonation and enjoyment from simple texts, well matched to their developing reading ability. There is steady progress until, by the age of 16, they read shorter versions of Chaucer and have experience of a wide range of literature read by and to them. This includes poems and texts from other cultures, popular children's fiction, such as 'Harry Potter', and play scripts developed within drama and for the study of Shakespeare. Resident pupils have daily opportunities to read to each other and this is a very positive contribution to their development both socially and academically.
73. All pupils achieve well in writing as the result of a good policy and very structured provision for developing spelling and handwriting. Writing skills, such as correct letter formation, spelling and punctuation are carefully taught and assessed. Comparatively little use is made of software and pupils do not have enough access within English lessons to word processors and spelling programs that would reinforce the good and very good teaching. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils write in consistent print, sometimes in cursive. They sustain up to a page of independent writing and have developed the skill of drafting and re-drafting their work. Basic punctuation skills are developing and a clear pride in written work is developing. By Year 9, these pupils have continued to make regular progress in the spelling of basic key words. They are using vivid vocabulary in story writing and compose their own short pieces of poetry. By the time that higher attaining pupils reached the end of their career at Priory in 2002, they achieved six Grade 3's and nine Grade 2's in the Entry Level certificate. This represented good progress and reflected the consistent and informed teaching they had received.
74. Lower attaining pupils also develop well in all aspects of English. By the end of Year 6, they have developed a rudimentary form of print, often with support. They are beginning to read the early stages of the structured reading scheme and are confident enough to

speak in class and to visitors in short, well-formed sentences. By the time they leave Priory, their communication skills have developed well. They write a few short sentences in well-formed print and can sustain up to half a page of story work with support. They write letters to thank visitors and spell a small, but relevant, stock of common words.

75. Leadership of the subject is very good. The National Literacy Strategy has been well implemented and the specialist English teachers successfully use the recommended structure for literacy sessions. Relevant targets have been set for individual pupils and these have been reached and exceeded in many cases. Resources have been built up well and lessons overall are well resourced. ICT is beginning to be used and one or two lessons were seen where this was very effective. However, overall this is an area that requires further development. All teachers and support staff work very effectively in support of pupils who have additional special educational needs and make sure that their lessons are planned so that these individual children can be fully integrated and become a true member of the group.
76. In subjects other than English, literacy skills are consolidated and taught well. For example, vocabulary associated with each subject is carefully introduced, explained and used frequently so that pupils become familiar with its use. There are good opportunities for discussion, reading and writing. An inadequate amount of time and planning is devoted to the development of library and research skills to maximise pupils' independence in this area. The library is small and does not yet fully support the structured use of retrieval and research skills.
77. The vacancy for a speech and language therapist has reduced the time spent on, and the quality of, specific programmes for pupils with the most complex communication difficulties. There is currently not enough work carried out in devising and implementing intensive language programmes for this small group of pupils.

## **MATHEMATICS**

78. Overall, the provision for mathematics is good.
79. Pupils' achievement and progress in mathematics are good and they make good progress because the quality of the teaching is informed, well planned and consistent. Pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6 is good. In Years 7, 8 and 9, it varies from satisfactory to very good with the majority of lessons being good or very good. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching is always good and sometimes very good. The subject is now well planned and there has been a significant improvement since the last inspection in Years 5 and 6 and Years 10 and 11.
80. The National Numeracy Strategy has had a very positive effect on the teaching and learning in mathematics. Additional staff support, and smaller groups of pupils of similar needs and abilities, mean that lessons are well focused on the needs of each group. The teaching of the basic skills of number, shape, measurement and data-handling has improved with a consequent good effect on learning throughout the school. Most able pupils use and understand the vocabulary related to time and solve simple problems related to it. They recognise a variety of shapes and patterns and describe the value of coins and are familiar with units of capacity and mass. They investigate pyramids and prisms and learn the number of faces and edges. Less able pupils make good progress with their basic number work, matching, sorting and recognising simple shapes. Pupils have very positive attitudes to mathematics lessons.

