

The Priory Witham Academy

De Wint Avenue, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN6 7DT

Inspection dates

23–24 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders have a clear vision for school improvement. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and they are taking effective action to ensure continued improvement.
- Staff, pupils and parents have worked collaboratively to secure improvements in all areas of the school.
- The trust has provided good support to ensure that leadership at all levels is strong.
- Early years provides an excellent start to children's schooling. The early years leader is inspirational and has high ambitions for all children.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in most subjects by the end of key stage 4.
- Outcomes of the phonics check in Year 1 are improving and now above the national average. Pupils make good progress in writing and mathematics in key stage 2.
- The sixth form offers a good quality of education and prepares pupils well for the next stages of their education.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved and is now good. Pupils understand what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils' conduct around school is good. They are confident and courteous. In a small minority of lessons, where pupils are not sufficiently challenged, there is some low-level disruption.
- As some teachers do not have high enough expectations, the most able pupils do not make as much progress as similar pupils nationally. Leaders are taking action to improve progress and attainment for these pupils.
- Some teaching assistants are extremely effective but the impact of teaching assistants is inconsistent across the school.
- Pupils' progress and attainment in science is below that of other pupils nationally by the end of key stage 4.
- Pupils' progress in reading at key stage 2 and overall attainment at key stage 4 are not yet good enough. Leaders are taking appropriate action to improve these areas.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further embed the strategies that are now in place to ensure that teaching is consistently strong throughout the school so that:
 - the most able pupils are challenged to make accelerated progress across the curriculum
 - progress in reading at key stage 2 improves
 - standards in science improve rapidly so that pupils make the progress seen in other subjects
 - the quality of support given by teaching assistants matches that of the best found in the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Excellent working relationships between school leaders, governors and the trust have brought about significant improvement since the last inspection. Leaders are uncompromising in their drive for continued improvement and have ensured that staff and pupils share their vision and high expectations. Staff are proud to work at the school and pupils feel valued.
- Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and areas where the school needs to improve further. They have clear plans in place to bring about this improvement.
- The trust has provided significant support in securing high-calibre staff across the school as well as contributing to the development of existing staff. As a result, leadership is strong at all levels and the capacity to secure continued and further improvement is evident.
- Leaders have collaborated well with parents, who are extremely supportive of the school and its work. Staff, parents and pupils have worked hard, together, to bring about the significant improvements evident since the last inspection.
- Leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. Leaders quickly identify individual pupils' needs and liaise with a wide range of other agencies to ensure that they have the support they require. Careful tracking of pupil progress and timely intervention ensures that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make very good progress.
- Leaders ensure that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. These pupils make very good progress.
- Primary sport funding is used to broaden the type of sporting activity available to pupils across the school. For example, a specialist wheelchair basketball coach has worked with pupils and staff in key stage 2. Leaders have also used this funding to purchase additional resources to encourage greater uptake of activities after school. The numbers of pupils who attend after-school sporting activities have increased significantly. Pupils are now confident in representing the school in external competitions as a result of this increased participation.
- Leaders ensure that the school provides well for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, both through the curriculum and through a variety of additional activities and experiences. Pupils in the sixth form, for example, have conducted their own presidential election campaigns and pupils in key stage 4 have explored newspapers to consider the impact of biased reporting. Younger pupils shared with inspectors their experiences of charity fundraising and all pupils study a range of different faiths. This range of experiences means that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have continued to develop the curriculum in both the primary and secondary phases. Leaders have identified that not enough pupils undertake the Ebacc qualification at key stage 4 but a greater number of current pupils are being prepared

to take these courses. The curriculum is therefore becoming increasingly appropriate.

