

The Priory School, Shrewsbury

Longden Road, Shrewsbury, SY3 9EE

Inspection dates

13–14 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Almost all students make outstanding progress throughout the school.
- Much teaching is outstanding and teachers throughout the school have very high expectations of students.
- The behaviour of students and their attitudes to learning are usually exemplary.
- Students say that bullying is rare and that they feel safe in school. They are very well cared for through the school's outstanding pastoral care system.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school.
- Attendance is well above the national average. Students say they enjoy coming to school.
- Students enjoy a good range of interesting subjects. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.
- Outstanding leadership has developed and sustained high teaching quality. School leaders, together with the governing body, have a clear view of how well the school is performing and what it needs to do to improve further.
- Much marking is of high quality but there is some that does not give students enough information on how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons, of which four were jointly observed with a member of the schools’ senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including senior leaders and teachers with other responsibilities.
- Inspectors took account of the 90 responses to the online Parent View survey during the inspection and the school’s own surveys of parents and carers.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documents, including the school’s own internal data on students’ current progress, self-evaluation, monitoring and planning documentation, records relation to attendance and behaviour, documents relating to safeguarding and governing body minutes. They also scrutinised students’ work.

Inspection team

Christine Young, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Leigh	Additional Inspector
Janet Harvey	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Priory School is an average-sized mixed comprehensive secondary school.
- The school converted to become an academy school on 1 June 2012. When its predecessor school, also known as The Priory School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The great majority of students are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those with a parent in the armed services and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for secondary schools, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- There is no provision for students at other locations.
- The school is a National Teaching School leading the Salop Teaching School Alliance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the best practice in marking students' work is shared with all staff so that all students are able to improve their work and make even more rapid progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students' attainment when they join the school is above average. Standards by the end of Year 11 are high. The picture of high attainment for current students mirrors the high standards attained at GCSE shortly after the school's conversion to an academy. In 2012, 78% of students attained five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics.
- Attainment is high in English, where 82% of students achieved A* to C grades in 2012. The school's accurate assessment of current students' performance shows that students' progress is equally rapid in mathematics, where, last year, 86% of students achieved A* to C grades. In both subjects, more students make and exceed the expected progress than in schools nationally.
- Students' attainment in a number of other subjects is outstanding, especially art and design, history, geography, religious studies, business and finance and food technology.
- There is no early entry for GCSE examinations.
- Students make rapid progress and enjoy their learning in Key Stage 3. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson students who were discussing whether or not radio advertising is a good thing were able to demonstrate high levels of engagement and maturity in their contributions. Responding to the teacher's probing questioning, students acquired knowledge quickly and, as a result, they made excellent progress.
- The school is making very effective use of its pupil premium funding. It provides extra support through individual tuition, additional resources and additional staffing to help students make sustained progress. The gap between these students and their classmates is around two terms in English and mathematics and is closing.
- Most disabled students and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with their classmates, with some making better than expected progress. Students are given personalised learning programmes that are monitored closely to ensure that the support provided is focused on the individual needs of each student.
- The school develops students' reading, writing and communication skills effectively by encouraging literacy skills across the curriculum; there is a consistent approach to spelling, grammar and punctuation. Students enjoy reading and were keen to talk about their reading. The school is very successful in supporting weaker readers, making effective use of the Year 7 catch-up premium for students who were behind in the national tests they took at their primary schools in Year 6.
- In addition to academic success, students gain skills in leadership and teamwork through a wide range of enrichment activities, including artistic, sporting and cultural experiences.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is consistently high and many examples of outstanding teaching were observed during the inspection.
- Teachers challenge students to work at high levels to meet ambitious targets by instilling a deep

interest in and enjoyment of learning. For example, during a history lesson, the teacher skilfully guided the students in their discussion about the Suffragette movement. Through the use of fine-tuned questioning, the teacher enabled each student to develop a sense of enquiry, built their self-confidence and increased their enjoyment of the subject.

