

The Priory CofE Voluntary Aided School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125281
Local Authority	Surrey
Inspection number	340754
Inspection dates	7–8 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Linda Kelsey

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	848
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Hockley
Headteacher	A Sohatski
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
School address	West Bank Dorking RH4 3DG
Telephone number	01306 887337
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's inspectors and four additional inspectors. Twenty-eight lessons taught by 25 teachers were observed and meetings were held with students, governors and members of staff. Inspectors looked at students' work in classrooms and in their books, scrutinised school documentation and analysed questionnaires returned by students, staff and 213 parents. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work

It looked in detail at the following:

- how high is attainment and how challenging are targets set by the school for students' achievement□
- how consistently good is teaching, and is the school succeeding in driving up the progress of all students
- how effective are all layers of leadership in rapidly improving students' outcomes, their achievement and enjoyment and particularly in relation to their overall performance at the end of each key stage.

Information about the school

The Priory C of E Voluntary Aided School is a non-selective smaller- than- average secondary school serving part of Dorking and other surrounding areas. It is currently seeking specialist status as a Business and Enterprise with Ethics school.

There are more boys than girls in the school and most are from a White British background. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. At the time of the inspection, 50 per cent of students were absent from Year 10 on a trip to Spain, and Years 11 and 13 had left the school.

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

This is a good school, where the behaviour of students is an outstanding feature. This leads to harmonious learning in a place where the majority of students say they feel safe and are happy to come to school. Parents are overwhelming in their support for the school and typically say that their children are happy and learning better, and are making good progress. The leadership team at the school have taken action to improve teaching and learning through a concerted and effective approach to classroom monitoring of teaching; this is largely accurate. However, they have not reviewed the full impact of their plans and policies on the progress made by different groups within the school. The overall good teaching in the school has improved since the last inspection; the progress of many students and their attainment is rising year by year. However, while teaching is good overall, it is inconsistent in some subjects across the school. Nevertheless, with the good procedures for self-evaluation, and the impact from this on improving students' performance, the school shows it has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

Students enjoy attending school, even though attendance is no better than average. Girls have worse attendance rates than boys and the school has not analysed the impact of this on their progress at school. Management systems run smoothly and governors are well informed; schemes and plans are in place for future development, such as the application for specialist status and the plan to improve the site further. However, school development plans and data such as attendance figures are not always rigorously monitored at all levels so that the school can analyse trends and evaluate the impact of these on learning.

The care, guidance and support for students are good; safeguarding arrangements are in place and are good. The good and creative curriculum has been designed to motivate learners and enable as many students as possible to gain qualifications before they leave the school. Many more are confidently entering sixth form study to further their education and training as well as contemplating university applications; this too is an improving picture. Although attainment has been average overall for the last three years and is inconsistent in some subjects, there are good signs of an improving picture, and attainment overall is set to be higher this year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further across the school and for all groups of students by ensuring more of the teaching is consistently good and outstanding in all subjects.
- Improve attendance figures by the end of the year end of 2010/11 by analysing the

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trends in absenteeism of different groups and cohorts and by working with these students to show them the importance of being at school more often.

- Improve the monitoring of the implementation of schemes and plans at all levels of leadership and assess the impact of these on groups of learners.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' achievement is good and most say they enjoy school and feel safe. Attainment is average overall at the end of Key Stage 4 and this represents good progress from below average starting points when students join the school. Behaviour is outstanding and students are well prepared for their future economic well being through improved standards in English and mathematics, and good skills in information and communication technology.

Attainment in science is improving and is above the national average. Attainment is also good in business studies and French. The number of students entering the sixth form is improving, with more staying on and completing courses and sitting re-takes of examinations.

The good progress through the school is particularly characterised by students' ability to take responsibility for their own learning, as was seen in a number of different subjects such as art and politics.

Most students make healthy choices with their food while at school and take part in physical activity through physical education classes, games or swimming. The spiritual, moral and social development of students is good; world faiths are taught to students and their cultural development is satisfactory and improving through stronger links with a multicultural school in London and continuing links with a Christian school in Uganda.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

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

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
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 Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently effective in ensuring most students are actively engaged and motivated by lessons; this results in outstanding behaviour and attitudes to learning. Lessons are well planned and teachers have strong subject knowledge in their specialism, so lessons are lively, fun and informative, such as in one chemistry lesson seen where students were actively engaged in conducting an experiment set for them. On just a few occasions, the lesson is not fully evaluated as it progresses and this limits the highest level of challenge. The additional adult support in classes and around the school enables all groups of students to make good progress. There is good use of assessment information, and examination data is monitored closely by the senior leadership team so that teachers know how much progress their students are making and so targets can be challenging. Marking in books is good and comments to students help them know what they need to do to improve their work.