81. By the end of Year 6, pupils use addition and subtraction facts to ten with money. They recognise 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p and 50p coins and are able to sort them correctly. They also understand terms like 'this coin will buy more than or less than'. They work out simple money problems related to buying flowers and use a shape and pattern strip correctly. More able pupils are able to add on numbers one to ten and count back in steps of ten from numbers up to 100. They use a 100 number square to recognise patterns and counting forwards and backwards. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make good progress with their number work and benefit from the patient help of the class support staff.
82. Good teaching and the use of relevant and effective resources ensure that, by the end of Year 9, all pupils have made good progress and most very good progress. Most able pupils build on their number skills, extend their understanding of time and make progress in handling money. More able pupils can read, write and order numbers up to 1,000 and count on and back in 10s and 100s from any two- or three-digit number. They know their two, five and ten multiplication tables and can read time to the nearest five minutes on the analogue and digital clock. They understand the value of digits in £3.06 and £5.29 and can work out simple menus. Less able pupils also carry out simple shopping activities and complete simple number squares involving nine figures. They also recognise and find simple fractions and understand that  $\frac{2}{4} = \frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$  is a quarter and  $\frac{1}{2}$  equals one half. Teachers help them to solve problems like  $18 \times 10 = 180$  by getting the pupils to work out practically with blocks of 10. For example,  $9 + 9$  blocks of 10 = 99.
83. By the end of Years 10 and 11, more able pupils can round any positive integer less than 1,000 to the nearest 10 or 100. They recognise simple fractions that are parts of whole numbers. They know their two, three, four, five and ten multiplication tables and know and use relationships between familiar units of length, mass and capacity and complete accurately function machines. Less able pupils use money most confidently, and accurately work out sums, like  $50p \times 5$  and  $90p \times 4$ . Their understanding of time is improved and they successfully complete exercises relating to blocks of time, for example 15 minutes, 20 minutes. In one very good lesson in Year 11 during the inspection, pupils were learning that multiples of ten end in zero and they express an array in terms of multiplication and division facts.
84. Numeracy is taught well in many other subjects. For example, in physical education, pupils measure the length of the swimming pool, which is more than 30 metres. In dance, they learn to work in pairs and also form an 'array' as they demonstrate Beowulf's warriors preparing for an attack. Staff use 'one, two, three' as a lead into activities so that pupils anticipate that actions will take place after three.
85. Overall, teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 are good. In Years 7, 8 and 9, they are predominantly very good. In one lesson observed, learning was satisfactory. On this occasion, the pupils were less well focused on their work and the pace of the lesson was slow and the quality of learning was more limited. In Years 10 and 11, the teaching and learning are good or very good. Overall, the planning of lessons and the knowledge and understanding of the needs of all the pupils have a significant effect on progress in mathematics. In almost all the lessons observed, teachers maintain a good pace so pupils' interest is sustained. All staff have been trained in the National Numeracy Strategy and there is good use made of the available resources. Older and younger pupils are encouraged to work independently. Speaking and listening skills are encouraged through very good questioning of pupils by teachers and teaching assistants. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. In one lesson observed, very good use was made of the interactive whiteboard but this feature is not

yet used extensively across the school. All the shortcomings on teaching identified during the last inspection have been addressed.

86. Assessment, both for individual pupils and for mathematics across the school as a whole, is good. There is a portfolio of assessed work for every pupil and the work of every pupil is levelled at the end of each year. In addition, every pupil has an individual record of key objectives which are assessed and reviewed at the end of each module of work.
87. The management of the subject is very good. The subject co-ordinator has consulted with teachers to produce thorough long-, medium- and short-term plans. These are used consistently across all age ranges. The co-ordinator teaches in each section of the school, monitors planning carefully and maintains regular dialogue with all staff teaching the subject. She uses the interactive whiteboard efficiently in her lessons and is anxious to extend this practice in mathematics lessons across the school. There are appropriate ICT resources to support the teaching of the numeracy strategy.
88. There are no accommodation issues that adversely affect the teaching and learning of mathematics.

## **SCIENCE**

89. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in science. There has been satisfactory progress in the development of the subject since the last inspection. This is due, in part, to the appointment of a teacher with specialist knowledge to co-ordinate and oversee the subject. The new co-ordinator has audited existing provision and begun to drive the curriculum forward. Good planning is now in place for pupils in Years 5 to 9, which provides a useful framework for teaching. At present, National Curriculum science is disapplied for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to allow them to follow a useful, well-established vocational course, which includes elements of environmental science.
90. Overall standards of achievement are good because of the improved teaching and curricular provision. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve well in lessons and over time. Older pupils, in Years 7 to 9, also achieve well over time and make even better progress than those in the primary department because they are taught by the specialist science teacher. Their achievement in lessons is very good.
91. By the end of Year 6, pupils recognise and describe changes in movement resulting from pushing and pulling objects. Most pupils make simple predictions on what might happen when they apply force in different ways and compare the speed and direction of movement when they race toy cars. Higher attaining pupils can say whether the results were as they had expected and can give sensible reasons for their results. Most pupils know that they need light to see objects around them. They recognise and are aware of several sources of light. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils were excited by the effects of light and patterns of light in a darkened room and recognised that they could hear objects like the teacher's keys but not see them when the teacher removed the light source. They can compare different light sources and are able to record in a grid those things that make light. They know that electricity is used in domestic appliances. Pupils observe and recognise the change processes when liquids are turned to solids. Lower attaining pupils understood that they could pick up solids and would splash or shake liquids. Most pupils can identify some of the characteristics of living things. They understand where domestic animals sleep and what they eat.



