



# The Priory School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 123562  
**LEA** Shropshire  
**Inspection number** 281506  
**Inspection dates** 19 October 2005 to 20 October 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Meg Buckingham HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Longden Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Shrewsbury
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Shropshire SY3 9EE
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01743 284000
<b>Number on roll</b>	808	<b>Fax number</b>	01743 284 001
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr John Hodges
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 December 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Candy Garbett

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 19 October 2005 - 20 October 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 281506
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Priory School is an oversubscribed mixed comprehensive school for 813 pupils aged 11 to 16 with a specialist school status as a Business and Enterprise College. Most pupils come from advantaged homes and only 5% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. There are a higher than average number of pupils with statements of special educational need and the school premises are fully accessible to disabled pupils. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below the national average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Attainment on entry is consistently above average. The school is an active member of Shrewsbury Partnership in Education and Training (SPET) Federation.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This effective school gives good value for money. Pupils achieve high standards and their personal development is outstanding. The school provides a good quality of care, support and guidance. There are exceptional links with other partners contributing effectively to the high standard of pupils' personal development. Pupils respond very well to the school's positive ethos. Their attitudes and behaviour in and around the school are outstanding and contribute significantly to their achievements. The quality of teaching is good and consequently pupils make good progress. On occasion, the tasks set are not sufficiently challenging and progress is more limited. The management and leadership are good. Day-to-day the school runs very well. The headteacher gives good strategic leadership, setting a clear direction for the school. The senior leadership team work collaboratively with complementary expertise and they have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school's performance even further. Increasingly, others including parents and governors, are involved in the review process.

The school is not complacent about its achievements and planning is directed towards striving for excellence. It looks closely at what it does. The school's self-evaluation is largely accurate and is linked directly with priorities listed in the school improvement plan. However, rigorous checking of the success of actions and their effect on pupils' learning is not yet an integral part of the process. Progress has been good on the points for action identified in the last inspection. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the planning and review process by drawing together the different strands of a priority or initiative, and identify precise criteria for judging outcomes, to show the impact on pupils' learning.
- Continue to develop the role of subject leaders so that they can contribute further to monitoring the effectiveness of the school's priorities.
- Continue the recent improvement in the applied business studies course.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Overall, standards are high. The 2005 Key Stage 3 results showed an improvement in science so that now, pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science (provisional) is well above national averages. The percentage of pupils who obtain five or more higher GCSE grades is well above the national average.

The school sets tough targets and they strive to meet these real challenges with varying success.

Although the school is high attaining there are some subjects where pupils do not achieve as well as others. The school analyses results to identify underachieving areas so that it can improve standards. For example, there has been significant improvement

from previous years, in the Year 10, 2005 results for the short course information and communication technology (ICT) GCSE. The impact of specialist school status on standards is variable. Attainment in most applied GCSE courses is high but results in applied business studies GCSE have been less so.

Pupils generally have high standards when they start at the school and they make good progress. They are set challenging targets in subjects so they know what they have to work towards. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, are well supported and make outstanding progress. For example, in 2005 almost 70% of pupils with statements of special educational need attained five or more higher level GCSE passes.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The school provides a supportive environment which contributes to pupils' outstanding personal development. Pupils attend school very regularly and report that they really enjoy school and the opportunities it offers. They particularly welcome the frequent occasions when their views are sought on how they can contribute to school life. For example, the pupils' keen involvement at the governor's health and safety committee meetings. Behaviour in lessons and around school is outstanding. Pupils have mature attitudes to their work and apply themselves diligently. Their motivation to learn is very high. Pupils are extremely courteous and behaviour outside lessons is very orderly, even in crowded areas. Although there have been some concerns about low-level disruption, this is limited, and useful measures are in place to tackle any instances. The number of exclusions is low.

The pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is good. Moral and social development is outstanding. Elements of citizenship are taught in many subject areas, including personal, social and health education or 'Life' lessons, but pupils' knowledge and understanding is not measured. Pupils develop a very strong sense of community and readily take on extensive responsibilities such as fundraising, supporting younger pupils and organising concerts. Pupils have a very strong sense of right and wrong and are trustworthy. The school council is outstanding and pupils make a very important contribution to decision-making in a thoughtful and mature manner. Their contribution is greatly valued by staff. For example, in preparation for the removal of the vending machine, school council representatives undertook their own research on healthy eating, what the financial consequences might be, and consulted the catering staff about alternatives. Pupils develop a deeper understanding of the diversity of the British community through religious philosophy lessons and visits to places of worship.

A variety of lessons challenge stereotypes encouraging tolerance. Very good relationships exist both between teachers and pupils and between pupils. Pupils report that bullying is rare and staff deal with isolated cases quickly and effectively. The 'Life' programme effectively informs pupils about healthy and safe lifestyles. Pupils are taught how to eat healthily and this is informing the lively debate in the school council about the present vending machine. Pupils develop personal qualities that will enable them to contribute very effectively to the community. They are very well prepared for

their working lives by business and enterprise activities, careers education and the extensive responsibilities they are given.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are generally well planned with clear objectives for learning. These objectives are later used to check the progress that has been made. Teaching assistants give strong support.

Teachers have high expectations of their pupils' achievements, effort and behaviour. They make effective use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) equipment in the classroom to share a good range of resources with pupils and to encourage research. Teachers use questioning skilfully to check pupils' progress and to encourage them to participate in discussion.

