

# The Priory School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101659
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bromley
<b>Inspection number</b>	323503
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Barry Jones

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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1321
Sixth form	265
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Paul Cross
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Nick Ware
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 May 2006
<b>School address</b>	Tintagel Road Orpington BR5 4LG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01689 819219
<b>Fax number</b>	01689 600842

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The Priory School is larger than average. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and for whom English is an additional language are a little higher than in most schools but below the mean for all schools; there is no dominant group and numbers in each tend to be small. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is almost double the national average. The school has a resource provision which caters for students who have complex learning difficulties and those who have specific learning difficulties. It has been a Sports Specialist College since September 2006. Its second subject specialism is information and communication technology (ICT) and business studies. It has had extended services provision for the last four years. The school has 3% of the students recorded as coming from Traveller families. The school has several awards including Healthy School status and Investors in People.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The Priory is a satisfactory school. It is improving due to strong leadership and has some good features. Students' personal development is strong as a result of the good care and support they receive. The school has forged outstanding partnerships which make very effective contributions to students' well-being. The majority of the parents recognise the improvements made. As one parent commented, 'The school gets better each year'.

Students start school with standards that are below average. They are also below average overall at GCSE and GCE A level. This reflects satisfactory student achievement in the main school and in the sixth form. However, there is variation between groups and between subjects. The proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSE grades has increased considerably in the last two years. This has been a key achievement for the school. Students with statements of special educational need make consistently good progress as result of the skilled, well-coordinated support provided for them. Over the last three years students have made better progress in mathematics than in English. There have been inconsistencies in the teaching of English which are now being remedied through comprehensive monitoring, support and training. The progress of students in the lower to middle ability range varies. There has been some underperformance in this group of students for the last three years. The monitoring of the progress of this group of students is less effective than for other groups and the school does not always counter underachievement quickly enough. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The proportion of good teaching is increasing as a result of new appointments and in-school initiatives.

Relationships in the school are good. The school has a zero tolerance policy towards poor behaviour. This is understood well by the students who respond positively and behave well. They make a strong contribution to the school. They feel safe and enjoy school. Students' enjoyment and motivation are further enhanced by a good curriculum which is designed well and meets the wide interests and aptitudes of the students. The school councillors say that their views are valued. Students' attendance was well below average when the previous inspection took place. The school has adopted robust approaches towards persistent absentees particularly and consequently attendance has improved markedly since then.

Senior leaders have carried the school successfully through a difficult period for recruitment, particularly in English, mathematics and science and there has been a delay in making some key middle management appointments. Interim arrangements, which involve senior management, are effective. The school's specialist status is managed well. This has contributed to the widening of the curriculum and to improving teaching in other subjects. While promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory overall, it is strong locally. Given the improvements made and a strong leadership team, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

Numbers on roll have risen in the last three years. This is partly because the sixth form is increasingly popular. It has also built on its sports specialism to forge strong links with other sporting organisations to create centres of excellence that also cater for external students. Students excel at a variety of sports both locally and nationally. At GCE A level, pass rates are average; standards are below average overall because fewer students attain the higher grades

A/B. There is a marked variation between subjects. As a result of scrutiny of results in the 2008 examinations, the school identified that underperforming departments should produce improvement plans. However, this has not been followed through rigorously and students' progress has not accelerated sufficiently. Systems for tracking students' progress have strengthened this year. There is a wide range of academic and vocational courses that provide a good curriculum to students. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and their personal development is good. They say they receive excellent support from tutors. For instance, they are supported well when making their applications to university. The school has made a definite contribution to the development of collaborative provision for 14 to 19 education in the region.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that students in the lower to middle ability range make good progress.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Ensure that any underperformance is tackled rigorously in the sixth form.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged 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**