92. Towards the end of Year 9, pupils understand what plants need to survive and know the places where living things may be found. They are clear about the differences between living and non-living things and use their knowledge of basic life processes in practical situations. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils measured their own and each other's pulse rates relating it to their heart beat. Pupils worked individually or in pairs on several different activities, making simple predictions, relevant observations, forming a hypothesis and testing it. They recorded their findings and, with confidence and great enthusiasm, showed their conclusions. The dynamic and skilled teaching in this lesson ensured the development of good scientific thinking. Most pupils recognise and can explain in simple terms the need for a fair test. All pupils are encouraged to ask the questions Why? and How? And, in addition, to search in a scientific way for answers. The school uses visitors and visits well to enhance the science curriculum. During the inspection week, Year 7 pupils, as part of their project on flight, were delighted to listen to a visitor from the Imperial War Museum at Duxford demonstrating the force of air pressure. Using a variety of exciting resources, including a toy car 'jet' propelled by a deflating balloon, and a working model of a hot air balloon, the visitor fascinated pupils with the principles of gravity, thrust and pressure and excellent learning ensued. This lesson was particularly successful because of the teacher's meticulous planning and preparation prior to the visit. Pupils will follow up their work on flight and force with a series of visits to the Duxford Museum.
93. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to make gains in skills and knowledge and understanding of science through their City and Guilds vocational course where they work on conservation projects developing an understanding of the local environment and its effect on plants and wildlife. Pupils are encouraged to record their own work and to explore the scientific principles involved in conservation in an age-appropriate manner.
94. Teaching is good for pupils in Years 5, 6, and very good for pupils in Years 7 to 9. A strength of the teaching in the secondary department is the teacher's secure subject knowledge and effective use of questioning to promote scientific responses and help pupils to recall what they already know. She is particularly adept at making the experiences relevant for the wide range of pupils' needs within the group, enabling them all to make progress, despite their level of need. The teacher provides a high, but appropriate, level of challenge, which interests and motivates pupils. Planning is good, with appropriate objectives for each pupil within the lessons, and these are made clear to the pupils so they know what they have to do and learn. Generally, lessons are well prepared with a good balance of stimulating activities. Consequently, pupils are interested and work their hardest throughout the lessons. Teachers use praise and encouragement well, and the management of the groups is good. In particular, the management of any occasional inappropriate behaviour is successful, and this ensures that all the pupils join in the activities. The support assistants work well with teachers to help or guide individual pupils, and staff judge their level of support well so that pupils are enabled and challenged. Teaching teams choose resources carefully to stimulate and reinforce learning.
95. The new co-ordinator has made a very good start and leads the subject well. She has a clear vision and plan for the development of the subject and works closely with the senior management team and the local advisor to ensure that the scheme of work matches the needs of all pupils. Planning is well thought out and highly practical. As a result, older pupils make very good gains in scientific skills, and in their knowledge and understanding of science. The school is aware that ICT is underused to support learning in the subject and plans to develop this as a priority. Resources have been improved and are now well organised, imaginative and of high quality. The designated

science room, although small, is used well and has a positive impact on pupils' learning in science. A new, larger science room is part of the school's future development plan. This will enable larger groups of pupils to be taught science together. Pupils' skills are thoroughly assessed and good records kept enabling the co-ordinator to gain a good view of pupils' progress.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

96. The provision for art and design is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11.
97. Overall progress and achievement in Years 5 and 6 are good and very good in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when progress was judged to be satisfactory to good. This improvement is due to the quality of the teaching, particularly in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11. In the lessons observed during the inspection, the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils were very good.
98. By the end of Year 6, pupils gain experience of working with colour and tone, different textures and show more control in making marks, lines and patterns. They also learn how to mix paints and use colour and tone to make images of things seen or imagined. For example, in one lesson observed during the inspection, they were creating self-portraits using mirrors to study the features of their faces. They were building on the skills gained in previous lessons. Pupils understood the importance of the background and the need to mix colours to represent the features of their faces. They studied the work and style of Van Gogh and tried to represent some of his ideas in their work. There were good opportunities to develop their observation, speaking and listening skills. Good use was made of classroom support staff working with pupils with additional needs. Years 5 and 6 pupils also used paint to illustrate the theme of 'winter harvest' when they observed, drew and painted fruit and vegetables showing their developing skills in these areas.
99. By the end of Year 9, pupils have further developed their techniques and produce very exciting work. They study cubism and a jigsaw of geometric shapes. They learn about the work of the American artist Jackson Pollock and how he placed his canvas on the ground letting the paint create its own work. They create 'hatching pictures' just by using lines to create a range of tones from black through to white. During the inspection, Year 8 pupils were learning to understand the meaning of animation in art. Using a zoetrope (Greek meaning 'tree of life') they gained an understanding of how animation can be contrived. The pupils were keenly interested in the work and each one completed the animation task and made their first moving picture. By the end of the session, pupils were able to answer the teacher's challenging questions, like 'how many drawings do you need to see an animated film?' The lesson was rich in opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. In another lesson, Year 9 pupils were drawing and painting a shoe as a three-dimensional surface. Using pencils, they were transferring a two-dimensional design onto a three-dimensional shoe. During the lesson, they demonstrated the ability to draw on previously acquired skills; they worked productively and at good pace to complete their designs. The knowledge and skills of the teacher and the management of the group had a very good impact upon the quality of the pupils' learning.
100. By the end of Year 11, pupils refine their skills and ideas. Their drawings are combined with other processes. For example, drawing a kiwi fruit before making a fabric picture. Self-portraits are made in a variety of forms. They use textiles and batik work drawing a design before adding the dye. They learn about Navajo Indian textiles, African textiles

and they respond well to tasks, like 'draw a special event in your life, when it happened'. In one lesson, Year 11 pupils were recognising the work of the artist Guiseppe Archimboldo before creating a picture collage in his style. More able pupils were able to construct their portraits by cutting out the shape of the food to make the feature of their portrait. Most able pupils were able to show great attention to detail and had a good sense of proportion.

101. Teaching and learning were satisfactory to good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 to 11. In the lessons in Years 5 and 6, the planning of work was good and effective use was made of the materials available. However, the management of the lessons for some pupils was not sharply focused and the procedures for the handling of materials were not precise. All the lessons observed in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 were planned with great care and they involved all pupils to the full. Lessons were based upon a detailed knowledge of each pupil. The teacher monitors how well all pupils are learning. The resources are prepared in advance and the activities are interesting and help pupils of all ages and abilities to want to learn. The teacher monitors how well pupils are learning by careful questioning and sets tasks that challenge. Pupils respond well to these approaches, try hard and concentrate well.
102. The art and design specialist and co-ordinator has a very good knowledge of the subject. The accommodation for lessons in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 is good; however, the co-ordinator acknowledges the need to improve the resources for Years 5 and 6 and the need to increase the availability of computers to allow more extensive use of programs like Paint and Colour Magic in the art room.
103. Art and design are strengths of the school and the pupils' work is displayed well around the building. It is evident that pupils enjoy their work in art and design. Of particular merit is the range of visits arranged to places like the Tate Modern Exhibition, local galleries and places of interest.
104. There is good coverage of National Curriculum aspects and the assessment procedures are good. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are assessed against the appropriate 'P' levels and National Curriculum levels. In Years 7, 8 and 9, progress is assessed against National Curriculum levels. In Years 10 and 11, skill-power log sheets are used to assess progress.

