



Priory School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115443
LEA SOUTHEND-ON-SEA LEA
Inspection number 279595
Inspection dates 24 January 2006 to 25 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. George Derby LI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special	School address	Burr Hill Chase
School category	Community		SS2 6PE
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01702347490
Number on roll	34	Fax number	01702432164
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	.Canon Roger Mason
Date of previous inspection	24 May 2000	Headteacher	Mrs. Jaque Faux

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	24 January 2006 - 25 January 2006	279595

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Priory is a special school which takes pupils with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is now admitting pupils with more complex needs, following a local authority review of its provision. Most pupils enter the school with attainment which is below average and many have been permanently excluded from their previous mainstream schools. About 20% of the pupils have a Youth Offending order. All the pupils are white British boys; the school has not had any girls for some time. The numbers taking free school meals is high. The school has had difficulty recruiting suitable staff over the past year. An acting headteacher has been in place since Easter 2005. There is also an acting deputy headteacher and a senior teacher who, together with the acting headteacher, form the senior management team.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Priory school does not provide an adequate education for its pupils. Too many pupils fail to attend the school or lessons and the number that are excluded, because of difficult behaviour, is very high. The school's pastoral support is good. However, there is too little emphasis on pupils' learning. Teaching, which is unsatisfactory, is often dull and fails to challenge pupils. Too often, as pupils move through the school their progress is uneven. There are individuals that do well in GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 and achieve near the national expectations but, overall, achievement is unsatisfactory. The school's data shows the pupils fail to reach their targets in mathematics and science, although they do well in English. Insufficient progress has been made since the last inspection. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. Award bearing courses have increased but the curriculum needs to take better account of pupils' aptitudes and abilities. There has been too little emphasis on the development of vocational opportunities, although some improvement is being made. There is not enough time for learning during the week. Music is not taught and citizenship across the school is not sufficiently emphasised in the school's planning. There is little use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons. The leadership team is relatively new and is inexperienced. Senior staff have spent a lot of time responding to day-to-day crises. As a result, they have found it difficult to reflect on the school's values and aims and what they want to do in the future. The team will need a lot of help to move the school forward and are not, at present, able to do this on their own. The school does not know itself sufficiently well. The school's evaluation of its performance is too generous. Given the low number of pupils attending lessons and the uneven progress they make, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money. In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making lessons more exciting, being clear what it is the pupils are to learn and ensuring that the work challenges pupils and matches their abilities.
- Improve the curriculum, especially with regard to broadening the vocational choices available. Increase the amount of time for lessons, offering music, and enhancing provision for citizenship, religious education in Year 11 and ICT across the curriculum.
- Ensure consistency in pupils' progress across the school, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Improve attendance and reduce exclusions.
- Ensure that the leadership and management of the school have a clear view about how the school should move forward, monitor and evaluate its work effectively and use all available information to identify the areas that need further improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Pupils achieve too little as a result of a narrow curriculum and lessons which fail to motivate and engage them. Too few pupils attend lessons; this significantly affects their progress. Standards across the curriculum are below average by the time the pupils leave the school. Although in English, many pupils achieve well and gain grades just below what is expected nationally, their achievements in mathematics and science are limited. The school's data shows that around only 60% of pupils across the school managed to reach their targets. This is far too low and is recognised by the school as such. Some weaknesses in science have been identified by the school and inadequate teaching in the past has led to pupils being uninterested in the subject. A new science teacher is improving matters but, as yet, there is still much to do. A lack of resources means that pupils make slow progress. Overall, challenging targets have been set in mathematics and science, although the strategies by which pupils are to achieve these are not clear.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 4

These are unsatisfactory. Attendance is too low. The school's figure of 70% for 2004/5 is similar to that at the time of the previous inspection when it was judged as unsatisfactory. It improved in subsequent years, but has deteriorated over the last three years. Pupils' attitudes to their work are often negative and their behaviour is unsatisfactory. The number of exclusions for difficult behaviour and physical assault on staff and pupils is very high. The few Year 11 pupils spoken with show a high level of maturity and good work habits; they generally apply themselves well to their work. However, this is not typical in the school where swearing, abusive and racist language and fighting occur. The school has not met its targets for reducing exclusions or attendance. The pupils on the school council have been concerned about the level of bullying in the school. Staff are rigorous in dealing with incidents but pupils are concerned about reprisals from those they report. A 'bully' box, whereby pupils can anonymously report incidents, was to be produced a while ago. This has not happened. The school is trying hard to improve pupils' health and pupils are now more aware of issues such as substance abuse, smoking, and healthy eating. However, there is still much to do. There are examples of pupils still eating sweets during tutorial time and smoking on the premises. Some pupils walk or cycle to school. The school generally provides a reasonably safe environment in which to work and to keep pupils safe from harm. This is because when violent incidents occur, they are dealt with swiftly and situations quickly diffused. However, too many of these occur. A few health and safety matters were identified during the inspection. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is unsatisfactory. Pupils clearly know right from wrong but have difficulty applying this knowledge. There are opportunities for them to reflect on issues personally and how these might affect their lives. However, there is little review or opportunity to contribute to how they have responded in lessons. Cultural development occurs

