

The Priory School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120750
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	339765
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Jeffery Plumb

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Corcoran
Headteacher	Daran Bland
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of time observing learning. They saw 12 teachers teach 13 lessons. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, pupils and staff focus groups. They looked at a wide range of evidence, including data on pupils' progress, attendance data, curriculum planning, individual education plans, safeguarding policies, the school's development plan, two case studies of pupils in vulnerable circumstances and 45 parent questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by groups of pupils with different special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the impact of interventions to narrow the achievement gap for girls in mathematics and scientific enquiry.

Information about the school

The Priory School provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties although about 25% of the pupils on roll have autistic spectrum disorders and 10% have a range of additional complex medical needs. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Boys significantly outnumber girls. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above the national average. There are six looked after children on roll. In June 2007, the school became part of a federation with another school. The two schools, The Priory School and The Garth School for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties, formed The Spalding Special Schools Federation and they share the same executive headteacher and governing body.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The Priory School provides a good quality of education. Each pupil is viewed as a person with the potential to learn, succeed and enter the adult world of college or work with confidence on leaving school. Many parents feel strongly, that the school successfully enables this to happen for their children. Their delight in what the school achieves for their children is summed up by the parent who says: 'The Priory School is fantastic. I am so honoured and pleased that my son had the opportunity to attend. This school has made my son the person he is today.' Amazing collaborative working between an extensive range of external agencies and a totally dedicated education staff team remove obstacles to learning for pupils related to their special educational needs and/or disabilities and enable them to flourish as independent and confident young people.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well because the vast majority of teaching is well matched to their needs. Thorough analysis of pupil performance is used effectively to plan and target interventions to raise pupils' achievement. For example, analysis of data at the end of the summer term 2009 showed that girls' grasp of shape in mathematics and skills to engage in scientific enquiry lagged behind those of boys. This informed decisive action, which has impacted on raising girls' standards in these areas of work to match those of the boys. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 lies at the cutting edge of national developments and very successfully accelerates their learning. However, there are a few areas in need of improvement. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is undergoing review and development. Green shoots, in terms of pupils' outcomes, have begun to emerge as a result of changes made. For example, pupils in Years 7 to 9 now have a thirst for reading as it is enjoyable. But, this is a journey with more work to be done in delivering basic skills through increased relevant learning experiences for the younger pupils in the school. The quality of teaching is generally good, but a little teaching lacks sparkle and slows the pace of learning. On a few occasions in lessons teachers do not engage pupils quickly enough because they spend too long giving instructions and this slows pupils' learning. In a few lessons pupils are not sufficiently clear about what is expected of them when given a group task. On these occasions they do not know what they need to do to succeed.

Elements of pupils' personal development are outstanding, such as their involvement in promoting their own safety and well-being. Pupils buy enthusiastically into all that the school does to promote their physical and emotional health. The executive headteacher ceaselessly drives improvement and since the development of The Spalding Special Schools Federation he has successfully developed the skills of senior and middle leaders, which have impacted on providing a good and improving education for the pupils. Based on the success in raising achievement, rooted in good evaluation of performance and

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appropriate interventions, the capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to raise pupils' achievement further by:
 - ensuring that pupils are always clear about what they are expected to learn in lessons
 - enabling pupils to evaluate and measure the success of their own learning.
- Improve the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 as planned, by providing more enjoyable and relevant activities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

All pupils make good gains in learning in the vast majority of lessons. For example, in a good English lesson pupils, well supported by their teacher, made rapid gains in reading and spelling. Excellent relationships and challenge in a music lesson enabled pupils to reach standards close to the national expectation for pupils of their age. From low starting points on entering school pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and science. Standards have risen year on year over the past three years. In 2009, Year 11 pupils attained a creditable range of Entry Level 1 and 2 qualifications in English and mathematics and a range of nationally accredited vocational qualifications. All of these pupils were equipped with the skills required to access a college place or enter the world of work. Pupils make rapid progress in reading, which enables them to become successful learners.

Pupils enjoy school and are keen to learn as evidenced by their outstanding attendance. Behaviour is outstanding and pupils engage enthusiastically with learning, particularly in practical subjects such as animal care and horticulture. Very good enterprise projects equip pupils well with important work-related skills. Pupils make a good contribution to the community. They exercise their voice through the vociferous and democratically elected school council, which is involved in important decision making to improve the quality of education within the school. The pupils who met with the inspection team stated clearly that they all have an adult whom they trust in school and with whom they talk through any difficulties they experience. Their involvement in shaping the 'Priory Principles', which focus on promoting safety and emotional well-being, is outstanding. Pupils understand the importance of eating healthy food and taking regular exercise, but also of learning how to overcome emotional barriers associated with their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils are considerate of each others' views and beliefs, have a well-tuned sense of what is right and what is wrong and care for each other.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is lively and successfully accelerates pupils' learning and development of important life skills. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively to engage the interest of all pupils in the class and so ensure they succeed. For example, in an outstanding Year 9 mathematics lesson well planned activities, including fun games, challenged the pupils who greatly enjoyed solving money problems. These pupils made outstanding progress in developing their addition and subtraction skills. A music lesson, with a dynamic starter, caught the immediate attention of the pupils and, as the lesson progressed, pupils' learning excelled. However, there are inconsistencies in teaching across the school and on rare occasions teachers talk for too long and this slows pupils' learning. In a few lessons teachers do not explain to pupils carefully enough what is expected of them when they are put into groups to engage in different activities and on these occasions the pace of learning drops. Most teachers use assessments of the pupils in their classes to plan work which meets their needs. However, in a few lessons pupils are not sufficiently clear about how to measure the success of their own learning.

