

# Priory Sports and Technology College Penwortham

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119739
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	291526
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 November –1 December 2006
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jim Bennetts HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	946
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Malcolm Ashworth
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr James Hourigan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 May 2002
<b>School address</b>	Crow Hills Road Penwortham Preston Lancashire PR1 0JE
<b>Telephone number</b>	08444 771818
<b>Fax number</b>	01772 752426

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This school draws students from Penwortham, a suburb on the south side of Preston, and from a little further afield. The range of standards that students have reached by the time they start at the school is similar to that found nationally. The proportion of students with very high standards at age 11 is much the same as in an average comprehensive school; there are fewer students registered as having learning difficulties and disabilities. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free meals is lower than the national figure. Most students are White British. Very few students are at an early stage in learning English. Nearly two thirds of the students are boys. This has been a specialist school for technology since 2000 and became a specialist school for sport in 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a popular school. It offers a sound education, and most students do well. Students enjoy school life and work hard. There are strengths in students' achievement, overall it is satisfactory. Though the majority of lessons seen were good, teaching is satisfactory overall. Behaviour is generally satisfactory. There is a radical curriculum framework which offers the possibility of high achievement. The school is rightly proud of its achievements over many years. However, senior staff, under the leadership of a new headteacher, are aware of the need for modernisation of structures, approaches to the management of learning, and general quality control.

Over 70% of students achieved the equivalent of at least five good GCSE results in 2005 and 2006. This compares favourably with the national picture. On the other hand, the proportion achieving five good passes inclusive of English and mathematics was significantly below the national expectation, largely due to weaknesses in mathematics that are starting to be addressed. Students for whom provision is mostly workplace based in Year 11 are very successful in securing jobs. There have been a number of areas of lower achievement involving certain subjects or small groups of students.

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with many strengths, but some lessons could be better. Students are keen to learn. They benefit from a curriculum that offers unusually wide choice and with an unusual approach to the taking of GCSE examinations early. However, grades are not always maximised and accreditation for some alternatives to GCSE is not always secured. Students are well looked after. Behaviour is often good, but there are occasions when it is not good enough. The school is generally a safe environment and students receive strong encouragement with healthy living. They have opportunity to have their say in school affairs and make a strong contribution, for example, as junior sports leaders. The school tracks students' progress, and the majority of students and parents value guidance that is given about targets and the means of improvement. However, some would appreciate more detailed guidance on how things stand in subjects.

Senior staff recognise that there are aspects of the school's work that would benefit from review or increased attention to raising quality. Promising new approaches and a firm resolve to ensure high achievement are becoming established.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all students achieve as well as possible in all their courses, and that they get the certification they deserve.
- Increase the number of lessons that are excellent and reduce the number that are less than good.
- Bolster monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work, with focused intervention to attend to resulting concerns.
- Eliminate the occasional instances of poor behaviour.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Overall, the progress that boys and girls make is satisfactory. Students join the school with standards that are similar to the range of attainment found nationally. In national tests at age 14, students have standards in mathematics and science that are a little above average; they

did better in 2006 than in 2005. However, standards are generally a little lower in English, with fewer than might be expected achieving the higher levels.

At age 16, students take GCSE and several other qualifications. In recent years many took the full GNVQ, for example, in ICT or science. Over 70% of students achieved the equivalent of at least five good GCSEs in 2005 and 2006. This is a commendable achievement for the students and the school, and substantially higher than the national figure. Success in GNVQ was amongst the best in Lancashire. However, there are considerable weaknesses in GCSE mathematics and some weaknesses elsewhere. In 2005, only 38% of students had results equivalent to five good GCSEs inclusive of English and mathematics. This was about 7% below the national figure. The position was similar in 2006. Over all GCSE subjects, there is a smaller proportion of successes at grades A and A\* than might be expected from students' standards when they start at the school. The curriculum provides students with wide ranging opportunities. The policy of entering the most and least able students for some GCSEs in Year 10 has advantages. However, some more able students with potential for A or A\* grades in English underachieve. In the lower group, a few students gain D grades in Year 10 without having opportunity to upgrade to a C in Year 11. This is because the school considers it neither achievable within the curriculum offered nor desirable as a school philosophy. Under the care of dedicated staff, lower attaining students flourish in their work for GCSEs in core subjects in Year 10. In Year 11, they have access to worthwhile courses, for example in carpentry, hair and beauty or general life skills, at colleges or a training centre, together with workplace based learning. However, completion and registration of these vocational qualifications lack rigour, with the result that the proportion of students achieving certification of the equivalent of five basic GCSEs (the Level One standard) is nearly 10% short of the national figure.

