

Inspection of The Priory School

Longden Road, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY3 9EE

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023 and
23 and 24 January 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Alison Pope. The school is part of The 3 to 18 Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David O'Toole, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gary Turner.

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 10 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at The Priory feel exceptionally valued by all staff and say they are 'lucky' to attend such a great school, and they are indeed. The school's focus on the values of kindness, understanding and empathy, and the staff's consistent modelling of these values, helps pupils to develop into self-assured, selfless and successful learners. This is a community where all are confident to be themselves, where everyone is accepted and where differences are embraced and celebrated.

The exceptionally positive and respectful relationships between staff and pupils have created an environment that is calm yet allows pupils to express themselves and have fun. Pupils have a deep appreciation and understanding of why they should behave well and take pride in doing so. They manage their own behaviours in a highly mature way. Behaviour throughout the school is exemplary.

All staff have an uncompromising focus on supporting all pupils, including those with the most complex and challenging needs, to achieve as highly as possible. This, along with the skills and expertise of the staff, enables pupils to make strong progress in their studies. With the addition of the exceptional careers offer, pupils are very well prepared for their next steps after The Priory.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school is uncompromising in ensuring that the education provided at The Priory enables pupils to achieve as well as possible. There is a clear focus on making sure that all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have equal access to ambitious and challenging learning. An effective curriculum across all subjects that supports pupils to learn knowledge and skills in a logical order has been developed. Staff are skilled at teaching this curriculum and their specific subject knowledge in the areas they teach is strong. The combination of effective leadership, curriculum design and teaching enables the vast majority of pupils to achieve very well. There are a small number of occasions, however, when staff's expectations of what some pupils should produce in their work are not as high as they could be. This can inhibit the progress of these pupils.

Some pupils need extra support to help them learn the curriculum in line with their peers. Specialist support within 'The Hub' is very effective at helping pupils with SEND to do this. Staff are highly skilled and know how to precisely adapt learning in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages to help pupils with SEND to access the learning and make strong progress. This then enables these pupils to successfully access the rest of the curriculum in the mainstream provision.

The school also has a clear focus on ensuring that pupils develop their 'reading for progress'. Work to support pupils at the early stages of learning to read is developing at pace. This includes utilising effectively specialist expertise from other schools within the trust. The school's ambition to ensure that all pupils read fluently to enable them to access learning across all subjects is starting to be realised.

Pupils' personal development is exceptionally well supported. Pupils benefit from a wealth of exciting, stimulating and meaningful experiences. The school is determined that no one misses out, and they do not. From overseas trips, choir, dance and sports to Rubik's cube clubs, there is something for everyone. The 'life programme' is impressive. It provides pupils with opportunities to learn crucial life skills covering relationships, health and well-being and living in the wider world. Equally impressive is the school's careers offer. Great thought has been given to how pupils can learn about the wide variety of pathways they can follow after they leave The Priory. Work-related experiences further enhance this offer. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Pupils love coming to school and consider themselves lucky to do so. The trusting relationships between staff and pupils help them to feel safe and secure. Everyone within the school embraces diversity. Interactions between pupils are positive and caring. This is reflected in the excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school. Pupils are polite, considerate and kind towards one another. Their enjoyment of school is reflected in their low absence rates.

The trust and governors have a precise understanding of what is working well, but also what could be even better. They challenge in a supportive way to ensure that school improvements focus on helping pupils to achieve the very best. Staff share the same ambition for the pupils. They appreciate the support they receive to help them do their job well, and the consideration leaders show for their well-being. Parents and carers are also an important part of the school community, and value the positive experiences and good education their children receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, teachers do not ensure that all pupils produce work to the highest possible standard. This limits the progress that some pupils make. The school should ensure that all teachers consistently support all pupils to complete their work to a high standard so that they all achieve to the best of their ability.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138216
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10269654
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	855
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gary Turner
Headteacher	Alison Pope
Website	http://priory.tpstrust.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The 3 to 18 Education Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision and two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art and design, English, geography, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the SEND coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead, governors, trustees and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in history, religious philosophy, business studies and drama.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, and during breaktime and lunchtime. They spoke with pupils both formally and informally.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Ann Pritchard, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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