- Many students commented on how much the teachers give, how supportive they are and what a difference their commitment and high aspirations is making to their achievement.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and their planning is of a consistently high standard. Teachers know their students extremely well and are highly skilled in ensuring that activities and targeted support match the needs of all students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- Teachers use assessment effectively to modify their teaching to match students' needs. In lessons, teachers constantly check students' understanding through excellent questioning and students' own self-assessment. This, together with the high expectations of the teacher, results in students being deeply involved in their work. In a Year 9 science lesson, for example, the teacher strongly promoted scientific thinking skills, which the students understood and were able to apply practically and with precision. Their sense of excitement and enjoyment in the topic demonstrated high-level learning.
- Teaching assistants are successfully used in class to support students in their learning. They work closely with the teacher to provide work that caters for the individual needs of students. They are especially skilled in supporting students in finding things out for themselves. This was particularly evident in a Year 7 business and enterprise lesson where students were using research techniques. As a result of good support, disabled students and those who have special educational needs were able to make excellent progress in their understanding of business promotion.
- The best marking and feedback teachers involves a dialogue between teacher and student which enables students to develop a deeper understanding of exactly what needs to be done to improve their work. Not all marking is as good as this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding

- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. The students make an exceptional contribution to a safe, positive learning environment.
 - Students' enjoyment of school is reflected in their excellent attendance, which is well above average. Levels of persistent absence are very low. Students' outstanding punctuality reflects their enthusiasm for their school and their learning.
 - Students are excellent ambassadors for their school; they are calm, polite and courteous both in the classroom and around the school. They are well meaning, inquisitive and fun to talk to. They show a respect for each other and for their school generally and support many charities. Students are proud of their school and its success in the community. The atmosphere in school is one of tolerance, sharing and learning together.
 - Students show a very good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take and the impact that bullying can have on individuals. Students were able to report with confidence that
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incidents of bullying are rare and that they are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and the leadership team know the school very well and provide excellent leadership and management. Its leadership of the Salop Teaching School Alliance enables the school to share good practice and develop outstanding teaching. Staff are able to model and apply outstanding practice in their own work.
 - Improvement planning, combined with robust and realistic self-evaluation, is extremely well focused on building on the school's strengths and eliminating any weaknesses. The leadership, at all levels, thoroughly analyses assessment information about students' attainment and progress and sets challenging targets.
 - Robust performance management systems, rigorously implemented across the school, recognise the strengths that teachers bring to lessons and the wider school. This supports the school's approach to refining methods of teaching that can lead to even better learning experiences for students.
 - Staff development includes training in school and opportunities to share outstanding practice. These are of a high order and lead to high-quality performance in the classroom.
 - The curriculum is very well suited to the needs and aspirations of the students in the school. It is extremely well designed to meet the needs of individual and groups of students. All students in Key Stage 3 study business as part of their core curriculum and can opt to study the subject further in Key Stage 4. The school uses its specialism to prepare students effectively for the world of work and further education through enterprise curriculum enrichment. It has successfully built partnerships with businesses, other schools and colleges to share good practice, resources and expertise.
 - Students speak highly of the opportunities to take part in a wide range of outings and trips, both in this country and abroad. Many speakers and artists visit the school to enrich the learning experiences of students. Students have the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. They are also involved in the Junior Leaders scheme and Young Enterprise groups.
 - The outstanding promotion of students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development prepares them to participate and thrive in a democratic society when they leave school. They understand the world in which they live and the interdependence of individuals, groups and nations.
 - The school is keen to promote equality of opportunity and discrimination of any kind is eliminated.
 - The pupil premium funding is well targeted to improve students' learning. Learning mentors provide support and coaching. The school supports students in a variety of ways, including small-group work, individual teaching, support with trips and outings, and support for school equipment.
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■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body takes on an active and very successful role in the life of the school. The governors know how well the school is doing, and its strengths and areas for improvement. Regular meetings are planned to help them maintain a robust and balanced overview of the effectiveness of the school and its management. They have a sound understanding of performance data. Governors are provided with clear information about students for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding and how successful its use is. The governing body is fully aware of the school's performance management system and this helps governors to accurately assess teacher's performance against the pay they receive. The governors ensure that the school meets its statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	138216
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	413304

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	815
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Coull
Headteacher	Candy Garbett
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01743 284000
Fax number	01743 284001
Email address	info@priory.shropshire.sch.uk

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