## **CITIZENSHIP**

105. The overall provision for the teaching of citizenship throughout the school is very good and although there is only a requirement to teach citizenship for pupils in Years 7 to 11, in Priory School, citizenship is a part of the curriculum for all pupils, whatever their age. This certainly enriches the educational experiences of the pupils as it is carefully presented and is developed with the special educational needs of the pupils in mind. For the pupils in Years 5 and 6, the citizenship modules also cover personal, social and health education areas of study.
106. Overall, pupils make very good progress. The younger pupils use story books to set a scene which they then discuss. In one lesson observed, Year 8 pupils were discussing 'A Kestrel for a Knave' – a book that focuses on bullying issues. Pupils take the issues in their stride and develop a clear understanding of how a situation of bullying can arise at home, at school or in the work place.
107. Older pupils in Year 9 entered in to discussion about the 'value' of things. There was much deep and interesting discussion and some very mature statements made by the

pupils. For example, the discussions developed from the value of things like your house and antiques to the 'value' that you would put on someone who is very special to you. Although the levels of attainment were below the national average because of their learning difficulties, the sentiments being expressed and the maturity of thought from many of the group were certainly in line with the maturity levels of the average 14- year-old.

108. The content of the courses is carefully planned to focus on three main areas; self - community involvement, self and others – political literacy, and beyond self – social and moral responsibility. In addition to the individually planned modules, there is a focus on citizenship within several others and all subjects of the school curriculum have contributed to the citizenship programme. In this way, it raises the awareness amongst teachers as well as pupils that in every area of study there are elements of citizenship to be addressed. This is also true of the school's approach to the teaching of personal, social and health education. Moral and social education cross into both areas of study and are regarded as equally important in each.
109. The quality of teaching is generally very good. Lessons are very well planned to meet the demands of the pupils and to make sure that all pupils get the opportunity to take part in discussions. In one lesson observed, the teacher had carefully grouped the pupils to make sure that discussion could not be dominated by the more powerful members of the group. This proved very successful and, thanks to the openness allowed during discussion, thoughts about valuing things moved on. There then followed a very mature discussion about the values that old people place on peace and quiet, time to be alone and time to admire the view. Pupils were then presented with 'thinking homework'. They were all charged with taking time to think about the things that they like and value most, at school, at home and in the community. One pupil told the group that it was the differences in people that made them special, whilst another said that nobody is perfect, but everybody is perfect at something. The quality and depth of these comments illustrate the success of the lessons and the very high quality of teaching and facilitating of discussion.
110. The school has a very good supply of resources to support the teaching of citizenship. The school also downloads a great deal of material from the Internet as there is an abundance of excellent material available. The school has yet to develop a comprehensive system of assessing pupils' attainment and progress in this area. The school recognises that this is an area for development and has already begun to formulate criteria for awarding grades to pupils for the work they have done.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

111. Provision for design and technology is very good and has steadily improved since the last inspection when it was deemed good. This is due to the work of the co-ordinator who inspires and enthuses the pupils and who plans and provides exciting resources. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement and progress. Pupils make very good progress throughout the time they are in school because of precise and interesting teaching carefully tailored to meet their individual needs.
112. By the end of Year 6, most pupils achieve well. They explore and use a range of materials, including wood, mouldable materials and textiles. In one lesson, Year 6 pupils were so inspired by a story and the illustrations of a patchwork quilt that they chose to make one of their own. They began to design and make individual squares for a class quilt, choosing shapes and colours and making templates to cut around, gradually building up squares to be joined. Teachers provide a good range of materials and

resources and, by the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils develop an understanding of the materials they work with, and many pupils use small tools, such as scissors, paste spreaders and rollers, independently. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. There is an expectation that pupils will do their best and pupils develop their concentration and improve their cutting, joining and folding skills. In food technology, Years 5 and 6 pupils design and make sandwiches for a party, first visiting a supermarket to investigate the different types of sandwich and bread sold commercially.

