

Priesthorpe School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108087
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	309595
Inspection dates	24–25 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Josephine Nowacki HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1205
6th form	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr I Featherstone
Headteacher	Mr Kenneth Hall
Date of previous school inspection	9 February 2004
School address	Priesthorpe Lane Farsley Pudsey West Yorkshire LS28 5SG
Telephone number	0113 2572618
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Priesthorpe is a popular school with a fully comprehensive intake, although the majority of students are of broadly average ability on entry. At the time of the inspection 14 students had statements of educational need, which is slightly below the national average. Approximately 74% of students are from a White British background. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds are mainly of Indian or Pakistani heritage. The number of students for whom English is not their first language is well above average. Some of the areas the school serves have high levels of social and economic deprivation. In September 2002, the school became a specialist sports college. This status was confirmed in 2007.

Sixth form provision is offered jointly with two other nearby schools. The current headteacher has been in post since January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Priesthorpe is a satisfactory school with some good features. Inspectors recognise it as an improving school, sufficiently so to judge there is good capacity to improve further.

The school is a welcoming community, inclusive and respectful of all cultures. Students' personal development is good, as is the care, support and guidance they receive. The school has very effective links with external agencies and other partners to ensure the care of all students and especially the most vulnerable. Behaviour in and out of classrooms is generally good. Students say they feel safe and know that any cases of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. The school has taken full advantage of the opportunities offered through its specialist status: people of all ages take part in sport and use the school facilities and this has cemented strong links with the community.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Results in examinations at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 show a gradual trend of improvement to around the national average. Most students make satisfactory progress, but the school is aware of groups of students, including boys of middle ability, who underachieve in some subjects. Strategies are in place to tackle this issue and are beginning to have an impact.

Inspectors agreed with the school's judgement that teaching and learning are satisfactory and improving. A more rigorous approach to assure the quality of teaching has led to a rapid increase in the proportion of lessons that are good and some that are outstanding. However, there remains a significant proportion that are still only satisfactory. Outstanding teaching has been identified, for example, in sport and physical education (PE) and this is beginning to be shared. However, this practice is not yet sufficiently widespread.

The curriculum is good because it is inclusive and highly responsive to the needs of all students. For example, in Key Stage 4, a good variety of academic and vocational options is supplemented with a successful programme aimed at students who are at risk of leaving school with no qualifications.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher, together with his senior leaders and the governors, provides a strong driving force for improvement. Senior leaders are self-critical and demonstrate a clear awareness of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school judges the sixth form as good, but inspectors judge it satisfactory with satisfactory capacity to improve. Standards in the sixth form are around the national average. Students on advanced level courses in geography, psychology and health and social care, and students on intermediate vocational courses make good progress. However, in many subjects at advanced level, students' progress is inconsistent and, in a number of subjects, students underachieve. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good, but this is not always reflected in high achievement. In the main it is because not all students make the best use of personal study time and some do not attend as well as they could. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and value highly the individual support they receive from their teachers.

Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory. A new head of sixth form has recently been appointed and is working hard to improve provision for students. For example, she ensures that sixth formers receive good care, support and guidance and has improved the range and availability of enrichment opportunities. However, the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating sixth form performance, and the drive for improvement, lack the clarity seen in other parts of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve progress for all students.
- Promote the sharing of best practice in teaching and learning more widely across the school.
- Ensure lines of accountability in the sixth form are clear in order to tackle underperformance in a number of subject areas.

A small proportion of schools where overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The majority of students enter the school in Year 7 having achieved standards that are broadly in line with the national average. Most, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress, having achieved standards that are at, or near, the national average in the end of Year 9 tests and in GCSE examinations. Inspectors agree with the school that achievement is satisfactory.

Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have shown gradual improvement overall between 2004 and 2006. Provisional data for 2007 indicate that mathematics and science have continued to improve, although results in English show a slight decline.