- Leaders have identified the specific area of reading as in need of further improvement. Significant work has already been undertaken, particularly in the primary phase, to affect pupils' progress. Current pupils' progress shows improvement, although work that has been undertaken has not yet had time to impact on outcomes at the end of key stages 2 and 4.
- Although most pupils make good progress across key stage 4, leaders have not yet ensured that progress is consistent across all groups and for all subjects. Progress for the most able pupils is not yet good enough and is below averages for similar pupils nationally. Leaders are aware of the need to increase progress for these pupils.
- Attainment in most subjects at key stage 4 remains below national averages. However, the work that leaders, at all levels, undertake to monitor this is having a positive impact and attainment is improving.
- Progress and attainment in science are below that of pupils nationally. There have been considerable staffing changes in the science department. Senior leaders are supporting new middle leadership in this area and clear plans are in place to improve progress and attainment for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Governance of the school

- Governance is provided by the local governing body and the trust. Governors are committed to the school and share leaders' aspirations for all pupils. The chair of the local governing body and the chair of the trust are extremely knowledgeable and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Regular meetings and communication ensure that governors and leaders work together effectively to continue to improve the school.
- Governors receive appropriate and up-to-date training that ensures that they are fully equipped to carry out their role effectively.
- Governors check and challenge how additional funding, such as the pupil premium, funding for special educational needs and/or disabilities and the primary physical education and sports funding is used. They monitor the impact that it has on pupils' progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders are highly knowledgeable and work well with other agencies, taking swift action should it be required. They are tenacious in following up concerns, escalating them to the highest level if necessary.
- Leaders have ensured a culture of safeguarding throughout the whole school. Staff are well trained and have an up-to-date understanding of all aspects of safeguarding. All staff recognise and embrace their responsibility to all pupils, of all ages, at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection, particularly in the primary phase. This has been largely due to changes in leadership and the appointment of lead practitioners who have led the development of teachers via coaching and mentoring.
- The new assessment system has been effective in ensuring that teachers have an accurate understanding of pupils' abilities. Where teachers use this information in their planning, activities are well matched to pupils' needs, which enables pupils to work at a good pace and make good progress.
- The quality of teachers' planning has improved since the last inspection. The majority of teachers plan their lessons to meet individual pupils' needs. Where teaching is most effective, teachers identify gaps in pupils' learning and amend activities to ensure that these gaps are filled.
- Teachers help pupils to understand what they are learning and what is expected of them in each lesson. This means that pupils are able to assess how well they are doing against these expectations and how they should approach activities. This helps pupils to plan the next steps in their learning.
- In the majority of cases, teachers provide feedback to individual pupils, in line with leaders' expectations. This is most effective when pupils are given time to reflect and respond in lessons. Pupils are keen to improve their work and want to do well. This has a significant impact on pupils' progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Many teachers use questioning skilfully to draw out pupils' understanding and to deepen their learning. This is most effective when teachers encourage pupils to justify and explain their answers and to use subject specific language.
- Great focus has been given to the teaching of reading across all phases. In the primary phase, work in all subjects is linked to the literary text that pupils are studying. For example, Year 4 pupils were producing artwork that represented the mountains in the story they had been reading. By linking activities to books, pupils are encouraged to develop a love of reading. This is further supported by the promotion of reading across the whole school, involving staff who each have selected their favourite novel and shared their reasons for their choices with pupils via displays.
- The teaching of phonics is strong and incorporated into all activities in the primary phase. Pupils, including older pupils, who read to inspectors, were enthusiastic about their reading and did so with confidence. Least-able readers were able to use their phonics skills to read unfamiliar words.
- Classroom environments are stimulating and displays foster learning.
- Most lessons follow agreed strategies and 'non-negotiables'. This means that pupils know what to expect in their lessons and are well prepared to learn.
- The use of teaching assistants is inconsistent. They are more effective in the primary phase where they support pupils to work things out for themselves thereby developing their learning. In some lessons, particularly in the secondary phase, teaching assistants focus too heavily on completing tasks rather than on the learning that such tasks

promote. Leaders have already identified this as an area for development.

- In some lessons, teachers do not use information about what pupils can already do, which means that work is not suitably matched to the right level. In some lessons, particularly in the secondary phase, low teacher expectations lead to insufficient challenge. In these lessons, pupils lose focus and concentration and their progress is limited.
- Greater challenge is required for the most able pupils in the secondary phase, particularly in English and science, so that they are able to make more rapid progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The ethos across the school is one of care and nurture. The pastoral support in the school is strong and all staff see pupils' well-being as their responsibility.
- Leaders have prioritised pupil welfare, for example in the development of the 'Beacon Provision', which supports pupils with challenging behaviour and provides a nurturing environment for those with more complex needs to develop social and interaction skills.
- 'Super Start' early morning activities take place before school to support families and to prepare pupils for each day of learning. This is further supported by a range of after-school activities.
- Pupils are confident and their understanding of how to become reflective and successful learners is developing. They are constantly encouraged to try new things and to challenge themselves. Inspectors observed an assembly where Year 8 pupils were taking 'the Revels Challenge', which led into a discussion about being brave. This resulted in volunteers reading out poems that they had written and selected, in front of the year group.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe. They understand potential risks and are able to explain how to protect themselves, for example near the river or fire.
- Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils feel confident in their ability to deal with bullying, should it arise.