Innovative and pioneering curriculum developments for pupils in Years 10 and 11 successfully equip them with job and college readiness skills. Recent modifications, for example to the science curriculum and the development of new modules such as the

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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one to introduce pupils to college, have impacted positively on accelerating pupils learning and increasing their confidence and self-esteem. Therapy is integral to the curriculum. For example, speech therapy programmes are delivered well by subject-specialist teachers and teaching assistants and make a valuable contribution to pupils' development of good speaking and listening skills. In Years 7 to 9, curriculum change is at an earlier stage of development. Although recent changes to the programme for English, with a sharp focus on phonics, pays dividends in improving pupils' reading skills in Years 7 to 9, other aspects of their curriculum experience are not yet so exciting and motivating as those for older pupils. The school plans to deliver basic skills for Key Stage 3 pupils through a thematic curriculum model, designed to better meet their needs and further improve their problem solving skills.

Very effective teamwork between education staff, social services and health professionals ensure that the care needs of pupils are exceptionally well met. Support for families is superb. For example, a programme to support parents and carers of pupils with low self esteem and a high level of anxiety has impacted very positively on reducing anxiety and stress for their children and so very successfully removed a barrier to learning for them. Excellent arrangements are in place to support Year 7 pupils to settle into school. Arrangements for pupils as they move on to college or the world of work are exceptionally well supported by an external careers adviser. Over the past two years every Year 11 pupil has been placed in college or a meaningful place of work on leaving school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The executive headteacher and other senior leaders ceaselessly drive improvement. The whole staff team share a vision which focuses on removing barriers to learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and equipping them with the skills required to be successful in the adult world. Monitoring of teaching is rigorous, and senior leaders know where improvements in teaching are required to accelerate pupils' learning further. In this reflective school, curriculum coordinators consistently evaluate their work and produce action plans for improvement. Equality of opportunity for all pupils is a core value of this school and pupils in Years 10 and 11 are successfully included with mainstream peers at college. Staff are very conscious that girls are significantly outnumbered by boys and have developed separate groups for girls, which

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have impacted on raising their achievement. Very effective management systems and procedures are in place to ensure pupils are completely safe and secure. At the time of the inspection, child protection procedures met government regulations. Risk assessments, including of pupils' behavioural and medical needs, are exemplary. Partnerships with local businesses and schools enhance pupils' learning well. For example, links with a local power station enhances the science curriculum and also provides funding for the school which improves resources for pupils as evidenced in its use to provide a 'trim trail'. The federation of two schools makes a valuable contribution to the professional development of staff. Engagement with parents and carers is, as they themselves say, 'fantastic'. Parents and carers are trained to help their children improve their reading and keep them safe when using computers at home. Community cohesion is good, particularly through an exciting international link with special schools in France and Spain. The school has conducted a thorough audit and much is done to promote community cohesion locally, nationally and globally. However, there is not a coherent action plan and the benefit of the strategy in respect of pupil outcomes has not been fully evaluated. Governors ensure statutory requirements are met well and provide effective support and challenge to the school's leadership in the interest of the pupils.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaires indicate that parents and carers who responded are overwhelmingly delighted and thrilled with what the school achieves for their children. Their views are exemplified by the comments, 'Without the school my son would not have a future,' and

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'The Priory School is fab, all staff are great'. A few parents disagree that their children enjoy school and that it helps them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Inspection evidence confirms parents' and carers' positive views and explains why they have every reason to be proud of this good school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Priory School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 126 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	73	9	20	3	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	78	10	22	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	58	18	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	51	22	49	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	33	73	11	24	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	49	21	47	2	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	56	17	38	3	7	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	62	13	29	2	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	60	18	40	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	69	11	24	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	51	20	44	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	64	16	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	73	12	27	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Priory School, Spalding, PE11 2EH

We really enjoyed our recent visit to your very caring and happy school where you are given, as your parents and carers say, 'fantastic opportunities to learn and develop.' You have good enterprise projects and develop very important life skills to equip you to cope in the adult world when you leave school. Thanks to those of you who took the time to talk with us. It really was a privilege to meet you.

Here are the main things we found.

Almost all of your lessons are challenging and help you to learn.

You make good progress and achieve well in English, mathematics and science.

The care and support you receive is excellent.

You receive good qualifications by the time you leave school and are well prepared for college or a place of work.

Your behaviour and attendance are excellent. You enjoy school and engage well with your learning. Your headteacher and dedicated staff lead and manage your school well.

You have adopted good habits to keep yourselves fit, healthy and safe.

Here are the things we have asked your teachers to do to make your school better.

Ensure that all teaching matches the best you receive and that you become better in measuring the success of your learning in lessons.

Make the curriculum even more interesting for those of you in Years 7 to 9, to enhance your enjoyment of learning even more and to raise your achievement further.

Thank you for all of your help and kindness you showed to us. Please continue to work hard and help your teachers improve your school further.

Yours sincerely

Jeffery Plumb

Lead inspector

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