In lessons seen and from scrutiny of books, students' progress at the present time is rarely less than satisfactory and very often good. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities do as well as others. Reasonable targets are set for achievement at ages 14 and 16. However, national and local authority targets are adjusted to make allowances for the abnormally small number of GCSEs that some students take. This readjustment should be reviewed to take proper account of the achievement pupils make in gaining vocational qualifications instead of GCSEs.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Many are confident and articulate with good social skills. They generally feel safe but some younger students and their parents are concerned about bullying. This is improving, and older students help younger ones to feel secure through the house system. Incidents of racism are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Most students behave well in class, have a positive attitude, and enjoy school. But there is a significant minority, particularly in Year 8, who disrupt the learning of others. Behaviour is usually orderly around the school, though there is sometimes a lack of consideration for others on crowded corridors and staircases. Litter and graffiti around the school reflect the negative attitudes of a minority. The level of exclusions is above average. Attendance is below the national average and lower in 2005/06 than 2004/5. A good programme of personal and social education ensures that students know how to keep healthy and safe. Fitness is high on the agenda and a large proportion of students take part in the excellent range of sporting opportunities. This contributes well to a healthy lifestyle and to students' enjoyment of school.

The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory with strengths in moral and social development. Although the school provides a prayer room and runs a Faith group, opportunities for spiritual and cultural development are not fully grasped. Older students help others through the mentoring and prefect systems. Students in all years make a positive contribution by raising money for charity and membership of the school council. Three-quarters of students in Year 10 take the Junior Leadership Award, which enables them to give very valuable help to younger students here and in partner primary schools. Students receive good careers guidance and the Young Enterprise project is very successful.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Many lessons are well planned and structured. Most teachers have a good understanding of how best to teach their subjects. They plan learning activities that take students through logical steps. Students know what they are expected to learn. Where ICT is available, it is used well, but there are areas of the school where daily access to ICT is limited.

It is not always clear what more able students have to do to reach the highest levels. Lesson plans rarely identify how best to support learning for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. In some weaker lessons, students' behaviour is not well managed. In these lessons some students have poor attitudes to learning and sometimes show a lack of respect. In other lessons the pace of learning is slow, and there is a lack of variety and challenge.

Some good marking and assessment shows students exactly how well they are doing in relation to National Curriculum and course criteria. They receive useful guidance about improvement through teachers' written comments and clear learning targets. But sometimes targets set for them are too general or have not been updated. Some work is rarely marked and, too often, marking does not identify basic errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. There are too many different systems used to grade students' work.

The quality and use of homework are variable, and some students find it boring. It is better in Key Stage 4, and these students are encouraged to work independently on coursework. The more able younger students get more frequent homework.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and boldly innovative. It offers opportunities well tailored to students' needs and aspirations, but some features have not always been managed effectively.

Younger students are suitably grouped by ability for some subjects. There are well conceived strategies to extend the most able younger students. The grouping together of less able or less well motivated students helps those who might struggle, but risks the entrenchment of weak attitudes. Though provision for modern languages for younger students has had limited success in the past, with low and some reluctant uptake for GCSE, arrangements are now being rationalised.

There are three radically different curriculum pathways for older students. For the large middle ability band, there are four well planned alternative routes. For the top band, English Language and ICT are completed by the end of Year 10, freeing up four hours a week for interesting

opportunities such as the Advanced Subsidiary in critical thinking. Unfortunately a few of the most able students have not achieved their full potential in English Language, or in some other subjects. The least able take GCSEs in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 10. This is reasonable where there is danger of students' disengagement if the courses dragged on further; however, there should be better opportunity to re-take examinations if there is a reasonable prospect of worthwhile improvement. These students take no GCSEs in Year 11; they follow a programme comprising work placements and vocational courses at college or with a training provider. Because certification of these courses has not been managed effectively, these students have failed to gain the important overall Level One qualification.

The school was highly successful with the full GNVQ in ICT and science. This has now been withdrawn nationally and the school has made appropriate curricular adjustments. With the diverse curriculum pathways, only a third of students have been studying science as a double subject. The proportion has been increased significantly this term, in keeping with the school's specialist status for technology. The school is acquitting itself well with its specialist school undertakings for technology, particularly so in aspects of design and technology and ICT. The sports specialist work is driven with vision, vigour and contagious enthusiasm. The school has a good range of extra curricular activities and the level of participation in sporting activities at lunch time and after school is outstanding.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Students are well cared for and receive good personal support. The house system provides a secure environment where older students informally help and mentor younger students. Trained peer mentors, identified with a badge, are on hand to help students with any concerns they might have. Child protection arrangements are secure. Students generally feel safe in school, though a small minority were concerned about bullying. Risk assessments for outside visits are carefully attended to and governors regularly check that the site is safe. Induction and transition arrangements are effective and links with local colleges and primary schools are good. School meals are healthy and sports college provision promotes high engagement with physical activities.