through visits, art and religious education, although some pupils find it difficult to accept that others can be different from themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. There were a few good lessons seen with exciting, challenging work, which made the pupils think and reflect on what they were doing and what they could do better. These lessons fostered good learning and high quality work. However, lessons are often uninspiring and pupils absent themselves or are sent to the 'quiet room' if disruptive. The 'traditional' textbook and worksheet resources which tend to be used often fail to motivate pupils. There is virtually no use of ICT to make lessons visual and exciting. In many lessons there is not enough challenge for all the pupils in the group, so some find the work too easy. What the pupils are to learn is not sufficiently clear from teachers' planning and the objectives for the lessons are far too general. Few lessons have plenary sessions which draw pupils together to check on learning. Pupils are generally supported adequately by teaching assistants during the practical part of a lesson and there were examples where some assistants used their initiative and managed the pupils exceptionally well. However, some do not anticipate pupils' actions sufficiently and are not given enough guidance as to their role. Most teachers and assistants have good relationships with the pupils and use appropriate strategies to manage those who are having difficulty coping in lessons and diffuse situations. Some staff, however, accept inappropriate language and fail to maximise the involvement of pupils in lessons. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory in English and mathematics; it is developing in science. However, there is little in place for the non-core subjects, although new course developments are in hand which should rectify this. Teachers are becoming more aware of how to promote learning through their feedback and support. Pupils are beginning to assess how well they are doing in some subjects but there is too little emphasis on what they need to do to improve. Pupils' personal targets are referred to little in lessons and they do not review these at the end of lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 4

The curriculum is not well-matched to the needs and aspirations of pupils. There is too little time for lessons each week and the school does not meet its legal requirement to provide all subjects of the National Curriculum. Music has not been taught for many years as the school is unable to recruit a music specialist. Literacy skills are promoted reasonably throughout the curriculum. There is little emphasis on numeracy and far too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT across the curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, the school ensures that pupils have some element of choice over the range of subjects and courses they follow. Few vocational and work related courses are on offer and there is little collaborative work with local colleges to extend the range of choices

available. The school is beginning to extend its vocational range and is trialling a new programme at present. All pupils study personal, social and health education (PSHE). This course is reasonably structured and has elements of citizenship in it, although there is no separate course for citizenship. The programme also includes aspects of sex and drugs awareness education. Religious education in Year 11 is also meant to be planned for as part of PSHE. However, the planning has little detail. Key skills are taught mainly through the successful Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) programme but are insufficiently emphasised within the rest of the curriculum. Work experience in Years 10 and 11 prepares pupils for adult life, although other work-related opportunities are limited. There is an adequate number of activities at lunchtime. Pupils readily participate in sporting opportunities which are available through team sports.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, support and guidance is satisfactory. The school knows its pupils' personal needs and backgrounds well. There are mostly good relationships and pastoral support and guidance are strong. Staff give lots of their time to pupils to talk to them about their behaviour and the stresses in their lives; counselling is readily available. The school has taken some steps to improve the management of behaviour, raise attendance and reduce exclusions. There has been some impact at the beginning of this term, although attendance during the inspection was only around 65%. The school has adequate arrangements for the protection of children and the monitoring of health and safety issues. Useful links with the Youth Offending Team are developing and a police liaison officer and education welfare officer provide regular support to pupils. Pupils' academic development is supported by a range of procedures which vary from subject to subject and do not result in a clear, robust, tracking system. Information is not always used to set targets, track progress and identify under-performance. Assessment information recorded by the school from different sources on pupils' National Curriculum levels tends to conflict, something the school needs to rectify immediately. Pupils benefit from helpful guidance before selecting their options in Year 9 and also from the advice they receive before coming to decisions about further study and employment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate. Since the acting headteacher took over the running of the school in March 2005 she has been faced by significant staff and recruitment difficulties and the temporary and inexperienced senior management team has been one member short. Much has been done to keep the school running and to respond to the crises which occurred but pupil admissions had to be halted last summer because of staffing issues. There has been little time to reflect on what the school's aims and values should be, especially given the changing nature of pupils' needs. As a result of all of this, the school is not moving forward sufficiently fast and the senior

team needs much help to improve the school. It is not able to do this on its own. The school development plan is unsatisfactory. It was constructed in 2004 and has not been updated. It has not achieved what it set out to do and it fails to consider the impact of its actions on pupils. A new plan is being compiled; this is more reflective of the needs of pupils but still needs to identify specifically the outcomes for them. The school's monitoring and evaluation of its own performance are limited. Its view of its work is over generous. Some systems for checking the school's progress are in place and indicators, such as attendance and exclusion, have been reviewed for some years. However, it is only now, that there is a recognition that things need to improve significantly. Governors are supportive of the school and recognise the difficult task staff have. Although they have questioned why areas such as attendance and exclusions are as they are, they could be much more rigorous in holding the school to account about how it could make its provision more attractive for pupils.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	No	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	4	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	4	NA
The behaviour of learners	4	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	4	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	4	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	4	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	4	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	4	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	4	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	No
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	No
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	No
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	No
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for talking with me during lessons. It was especially good to see how well the Year 11 pupils who attended during the inspection were working and their positive attitudes to their work. Your staff try hard to help you learn. They support you well when you are having a bad time managing your behaviour or if things are difficult outside school. Many of you find it difficult to stay in lessons. These could be much more interesting and exciting to help you learn better and to enjoy what you are asked to do. What you are learning needs also to be much more practical, especially for those of you in Years 10 and 11, to prepare you for college or the world of work. Hopefully, this will encourage you to come to school more often. In addition, there is too little time for lessons each week. You can help your teachers by trying much harder to behave in school, and taking a more responsible attitude so that you are not forced to have to spend time out of school at home. The staff that run the school are trying to improve it but need a lot of help, especially in planning how to assist you in making better progress. Because of all of this, inspectors will visit the school each term to check that things are improving. Good luck for the future.