The good curriculum is enlivened by the good teaching and the additional options such as law, business studies, sociology, psychology and three modern foreign languages. Students go on trips, such as this year to Spain, and many take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities after school. The care, guidance and support for all students are good and most say they know whom to go to for help and advice. Through a good personal, social and health education programme, they know about

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The strong ambitious leadership and management of the school have clear priorities for improvement. A high focus on good teaching and learning are having an impact on improving the outcomes for all students. Systems for the safeguarding of students are thorough and good. There are also good systems for monitoring and evaluating the

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quality of teaching so that students make better progress in learning and achieve higher standards of attainment in their subjects. The school has established a high level of engagement with parents and carers and good lines of communication are recognised and appreciated by a large majority. Satisfactory equal opportunities exist for all students to take part in school activities and the flexible approach of the curriculum is well matched to meet the need of the majority of students. The strong partnership with outside agencies and support in school helps the most vulnerable students succeed, although weaker monitoring of attendance is not highlighting that there are more girls than boys being absent from school. There are good proportions of students in the school who are involved in local fundraising and charity events and the school has developed close links with a school in Uganda and many schools abroad. The school has yet to fully evaluate the impact of community cohesion and develop a plan for engagement in a range of activities beyond the school.

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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students achieve satisfactory outcomes and make expected progress in line with their starting points. They are developing sensible and mature attitudes to study which stand them in good stead for the future. Students state that they are well on target and know how well they are progressing through discussions each term with tutors. Good advice and help is offered regularly.

There is good teaching in a number of areas and a broad range of subjects and links between the subject studied at Key Stage 4, the sixth form and on into higher

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education. Students get good support for AS and A level courses and in the planning of university applications. They appreciate the small class sizes. Parents and carers are supportive and endorse the caring and nurturing approach of the school. There is a strong relationship between staff and students and this adds to the knowledge of the students and is a key feature in more recent satisfactory completion of courses for more students.

The sixth form is well led and managed and the individualised programme and range of options, plus careful monitoring of students' progress, is leading to an improving and growing provision within the school. Links with local colleges to broaden the range of options open to students are an early stage of development. Students are not interested if it means being taught and having to travel elsewhere, which is restricting their ability to make choices for their future.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are very positive and the vast majority consider their children are safe at the school. A large majority say they are happy with their children's experience, that their children enjoy being at school, they are informed about the progress they make and that teaching is good, so that their children make enough progress at the school. A large majority also consider that the school is well led and managed, that suggestions and concerns are dealt with appropriately and that the school deals very well with unacceptable behaviour. A large majority say that the school supports their children with learning on how to have a healthy lifestyle, meets their needs well and prepares them well for the future. The inspection team endorses these positive views of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Priory C of E Voluntary Aided 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.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	96	45	104	49	12	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	120	56	90	42	0	0	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	105	49	95	45	10	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	94	44	107	50	9	4	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	92	43	108	51	5	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	78	37	115	54	14	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	68	32	128	60	11	5	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)	84	39	114	54	6	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	86	40	110	52	14	7	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	90	42	109	51	10	5	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	87	41	95	45	13	6	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	133	62	73	34	3	1	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	129	61	74	35	7	3	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupil's 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.



9 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Priory C of E Voluntary Aided School, Dorking RH4 3DG

We enjoyed meeting so many of you in class and at lunchtime and were very impressed by your friendliness, politeness and outstanding behaviour in and around the school. Your parents and staff must be very proud, as you are a credit to them. You told us about how safe you feel at school and we can see that you are well cared for and protected.

For many of you, your work and standards at school are greatly improving year by year because of the good teaching and support you get from the staff. We would, however, like to see this get even better and we have asked the school staff to ensure through their management systems that they make sure this happens. For many of you, because of the improved results in examinations at both Key Stage 4 and at the end of the sixth form, you are well prepared for the next stage, whether at university, college or work. Despite the fact that so many of you enjoy school, it is a pity that attendance is not better than average and we have asked the school to ensure it gets tougher at monitoring this, especially for the girls who have the highest rate of absence in the school. However, we were pleased to see that so many of you take part in activities, sport and after-school clubs.

Your teachers and headteacher have worked hard at making your lessons interesting and it was great to see so many of you engaged and learning and having so much fun and enthusiasm for school. Many of you are good at using computer and technical equipment. However, we know that with your outstanding behaviour and good attitudes, you will help the school to become even better. Please keep suggesting ways of improving your school through being active in your school council and also make sure that more of you attend more regularly and take up all the advantages this good school has to offer.

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We wish you all the best of luck for your future success and happiness.

Yours sincerely

Linda Kelsey

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