113. The teacher demonstrates skills well and, by the end of Year 9, pupils begin to follow the design and make process and, with support, evaluate their work in a simple way. They carefully handle and choose tools and materials for specific purposes. For example, Year 9 pupils evaluated their designs for mini torches and knew which ones would work the best. They made electrical circuits and designed and made plastic cases to enclose the circuits. Most pupils use power tools with a high degree of independence to drill and shape the torches. All took great care to finish their torches, making sure the edges were smooth; their efforts were successful and the finished items were attractive. Good links with other subjects, for example science and art and design, extend pupils' learning and give them additional opportunities to practise their skills. Effective teamwork and organisation in food technology enable higher attaining pupils to work independently and all pupils to develop skills with kitchen implements. Pupils use digital scales to weigh and measure ingredients with absolute precision. They have a good understanding of the methods of blending, creaming, mixing and crumbing and organise their time well. Good teaching ensures all pupils have a good understanding of hygiene in the kitchen and use all implements, including the ovens, carefully and safely.
114. The school uses the community well to enhance the curriculum. During the inspection week, Year 10 pupils watched the Garlic Theatre puppet show in preparation for their project on puppets. The teachers' very good preparation and planning made the start of this project highly stimulating and very successful. Pupils had the opportunity to ask the puppeteers questions after the performance. All pupils were well prepared and had astute and very sensible questions relating well to the design and making process. Some pupils also asked questions about the actual operation of the puppets, as Year 10 would be putting on a school performance with their own completed puppets at the end of the school year. Pupils then looked at the very professional and exciting puppets that were made by pupils last year and, with great enthusiasm, began to design their own.
115. Pupils in Year 11 continue to make very effective progress and their achievement is very good. They focus on using and managing materials in practical activities. For example, they explore the qualities of clay, rolling and turning it to make Greek thumb pots and vases. Higher attaining pupils work independently creating very attractive, workable shapes. Pupils with more complex needs also make very good progress and have very successful results through the sensitive and skilled support of the teaching team.
116. In food technology, pupils ask sensible questions and have a good understanding of the way different ingredients can be combined. For example, pupils, having read the recipe for shortbread, asked astute questions on the amounts of ingredients, and compared the measures to those used in pastry making. The teachers' very good planning enables pupils to work in a calm but purposeful atmosphere and they are able to adapt their recipe to fit in with the eccentricities of their ovens and their experiences. They use language well and are skilled at more complex kitchen techniques.
117. Teaching is never less than good and generally very good. The subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through exciting and challenging teaching, which inspires and enthuses the pupils. Teachers

and the support team are skilful at bringing pupils with challenging behaviour back on task. Pupils are aware of behaviour that is acceptable in the classroom and try hard to follow classroom routines. The teachers work particularly well with support assistants, who are well briefed and competent and manage pupils' learning and behaviour well. At all ages, pupils learn to listen to instructions and follow them carefully. Attitudes and behaviour are good because teaching is enthusiastic and motivating, and teachers use very precise and clear explanations so that pupils know exactly what they need to do in order to be successful. Although communication is used well, not enough use is made of ICT in the design process to support teaching and learning. This area needs development.

118. The co-ordinator is active in community arts and develops many opportunities for broadening pupils' experience through community projects. Planning is detailed and thorough. Procedures for checking pupils' progress over time are good and teachers use them well to plan future lessons. The co-ordinator, who also manages art and design, has a very good overall view of her subject and has clear and appropriate plans for the future. The design and technology specialist accommodation is adequate but is shared with art and design and this limits its use. Resources for design and technology are good. In food technology, they are generally good, although the school is aware that some equipment needs renewing. The food technology room is adequate but small and class size needs to be limited to provide sufficient workspace.

## **HUMANITIES**

119. The school makes satisfactory provision for history and geography. By the end of Year 5, in their study of Romans and Celts, pupils recollect stories of Boudicca. They also know basic facts about how Romans built their roads. From their study of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they recollect inventions of the Victorian age and realise how the rapid development of large conurbations and industrialisation led, in part, to the cruel and exploitative treatment of children. Pupils are able to discuss the lives of chimney sweeps in this context. In the one lesson in geography seen in Key Stage 3, pupils were able to describe geographical features illustrated in pictures of the island of St Lucia. They compared these with the landscape in the vicinity the school, and noticed differences in the weather, flora and fauna but were unable to suggest how these differences would affect the lifestyles of those living there.
120. By the end of Year 11, pupils have studied Japan. They have compared the size of the population with that of Britain. They confidently ascertain how much of each country is mountainous, and how much is flat. They use globes and atlases to name the seas that surround Japan and record their findings on a worksheet. They name the islands of Japan and the principal cities. In their study of the changes in warfare in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, pupils are helped to successfully explore how World War Two affected civilian lives, in their confident analysis of a small range of primary and secondary sources.
121. Teaching is broadly satisfactory in Key Stages 2 and 3. Explanation is competent and sometimes engaging, but lessons sometimes depart from planning, which limits their effectiveness. A high level of support is a strong feature of the more successful lessons. Teaching is very good in Key Stage 4, where pupils make very good progress. Lessons at this key stage are very well planned as part of a coherent and valuable scheme of work. Explanations are accessible, well timed and interesting. Key vocabulary is promoted well and this helps pupils' understanding. Learning is supported in a multi-sensory way by artefacts, pictures and written accounts, all of which assist the learning process. Well-chosen globes and atlases are used well in geography

lessons so that pupils learn basic skills and develop a sense of distance and the relative position of various countries. Promotion of independent inquiry is a key strength.