Behaviour

- The attendance of all groups is improving and is now above national averages. It has improved significantly for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school environment is kept neat and tidy and there was no evidence of litter. Pupils' books were well kept and inspectors did not observe any graffiti. This reflects the pride that pupils take in their school and the value they place on their work.
- The social behaviour of pupils is good. Their conduct around school is calm and orderly and they are courteous to adults and to each other. They demonstrate good manners, for example by holding doors open for others. Pupils interact with one another well at

breaktimes and lunchtimes.

- In a minority of lessons, pupils are compliant but passive and do not demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. In a small number of lessons, particularly where teaching is weaker and pupils are not sufficiently challenged, low-level disruption limits the progress that pupils make.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Many pupils enter the school with levels of development below those typical for their age. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and are effective in supporting pupils to catch up.
- In 2016 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, in key stage 4 made good progress compared to all pupils nationally. Pupils' progress in English was good and it was very good in mathematics, in the top 10% of all schools nationally.
- In key stage 2, pupils make good progress in mathematics and very good progress in writing.
- The number of pupils who reach the expected level in the Year 1 phonics test is above the national average and is continuing to improve.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Assessment systems are developing and different subject areas have adapted systems to best suit their subjects and facilitate pupils' understanding of how to improve their work. For example, the English and mathematics departments use 'arrows' that show pupils what they have done well and how they should improve further. Pupils are making good progress as a result.
- Leaders have made use of support within the trust to increase the accuracy of teachers' assessments. For example, by moderating pupils' work with teachers from other schools, teachers' assessments are now more accurate. Leaders predict that outcomes for current pupils by the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 will be higher than in previous years.
- Although progress was strong, attainment at key stage 4 in 2016 was lower than all schools nationally for most subjects.
- At key stage 4 in 2016, pupils' progress and attainment in science was weaker than in other subjects. School leaders have identified this as a priority and plans are in place to improve outcomes in science.
- In most subjects, progress for the most able pupils in key stage 4 is not as strong as for other pupils in the school or other pupils nationally. In 2016, this group of pupils was small but school leaders recognise that greater challenge in lessons is required to support these pupils to reach the highest grades.
- The number of pupils entering the Ebacc qualification in 2016 was small compared to other schools nationally. However, the number of pupils in Year 10 who are currently following these courses is higher than in previous years and more pupils in Year 9 are taking courses that will enable them to achieve this qualification.

- In key stage 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined was lower than in all schools nationally. No pupils reached the higher standard.
- Progress in reading at key stage 2, particularly for disadvantaged pupils, is not as strong as it is in writing and mathematics. School leaders have identified this as a key priority and significant work is already being undertaken to help pupils to catch up. Inspectors were able to see the positive impact of this work during the course of the inspection.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is a strength of the school. The inspirational leader's drive and passion ensures that every opportunity is taken to enhance children's experiences. This means that children have a very positive start to their time at school.
- The early years leader has a secure understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for improvement. Clear plans are in place to enable further development to secure children's continued progress.
- Many children enter the school with levels of development that are below those typical for their age. Strong leadership in the early years ensures that robust systems are in place to identify children's needs in a timely manner. This means that any additional support that children require is swiftly put into place.
- Good quality monitoring systems ensure that all children make good progress.
- The curriculum is planned to provide exciting and fun activities that promote a love of learning in children from the outset. All areas provide children with opportunities to develop their writing skills and inspectors saw children participating in mark-making with enthusiasm and concentration.
- Staff are skilled in using questioning very effectively to challenge and support children, which helps them to make progress.
- The nursery environment is organised so that each area has a very clear purpose and there is a good balance between child-led and adult-led activities.
- The outdoors area is varied and enriches children's experiences. Activities are planned in such a way as to encourage children to think deeply. Several children participate in the early years' 'forest school', which takes place weekly after school. Children enjoy this experience and inspectors observed children excitedly donning their wellington boots and coats and skipping off to take part.
- Staff are skilled and knowledgeable about the early years requirements; this ensures that children make good and very good progress.
- Leaders and staff have developed very positive working relationships with parents and encourage parents to support their children's progress. For example, parents are encouraged to stay and read with their children first thing in the morning when they bring them to school. Inspectors also observed a 'stay and learn' session where parents of the youngest children in the school were invited in to participate in activities with their children, supported by school staff. These activities build relationships between the school and parents while helping parents to understand how they can best support