The standards reached by students at the end of Key Stage 4 improved markedly in 2006 and the proportion of students who achieved high grades in GCSE was just under the national average. School data for 2007 shows that pass rates in GCSE remained at similar levels to the previous year but the school did not meet its overall targets. However, results in English and science improved further. Strategies to address underachievement by boys and girls of average ability and Indian and Pakistani learners were successful: results for these groups of students improved in 2007. Early identification of students, who were at risk of leaving school with no qualifications, enabled the school to provide an alternative curriculum combining academic and work-related study. As a result, all of this cohort achieved well and progressed to another course or into employment or training.

Standards seen in lessons during the inspection indicate that many more students are now making good progress. This stems largely from the school's rigorous approach to improving teaching and learning. Arrangements for setting targets and monitoring students' progress have improved, although the school recognises that there is a need to embed these more consistently across the school.

Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress overall. Achievement in GCE A level biology, chemistry, psychology and business was particularly high in 2007. Students achieve

well on intermediate vocational courses, including health and social care. However, performance across all subjects in the sixth form is inconsistent.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enjoy coming to school and appreciate the friendly atmosphere, the help they receive from teachers and the range of things to do outside lessons. Hence, their attendance is satisfactory and almost all arrive at school on time. Students are less enthusiastic about some lessons, notably the ones that are dull and do not capture their interest. Nevertheless, students remain generally tolerant and well behaved in lessons. Behaviour around school is also good, with only very occasional instances of boisterous and silly behaviour. Students generally feel safe and are confident that any isolated incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. They understand the need for a healthy lifestyle and most take full advantage of the excellent physical education activities provided through the school's specialist sports college status. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and older students speak of the importance the school attaches to treating everybody equally and fairly, irrespective of race or background. Year group and school councils run their own meetings and the school council is involved in staff appointments and formulating new policies. Charity work, particularly in the links with a school in Natal and the work for Teenage Cancer Trust, is an important feature of school life. Students benefit from vocational opportunities and work experience but examination results are not yet as good as they might be in ensuring students' prospects for future employment.

Students' personal development in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good, but enrichment opportunities are at an early stage in development and students do not receive sufficient personal and social education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. New strategies, a more rigorous system of lesson observation and work with the local authority, have rapidly increased the amount of good teaching. Nevertheless, the school recognises that too much teaching is still just satisfactory and is working hard to remedy this.

All teachers plan their lessons well with clear learning objectives. In the better lessons, the pace is lively and teachers impart knowledge of their subject with great enthusiasm so that students enjoy learning, feel challenged and make good progress. Targets are clear and students are kept on their toes by effective questioning to check their understanding. Peer assessment is used to good effect. For example, in a Year 7 PE lesson, students discussed, sensitively, their peers' gymnastic techniques and made sensible suggestions about how they might improve.

In most lessons relationships are good and students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are positive. However, in satisfactory lessons, some students become restless because there is too

little to challenge them or stimulate their interest. In these lessons there is often too much talking by the teacher and little development of students' independent thinking skills.

Inspectors agree with the school that teaching in the sixth form is good, although the impact of this is not always reflected in the progress that students make, often because attendance is not as good as it could be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's curriculum is good. It closely matches the needs of students and meets statutory requirements. Particular attention has been paid to giving students a choice in their education and the evidence is that this is leading to better academic attainment, especially for vulnerable young people and those at risk of not achieving. At Key Stage 3, students are taught all National Curriculum subjects and there are good arrangements for supporting groups of lower attaining students in some classes. There are strengths in the Key Stage 4 curriculum, in particular, vocational courses which give students access to opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understanding within a work-related environment.

In a drive towards personalised learning, the school identifies students who are able to finish their standard attainment tests at the end of Year 8 and begin their GCSE studies in Year 9. The number of tutor groups in Year 11 has been increased in order to better meet the needs and personal interests of individual students. For example, the school has introduced single sex tutor groups where this is likely to raise achievement.