122. The curriculum in Key Stages 2 and 3 is currently unsatisfactory. It is not planned in enough detail to ensure that pupils build systematically on what has gone before. As a result, pupils do not make enough progress at either key stage. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 is very good and well co-ordinated and this leads to very good progress. This subject supports pupils' literacy in the promotion of keywords at Key Stage 4. Numeracy is supported in Key Stage 3 when co-ordinates are taught. Planned use of ICT in both subjects remains an area for development.
123. Co-ordination of humanities across the key stages is unsatisfactory as areas of responsibility have yet to be resolved. Until this happens, the subject cannot make progress in Key Stages 2 and 3. In Key Stage 4, an interesting and rigorous entry-level award with discrete accreditation is being successfully trialled.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

124. Good leadership, the development of a very good ICT suite and a strong core curriculum have ensured that standards in this subject have improved since the last inspection. The current curriculum is built upon the development of key ICT skills using the new suite. This is a strength, but leaves the use of computers within individual subjects and in classrooms an area for development.
125. By the time they are eleven, pupils combine text and clipart to design posters, they search for information using the Internet and CD-ROMs, and they can use basic word processors, desktop publishers and design programs. They have developed a good familiarity with the keyboard and are beginning to manage files. Lower attaining pupils have developed better co-ordination which they employ to process basic text, such as their names or single sentences. In a good Year 5 lesson, the specialist teacher identified a pupil to display the different stages of using a word grid on the interactive whiteboard. He then provided a detailed description of the process and pupils had a good model to copy in pairs. The pairs worked well, sensibly taking turns and assisting each other. Throughout the lesson, there was a very good emphasis on the English skills that pupils were also developing elsewhere. Pupils showed a good understanding of a small but important technical vocabulary such as 'grid', 'log on', 'delete' and 'icon'. Very good signed support was provided which interpreted the teacher's information and requests into a simplified but accurate form. It was noticeable that one or two pupils, identified as having significant attention problems, remained on task throughout the lesson. Progress for all pupils was good and pupils attested to their enjoyment of the lesson and this subject in general.
126. Similarly, in a very good Year 8 lesson, the teacher started with a DVD extract from a James Bond movie and proceeded to model for pupils how to add sounds to their slide presentations. The steps were methodical and no pupil was left behind. However, pupils did not become bored, following the stages with care and then reproducing the work on their own computers. SSAs provided very good support for pupils who had extra learning difficulties and the teacher moved between individual pupils providing advice at an appropriate level for individuals. It was clear that the good progress made by pupils was assisted, not only by the very good teaching and support skills, but also by the comfort and efficiency of the ICT suite, the regularity of adult interest and the use of up-to-date hardware.

127. By the end of their career at Priory School, higher attaining pupils are familiar with a wide range of publishing skills for the production of posters and birthday cards, the use of spreadsheets and how to use CD-ROMs and the Internet to search for information in topics such as 'Egypt' or 'the planets'. Those who have progressed more slowly are still very comfortable with the computer for hearing stories, playing games, setting up small databases and converting them into spreadsheets and using control skills to devise patterns using an on-screen 'turtle'.
128. Pupils learn well because they are enthused by the technology. They are motivated by what they see on the screen and this enables them to concentrate for comparatively long periods. Learning is further supported by the very good curriculum, which has been developed and modified in the light of usage. The provision of a school ICT club for boarders is an imaginative innovation and promotes the subject well. Assessment and recording are very good and the whole subject is well led. Plans for developments are realistic and well thought through.
129. Interactive white boards have been widely introduced and digital cameras are strong features of provision, being used, for example when puppeteers visited the school. These enable pupils to present their work to others in highly sophisticated ways. A school website is currently being developed. This in turn is often used as a teaching aid.
130. Since the last inspection, there has been a good level of improvement. Resources for the subject have been very greatly improved. The school has undertaken an effective training programme for teachers and learning support assistants. Further training for individuals is planned. As a result, teaching and learning have improved and are now consistently good. The co-ordinator has also used the current budget to finance software purchases by individual subject teachers. At present, there have been a number of cross-curricular developments, especially within mathematics and geography. In general, the usage within individual subject lessons is a weakness and now needs to be reviewed.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

131. Provision for this subject is good. By the end of Year 9, pupils use correct French to engage in very simple conversations. They greet each other, using good French. They ask other pupils how old they are, using the correct French constructions. When asked 'Quelle heure est-il?' they are able to reply correctly. Pupils know the French names of the subjects they study in school, and can say which they enjoy, 'J'aime l'histoire', for example. In the classroom, they understand and respond to simple instructions given in French such as 'encore un fois'. In their notebooks, pupils list vocabulary and constructions to enable them to order food and drink, and give directions, using correct French.
132. Pupils readily enter into discussion about new French words they encounter and, by the end of Year 11, they can see similarities between some of them and their English equivalents. These verbal clues help their recall as they make sensible guesses as to meaning. At this key stage, they remember key classroom words which enable the teacher to conduct at least part of the lesson in French. Pupils engage in simple conversations using constructions such as 'je voudrais'. They understand the difference between 'c'est la' and 'c'est ici'. In their preparation for the school trip to Boulogne, they prepare the vocabulary and rehearse constructions to enable them to order food and drink in a café, buy a picnic lunch and send a postcard. Pupils have some knowledge of



French culture, particularly in the areas of food, festivals and tourist destinations. During the week of the inspection, they embarked on a programme of study of French café music, to include Edith Piaf.