their children in continuing to develop their learning at home.

- Leaders have adopted an online system of communicating with parents who are encouraged to interact with school staff about their children's learning. For example, inspectors saw photographs of children making pizzas at home with their parents, following the same strategies as the children had practised at school. Staff were then able to assess children's development and adapt activities for children who had mastered skills and design more challenging activities for them in school. School leaders have ensured that parents are able to access this system and the vast majority of parents regularly interact with staff in this way. The number of parents who regularly communicate via this system is increasing.
- Children are well cared for and are safe. Statutory duties are met and appropriate risk assessments are in place. Safeguarding is effective in the early years setting.
- The number of children, including disadvantaged children, reaching a good level of development by the end of their time in early years is increasing but remains below national averages.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is good and has brought about continued improvement. Leaders have a good understanding of the sixth form's strengths and priorities for further improvement. Clear plans are in place to realise these priorities.
- The number of pupils following academic courses is low. A small number of pupils attend other schools in the trust to take lessons in subjects that are not available on site. A greater number than this study vocational courses. New courses have been added to the curriculum since the last inspection to meet the needs and interests of learners, for example, child care. There are plans to extend the curriculum further to offer a wider variety of courses to pupils on the Priory Witham site.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make very good progress on vocational courses compared with other pupils nationally. Progress in health studies is particularly strong.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form is good. Teaching follows whole-school approaches which means that pupils understand expectations. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and assessment is thorough. This means that pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils' progress is closely monitored, which enables timely and effective intervention should it be required.
- Lessons promote pupils' development in literacy skills and they are given opportunities to practise extended writing. Numeracy is engaging and interactive, which leads to good progress.
- Pastoral support for pupils in the sixth form is strong. Pupils are fully aware of how to stay safe in a wide variety of situations. They are clear about how to seek support and advice if needed.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are promoted well. Pupils receive thorough guidance about their next steps and say they feel extremely well supported, for example in applying for places at university. They are thoroughly briefed on the variety

of options available to them when they leave the sixth form, for example to undertake apprenticeships or to advance to further and higher education.

- Safeguarding is effective. The small number of pupils who attend lessons at different schools are closely monitored to ensure that they are safe and well cared for.
- Outcomes for pupils taking academic courses have improved and are now slightly below national averages.
- Although improving, the proportion of pupils making sufficient progress in level 2 qualifications in English and mathematics is too low.

School details

Unique reference number	135563
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10019562

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,016
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	81
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Smith-Howell
Headteacher	Andrew Madge
Telephone number	01522882900
Website	www.priorywitham.co.uk
Email address	generalenquiries@priorywitham.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Priory Witham Academy is one of four academies sponsored by the Priory Federation of Academies Trust.
- This all-through academy, with pupils aged from three to 18, is larger than the

average-sized secondary school.

- The early years provision consists of part-time morning and afternoon Nursery classes and full time Reception classes.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative off-site provision at the Acorn Free School.
- A minority of pupils in the sixth form attend courses at other schools within the trust.

Information about this inspection

- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders and with other staff, governors, members of the trust and parents.
- Inspectors observed parts of 50 lessons, some jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books in lessons. They also carried out a scrutiny of a sample of pupils' books with leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils across different age groups, both formally and informally, and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors observed pupils before school and at break and lunchtimes. They observed tutor periods and an assembly.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including school improvement plans, the school's self-evaluation, governing body and trust minutes, performance information for all pupils and records of pupils' attendance, behaviour and welfare.
- Inspectors considered the 19 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View and staff responses to questionnaire provided by the school.

Inspection team

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Linda Lyn-Cook	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Staley	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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