In 2008, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades at A\* to C rose noticeably for the second year running. The increase from 28% to 43% over these two years is impressive. However, the average rate of progress over time for all students fell. This is mainly explained by some lower to middle ability students not doing as well as they should. For instance, in the last three years some middle ability girls in English have not done as well as they should have. The school is taking successful steps to raise achievement further but the differences between subjects and groups of students have not yet been eradicated. Standards at Key Stage 3 have fluctuated from year to year but there is an upward trend. The school meets most of its targets, including those for the specialist subjects ICT and business studies. Ofsted data indicate that the small group of Traveller children progress as well other groups in the school.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students respect other beliefs and cultures. The school is a harmonious community. There is an absence of exclusions and rare occurrences of bullying. When these do occur most students say that they are dealt with effectively by the school. Students make a good contribution to the community. Sixth form students act as 'buddies' to Year 7 and this is appreciated by the younger ones. Sixth formers are extremely positive about their time in school. As one said, 'It has been excellent. You are always treated as an individual and it is not just about examinations'. Students' understanding of healthy living and participation in sporting activities are good. This is recognised by the awards of Healthy School status, Sportsmark and the FA Charter Mark. Students have satisfactory and improving numeracy and literacy skills. Together with their good personal skills and positive work experiences, this means they are well prepared for the next stage in their life. There is a higher staying-on rate for Traveller children than normally found.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teachers manage their classes well. This means that lessons are conducted in an atmosphere that is conducive to effective learning. It is underpinned by the school ethos that disruptive behaviour is unacceptable. Students come to school to learn. Lesson objectives are made clear to students but sometimes they describe activities to be done rather than learning outcomes. Hence, objectives are not always expressed with sufficient clarity to enable all students to know what they are expected to learn. The quality of teaching seen varied from one unsatisfactory lesson to outstanding. In an excellent Year 8 citizenship lesson students debated the issues relating to consuming alcohol. This was a dynamic session to which all contributed and which led to a much deeper understanding of the issues. In other lessons, teachers vary in their ability to set challenging work for all students. Students are usefully involved in assessing how well they have done in some lessons. Teachers' marking is conscientiously done. However, too often, opportunities are missed to give constructive feedback on how the work might be improved further.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The school is innovative and works hard to provide a curriculum to meet students' different needs. For instance, in Years 7 and 8 there is a 'primary model' curriculum. This means using fewer staff and provides greater flexibility in what is taught and enables teachers to make meaningful links between subjects. There is early entry to national Year 9 tests and GCSE for the most able students in mathematics and science and for GCSE English. The school's monitoring shows that these strategies are working. There is a good range of academic and vocational courses that meets the needs of most students. The school is continuing to improve the curriculum further for students in the middle to lower ability range. There is good provision for citizenship and personal, social and health education. These contribute appreciably to students' strong development in these aspects. Support for developing students' speaking skills is outstanding. All Year 9 and Year 10 students received coaching to be able to develop their public speaking skills. Its success is shown by the fact that a student won a borough-wide competition against strong opposition. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities that are popular and contribute to students' enjoyment of school.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care and support are good. There are effective initiatives to raise attendance and promote good behaviour. The school has developed successful strategies to combat misbehaviour that involve temporary withdrawal from the classroom but not the school. Some aspects of the school's work are outstanding. For instance, the school works exceptionally well with a range of agencies to ensure the safety and well-being of students through extended services. Students value the counselling service which is onsite and is used frequently. There are effective systems in place to identify at an early stage any students who have special educational needs and to ensure that they are given good quality support. Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving. Students know their targets and how to improve. There is a computerised tracking system for students' progress that is in place for most year groups. It has the potential to help

the school to identify dips in performance more effectively. In the main school, tutor periods at the start of the day are not always used well. Hence, opportunities are missed to give further support. In the sixth form, support given by tutors is a particular strength.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are strongly focused on raising standards and achievement. The headteacher has a clear sense of vision and purpose for the school and this is shared by the staff. He is ably supported by his senior management team. They have been successful in maintaining high levels of care and improving standards. There is more work to be done and this has been hindered by difficulties in recruiting key staff, including at head of department level. Consequently, there is currently additional senior management support for English, mathematics and science. This has strengthened the work in these departments. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. There is a comprehensive programme for monitoring the quality of teaching. Teachers receive constructive feedback with additional support when required, which helps them to improve. Support for community cohesion locally is good. The school has given strong support to another school in supporting its innovative curriculum and raising standards, for instance. The school recognises that it has not fully identified its contribution to promoting students' understanding of national and global issues. The majority of parents now recognise that the school has made improvements that are apparent to the inspectors. However, a significant minority of parents raised issues relating to communications, inconsistencies in teaching, and students' behaviour. The governors do not always act as a critical friend but are very supportive of this improving school.

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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**

<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	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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/or disabilities make progress	2	

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<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	2
The attendance of learners	3	2
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	3	3
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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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**

19 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Priory School, Orpington, BR5 4LG

Thank you for the help and cooperation that you gave to the inspectors when we inspected your school. You told us that you enjoy being at The Priory and feel safe there. We met representatives of your school council and some students from the sixth form committee. They told us that their views are valued. They have been able to influence decisions on school uniform, for instance. The sixth formers have made recommendations for improving their common room, which have been accepted.

We judge that The Priory is a satisfactory and improving school. The things we liked are:

- more of you are obtaining five or more good GCSE grades each year
- students with statements of educational need receive good support and make good progress
- adults in the school look after you well
- you behave well and get along with one another
- you develop well into mature young people
- the school works hard and succeeds in providing an interesting curriculum
- the school works exceptionally well with other agencies and provides effective support to meet students' particular needs
- the school is led well by the headteacher and his team.

The school is always keen to do even better for you. There are three things that we have asked it to do. The school is developing the pathways and we want the school to check that all of you in the middle to lower range do well. You have many good teachers but there is some inconsistency in teaching. We would like to see consistently good teaching. In the sixth form there have been some differences in performance in subjects in GCE A level and we would like to see these remedied.

For your part, everyone tells us how much better attendance and behaviour are now. Keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully

Barry Jones

Lead Inspector