133. Pupils' progress is good at both key stages because they are well taught. Lessons are systematically planned, with good opportunities for repetition which leads to consolidation of knowledge over time. As a result, pupils remember what they have been taught. Skilful questioning in the classroom, often in French, ensures that pupils listen carefully. By this means, all are able to take an active part in response. This improves confidence, although pronunciation can be indistinct and, in some lessons, particularly for younger age groups, pupils would benefit if they were able to hear recordings of French spoken by a native speaker. French artefacts and pictures of France are notably absent from the classrooms, although the school possesses both. Written words and grammatical constructions are, however, a strong feature of classroom display. Only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 4, taught by a supply teacher. Preparation of this lesson by the class teacher was an excellent feature of provision. The very good use of an interactive whiteboard motivated the pupils and held their attention. Pupils, already excited at the prospect of the residential trip to Boulogne, were very eager to learn. As a result, proceedings went at a brisk pace and expectation was high. Class management was confident and effective. A well-planned plenary session served to consolidate learning.
134. The curriculum is good for all pupils in Years 7 to 11. It is planned to take Year 7 pupils on a day trip to Calais in the future, which will add interest and immediacy to the curriculum in Key Stage 3. Strong features of the Key Stage 4 curriculum include the residential experience in France and full accreditation. Although resources are good, they were not always seen in use during the inspection. The subject makes a good contribution to cultural education, particularly in the whole-school celebration of Bastille Day. Literacy is well supported, particularly in aspects of speaking and listening and knowledge about language. Sequencing and telling the time support numeracy. Planned use of ICT, particularly the use of interactive videos, is an area for development.
135. Since the last inspection, co-ordination has improved and is now good. Statutory requirements are now fully met.

## **MUSIC**

136. At the time of the last inspection, teaching and pupil progress in music were deemed to be 'at least satisfactory'. There has been considerable improvement within this subject to the point where both of these aspects are now always good, often very good and occasionally excellent. This is a well-taught subject that is highly regarded by pupils. As a result, it makes a very significant contribution to pupil enjoyment and progress.
137. Music is taught by a part-time specialist teacher who has teaching, performance and relationship skills that make music lessons a joy in which to take part or observe. Every class has music and all lessons are delivered with pace, humour and great attention to detail. Lessons have clear boundaries for behaviour and high expectations in terms of performance and listening skills. Pupils are given time and space in which to listen, respond and grow in their musical skills. The quality of music teaching within the school was exemplified by two lessons seen during the inspection. In a very good Year 5 lesson, pupils entered to a Paul Simon disk and then listened to 'Tom Dooley', which they sang with skill and accuracy from a printed text. A disk of Danny Kaye singing the 'Ugly Duckling' saw the class singing and miming in time with the teacher. The central part of the lesson provided the opportunity for pupils to choose an instrument to

represent part of a story, 'A walk in the country'. Pupils showed great care and understanding in choosing and adapting instruments, while their performance ability was shown to good effect in accompanying the teacher's story with the agreed sound effects. Although the class contained two pupils with severe behavioural and attention difficulties, there was not a moment during the whole lesson when pupils were less than fully engaged. The joy was tangible and the progress in communication in its many forms was very good indeed.

138. A second, excellent Year 9 lesson had the same format and produced even better results. The robust and humorous relationship between teacher and class encouraged very good participation in the Negro spiritual 'Let My People Go'. The lack of embarrassment in singing was clear from the outset. The next task was to sing and accompany the Elton John song 'Sorry is the Hardest Word' using gamelan notation. This had been developed in the previous term when the school hosted the local education authority's gamelan resources; the class created an accompaniment to the teacher's singing. To complete the lesson, pupils were asked to sing and accompany themselves. This was a challenge, but one which all accepted well. The first attempt was disjointed and required polishing. With a second brief rehearsal, the performance reached a very acceptable standard. For a group who had only started this work in that very lesson, this sort of commitment and progress were impressive. The very enjoyable atmosphere within these sessions has a very beneficial effect on pupils' behaviour and self-esteem.
139. This subject is well led and the particular skills of the specialist teacher have brought about the development of an individual, but highly effective, curriculum. Throughout their stay at Priory School, pupils develop a wide range of listening, performing and evaluating skills. These are formed by singing, playing but, above all, enjoying a wide range of modern music. The music room and the good stock of instruments contribute significantly to pupils' development. The school choir is extremely popular and highly thought of in the district where it performs frequently. Music is also used well during sessions such as lunch, at the start of some lessons and within the boarding accommodation. Although music is used well throughout the school, some opportunities have been missed to link it even more closely with other subjects. Topics within, for instance history and geography, would assist in widening still further pupils' experience of ethnic and period music.
140. Although not part of the music curriculum, the school works with a skilled music therapist. His approach and reports are extremely beneficial for a small group of pupils with significant emotional and learning difficulties. More time is being considered for this, and inspection evidence indicates that it would be very beneficial in a key area of concern for parents and pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

141. Overall, the provision for physical education is very good. This has improved since the last inspection due to the very good and sometimes excellent teaching and the extensive and good range of learning opportunities. Improvement is also due to the high quality resources, accommodation and the very good subject leadership. Extra-curricular opportunities are a real strength and help to promote the good standards that pupils achieve. For example, 87 pupils can swim without aids and 65 pupils can swim over 30 metres. In 2002, the school achieved the 'Sportsmark' award, which is only given to schools that have effective policies and practices for the provision of a well-balanced physical education programme. The award also requires the school to develop their 'out-of-hours' opportunities and to enable young people to move from sport

in school to sport in the community. The findings of the inspection confirm that this Sportsmark award is well deserved by the school.