Teachers make very good use of assessment to involve pupils in understanding and tracking their own progress and to motivate them further. However, some pupils are not sure how to improve their work because teachers' marking does not always provide adequate guidance. In less successful lessons, a lack of structured planning leads to a lack of clarity about what is expected of pupils, tasks are not sufficiently challenging and they make less progress.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. Learners are served well by its breadth and balance. The school is continually seeking to ensure that the Business and Enterprise dimensions are reflected in pupils' learning. At Key Stage 4 the school has introduced a curriculum based upon different pathways. This includes applied courses, which meet the needs of its pupils more effectively than at the time of the last inspection. With the improvements to ICT, the curriculum meets national requirements. The school responds well to the needs of all the pupils. For example, it has identified a group of pupils in Year 8 with lower attainment and has developed an exciting and stimulating curriculum to support their development.

Pupils contribute to community and business links and they have very good opportunities to broaden their experiences and exercise responsibility. This supports their work-related learning. Pupils enjoy this aspect of their work. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop economic awareness and has improved the provision for developing enterprise skills in certain subjects across the curriculum. However, tutor time is, on occasion, not used effectively. Since the last report, the school has increased the opportunities for pupils to take part in extra-curricular activities at lunchtimes and after school. Pupils enjoy sporting and drama activities. However, uptake is limited and pupils do not always avail themselves of these opportunities.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support to pupils is good. Arrangements for child protection are appropriate and there are extensive links with outside agencies, one of which offers a counselling service to pupils. The school has regular procedures in place to check health and safety.

Pupils feel very safe in school and know they are well cared for. Bullying or racial incidents are very rare and are dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils know where to go for help with problems and are confident they will be listened to and have their concerns taken seriously.

Pupils have good understanding of their own progress and take a share of the responsibility for tracking it towards their targets. They understand how their work is assessed and what the assessment levels mean in terms of what they have already achieved. They are less certain about what they need to do in order to improve. Pupils with a range of additional learning needs make very good progress because there is very good support from teachers and learning support assistants.

There is a wide range of support, from a number of sources, for pupils who appear likely to underachieve or whose behaviour or irregular attendance give cause for concern. There is no clear system to ensure that the progress and success of these different mentoring arrangements, for individual pupils, is collated and evaluated as a whole.

Good careers education and guidance enables pupils to make well informed choices to support their educational and career aspirations.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The management of the school is good and, day to day, the school runs very well. The headteacher provides effective strategic leadership, setting a clear vision for the school to sustain the high achievements and improve further. She is well supported by the senior leadership team, which works collaboratively, with complementary skills and expertise. Each member of the senior leadership team has regular 'coaching' meetings for discussion with staff whom they manage. Staff feel well supported and this dialogue fosters a positive climate of professional debate and personal development of staff, focused on sustaining and improving the quality of provision. Ongoing review of provision and improvement planning are firmly based on regular consultation at all levels within the school. Increasingly the school is involving parents, governors and others in reviewing its practices.

Part of the strategy for further improvement is to support subject leaders in monitoring the standards and quality of provision in their departments, as well as encouraging them to take a wider view of whole-school developments. Overall, subject leaders have responded well to this approach, although it is further along in some areas than others. Some subject leaders are collaborating productively with their counterparts within the

SPET Federation, for example, with improvement in recording assessments in physical education and new ways of reporting to parents.

Overall, the school's self-evaluation is accurate. Many initiatives are under way, particularly related to the specialist college status. The school is looking closely at what it does and the right priorities are in the school improvement plan. The planning and review process is not so strong in drawing together the different strands of a priority or initiative, and identifying precise criteria for judging outcomes, to show the impact on pupils' learning.

The governors support the school well and give their time generously. They increasingly act as a 'critical friend' on initiatives and policies. Effective business management contributes to the good grasp the governing body has on the school's financial position. Resources are used well and spending is linked to the school's priorities.

The school's vision, 'In pursuit of excellence, together we can make this happen,' is underpinning many aspects of its work, not least the standards achieved by pupils. The school has good capacity to improve further.



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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	NA
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	NA

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
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**

The Priory School Longdon Road Shrewsbury Shropshire SY3 9EE

21 October 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we came to inspect your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you, watching how you worked with your teachers and speaking to them about your progress at school. They are rightly proud of you and the work that you do. Your teachers give you good support and guidance during your time at school, and you say that you appreciate this help. The inspectors were impressed by the responsible ways you go about helping others, in school and through your charity work. Your school council is particularly impressive in helping the staff make decisions about things that affect your life at school. Your behaviour is outstanding and you have very good attitudes to your work, and this helps you achieve high standards.

Your teachers work hard and do their best to help you learn, by providing interesting activities and expecting you to work hard. In some lessons, the work needs to be more challenging for you. Your headteacher and other staff are looking closely at how the school can improve even more. The inspectors believe your school is doing very well in many areas, but we have asked your headteacher, her senior team and the rest of your teachers to do the following things:

Continue to work on how everyone can help to achieve even higher standards.

Check more carefully that improvements the school makes are really effective in helping your learning.

Continue to help pupils achieve even better results in the applied business studies course.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs M A Buckingham HM Inspector of Schools