Extra-curricular activities, including after-school clubs, are numerous and varied. Specialist sports college status has supported the development of many sporting opportunities. Students take part in educational and residential visits and this enriches the curriculum and helps to raise aspirations.

The sixth form consortium provides a good choice of academic and vocational subjects at advanced level. There is an increasing choice of subjects at intermediate level which are proving highly successful in enabling students to progress to further education or in to employment. However, enrichment opportunities in the sixth form are only in the early stages of development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides very good pastoral care for students, including those who are most vulnerable. Procedures for safeguarding students meet current requirements. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support in lessons and this enables them to make satisfactory progress. In addition, vulnerable students benefit from a wide range of valuable extra experiences, including exercise classes, special ball (Boccia) games and computer packages to meet students' various needs. The school makes good use of surveys and meetings with students to discover their concerns. After consultation with students about bullying, supervision of the school site was tightened so that students now feel safe. Results of a survey were used to identify and provide extra help for students who had problems with confidence and self-esteem.

Procedures for encouraging good attendance are constantly improving, with merits and rewards for students now backed up by insistent telephone calls to parents when students are not present in school. The school has taken a firm stand on improving behaviour and preventing poor behaviour from disrupting learning. This initially produced more exclusions but a new and better behaviour policy is being used successfully to keep more students in school.

The school is now setting suitably challenging targets for students and the arrangements for monitoring students' progress in relation to those targets have also improved. However, both these developments are new this term and it is too early for them to have had an impact on students' standards and achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Some aspects are good, such as the contribution of the governing body and the highly inclusive ethos of the school, which aims to ensure that all students fulfill their potential.

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's development. He has identified the major areas where improvement is needed, with a particular focus on raising standards and achievement for all students. In this, he is very ably supported by his deputy headteacher, a hard-working, highly committed and enthusiastic senior leadership team, the governors and all staff who share his determination to raise standards.

Systems for quality assurance are becoming established and having a positive impact. For example, a more robust system of lesson observation has been introduced and the quality of teaching has improved. Performance management is now more closely linked to improving students' achievement and teachers are set suitably challenging targets. The quality of middle managers is improving and many are responding well to the challenges and responsibilities which they are undertaking. Subject and pastoral leaders are enthusiastic about leading initiatives to improve teaching and learning, but these are not yet fully embedded throughout the whole school.

Evaluation of the school's own performance is accurate and identifies most key strengths and areas for improvement. The headteacher is aware that action plans and targets have previously lacked the sharpness and challenge needed to raise whole-school performance. This is now being addressed.

Governance is good. Governors are committed, supportive and appropriately challenging: they know their school well. Financial management is good. Specialist status in sport is managed well and enhances opportunities for students, staff and the local community to engage in a wide range of sport. Staff and resources are deployed to give satisfactory value for money.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Evaluation of sixth form provision lacks sufficient analysis. Consortium arrangements are generally managed well, but lines of accountability within school are not sufficiently clear and this is hindering the drive to ensure more consistent performance across all sixth form provision.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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	3	

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed our visit and your views were very helpful to us.

These are the main findings from the inspection.

- Some of you are not making as much progress as you should. We have asked the school to really focus on this. You can help by working hard in all your lessons.
- You enjoy your lessons, particularly when the teacher makes it interesting by using different ways to help you to learn. However, some lessons are dull and are not helping you to reach the standards you are capable of. We know that the school is already working to make all lessons as interesting as possible and that they will continue to do this.
- The school looks after you well and provides support when you need it. You told us that if there are any problems with bullying, you know who to go to and that it is dealt with quickly.
- There is a good choice of subjects and qualifications, designed to enable all of you to succeed in what you are best at.
- You really like the sport and other activities, like field trips and outings that the school puts on for you.
- Some students in the sixth form do well in some subjects but not all of them. We have asked the school to look at the reasons why, so that all students get the grades they deserve.

On behalf of the inspection team, I wish you well for your future education.