142. By the end of Year 6, pupils experience very good opportunities to develop and acquire their games, dance and gymnastic skills. In lessons, they learn to evaluate and improve their performances and begin to understand the importance of fitness and health. In one lesson during the inspection, they were developing and building a movement vocabulary around their drama topic of Beowulf. They were stressing body shape and tension working with a partner. Every pupil had individual targets to work towards. They worked enthusiastically and mirrored the excellent movement demonstrations provided by the teacher. It was clear from their responses that they enjoyed their lessons and made the maximum efforts to achieve high standards. The technical competence and enthusiasm of the teacher was both challenging and inspiring.
143. By the end of Year 9, pupils continue to develop all aspects of the subject and learn to perform technical studies as they work towards their targets. They do this with increasing control and learn to evaluate not only their own performance but also the performance of others. For example, Year 7 pupils were making a technical study of movement related to electricity and machines. They were able to successfully explore and perform basic movements and actions in response to teacher-led demonstrations. Their enthusiasm was infectious and one pupil with autistic spectrum disorders was kept involved throughout the lesson. The skills of the teacher and her abundant enthusiasm have a very good effect upon the overall quality of the learning.
144. In another lesson, Year 9 pupils were experiencing activities which allow pupils to maintain flexibility, develop co-ordination, strength and stamina while exerting the maximum effort. Once again, every pupil was working towards individual targets in the context of the lesson. The lesson also included an element of health and fitness. Pupils understood the use of a heartbeat monitor and the importance of exercise and healthy eating. Part of the lesson involved counting their own heartbeats in their head. In the plenary, they were able to talk confidently about changes in their bodies related to exercise. They were also increasing their understanding of the principles of respiration, temperature, fatigue and recovery.
145. The quality of teaching and learning is always very good and sometimes excellent. Lessons are planned both upon a clear understanding of pupils' needs and physical abilities. The work is always challenging and the pupils very well managed. The planning and assessment are individual and detailed. In this way, the complex needs of all pupils are efficiently met and good support is provided by classroom assistants. 'P' level scales and National Curriculum levels are used to set targets and record progress. In Years 10 and 11, 14 pupils achieved entry level in the Assessment, Quality, Alliance assessments (AQA). There is a wide range of awards for pupils to work towards.
146. The curriculum for physical education is broad and includes horse-riding sessions for all pupils for whom this would be beneficial. The school organises a wide range of competitive sports; netball, football, swimming, sponsored walk and different lunchtime activities, which include weightlifting and games practice, and activities appropriate for each season of the year. The pupils have real enthusiasm for the subject.
147. The subject co-ordinator's knowledge and enthusiasm have been instrumental in raising interest and achievement. The subject also makes a significant contribution to pupils' social and personal development and their speaking and listening skills.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

148. There has been satisfactory improvement in the subject since the last inspection. Effective planning, based on a sensitive interpretation of the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus, has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning and achievement. Religious education now has a higher profile in the school and the time allocated to it has increased. It is now taught in separate lessons.
149. Overall, pupils in Years 5, 6 and 7 achieve satisfactorily in lessons and make sound progress. Pupils in Years 8 to 11 achieve well and make good and very good progress in lessons. Year 6 pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of Christianity and an awareness of other religions. They learn about the origins of Buddhism and carefully handle artefacts relating to the religion. They know stories from the Bible and people that Jesus met and helped and, through sensitive teaching, learn about important Christian ceremonies. Through visits to their local church, pupils are able to recognise and understand the purpose of different parts of the building. They begin to understand the importance of belonging to a group and understand how different religions recognise and follow certain feasts and festivals.
150. By the end of Year 9, most pupils know the essential features of Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and Sikhism. They learn how these religions celebrate festivals and about significant rites of passage. They have some understanding of the development of Christianity from Judaism and understand the significance of rules within both religions. They become familiar with a variety of artefacts associated with different religions and beliefs. Teachers use a variety of resources to enhance pupils' interest and understanding and, in one lesson, Year 7 pupils were engrossed by a range of natural resources, recognising that they came from places which were very special, and relating those to special places for different faith groups.
151. Pupils in Year 11 understand that different practices and objects have particular importance in the different faiths. They look at the purpose behind a range of books, placing them into fact or fiction groups, recognising that holy books are difficult to categorise. Higher attaining pupils make perceptive comments about the truth in stories with religious traditions. Year 10 pupils, in their study of symbolism in Christianity, visited St Edmund's Cathedral. The teachers' very good planning ensured that pupils had prepared appropriate and challenging questions and very good learning followed. Pupils learnt how the abbey had been destroyed and then rebuilt and extended. Pupils understood the significance of the cross and higher attaining pupils knew of the symbolism of the cross made of palm leaves and given out just before Easter on Palm Sunday. Most pupils knew about the symbolism of light and water and the significance of the font. Teachers use visits extremely well to enhance the curriculum and pupils' behaviour on visits is very good. There is an expectation that pupils will prepare and behave well and try their hardest – and they do, improving concentration and developing a good understanding of the place visited.
152. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and mainly good in Years 7 to 11. Teaching was very good in one lesson where the teachers' planning ensured pupils were very well prepared and confident to make a visit, and the learning which followed was very good. The subject makes an effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through sensitive teaching of different religions and cultures. Pupils respond well, extending their concentration, answering enthusiastically and listening carefully to others. In most lessons, teaching is sensitive and is enhanced by the use of good resources. This makes learning fun, so that pupils are well motivated. In the best lessons, teachers create a very positive learning environment and their

strong relationships with pupils enable them to manage their behaviour well. Where teaching is less successful but still satisfactory, the pace of the lesson is slow and teaching is uninspired. Some pupils remain passive and answer very briefly in one or two words.

153. The co-ordinator manages the subject well. She has an appropriate plan for the future development of the subject. Her planning is careful and thorough. Procedures for checking pupils' progress over time are good and they are used well in teachers' planning of future lessons.
154. Resources including artefacts, have been increased and are well organised. However, not enough use is made of ICT to support learning in religious education. This is an area for development and the school is aware of this.