Students with learning or physical difficulties receive satisfactory support. Teaching assistants provide strong personal help and guidance but individual education plans are not effectively disseminated to all teachers. Some Year 7 students who are placed in the lowest ability set have behaviour difficulties and this can limit progress. The Pathway 3 curriculum for some older students fosters achievement through encouragement and supportive relationships.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. Students who are not yet fluent English speakers receive appropriate support. Every five weeks students have a one to one or small group mentoring session with their form tutor to ensure they are keeping up with their work. Students know their target grades. However, marking and assessment practice to show them where they are, and what they have to do to achieve a higher grade or level, is inconsistent across subjects. Some parents said the lack of formal opportunities to meet with subject teachers inhibited the amount of academic support they could give their children.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The present headteacher had previously served as deputy, and as acting headteacher from September 2005. He has been substantive head from September 2006. The school achieved much over the last ten or fifteen years and enjoys the support of the community it serves. There are good systems for seeking the views of students and their parents. An innovative curriculum and system of pastoral support are well established.

For the last year or two, senior staff had been aware of weaknesses in standards associated with teaching that was not always good enough. There is ample evidence of trenchant analysis of data. However, there were ineffective procedures for monitoring and evaluating quality, and for taking forward subject departments in the quest for improvement. The established network of teaching and learning responsibilities was not the optimum for management of change in approaches to learning. Senior leaders, governors and staff are now getting to grips with these difficult issues. There are fresh approaches to facilitating learning, informed by strategies promoted by the Specialist Schools Trust. Closer evaluation of the work of subject departments is beginning to get underway. Although the governing body was not aware of shortcomings in the modern foreign languages department, it is clear about a number of the key issues that the school now needs to tackle to move forward. The many examples of good teaching throughout the school demonstrate the willingness of staff to give of their best.

Senior staff have a clear appreciation of the need for closer management of quality across several aspects of the school's work. They have the support and encouragement of the governing body. The school had a very positive inspection report in 2002. On balance, improvement since the last inspection is no more than satisfactory. However, the school now has strong capacity for further improvement. It provides sound value for money.



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## Annex A

## 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>
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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>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Priory Sports and Technology College, Penwortham

Crow Hills Road

Penwortham

Preston

Lancashire

PR1 0JE

1 December 2006

Dear Students

We are grateful to you for all the help you gave us when we visited the school, in discussions, in classrooms, and as we went about the school. You and your parents were very helpful in telling us what you like best about the school, and also about your concerns.

We think Priory Sports and Technology College provides a sound education, and that most of you do well. We were very impressed by some things, for example, the enthusiastic participation in sports activities, the high quality of some work in technology, and the very effective progress of those in Year 10 who are on 'pathway 3' before spending Year 11 out of school. There are good arrangements in Year 10 and 11 that allow you to choose from wide ranging alternative courses. You are generally well looked after. Staff keep a careful watch on your progress and there is usually appropriate intervention to sort out any unpleasant behaviour.

In 2005 and 2006, over 70% of students achieved the equivalent of five good GCSEs, better than would have been expected from the standards that those students had when they started at the school. However, the opportunities for some students to maximise some GCSE grades are not always taken, and there is a smaller proportion of successes at grades A & A\* than might be expected, given the attainment of students on entry to the school. Although the majority of the 34 lessons we saw were good, in some lessons there was unacceptable behaviour that slows down learning. Please all work to eliminate this aspect. In addition, the inspection came across instances of poor behaviour. Again, this does let the school down and I hope that pupils and staff can work together more vigorously to eliminate such instances. Finally, speaking and basic literacy do need to improve – not only will that help your work now, but also help you in your future careers.

There are some things that we have asked the school to improve.

- Staff will make sure that in all subjects results are as good as they should be for all students.
- Teachers will try to ensure that more lessons are of high quality.
- Senior staff will be doing more to check up on the quality of all the school's work and sort out any problems.
- Staff will do more to put a stop to the occasional instances of poor behaviour.

There is a lot to be proud of at Priory Sports and Technology College. Do your bit to make it even better.

Yours sincerely

Jim Bennetts

Her Majesty's Inspector