

# The Priory CofE Voluntary Aided School

Westbank, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3DG

**Inspection dates** 13–14 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher is a highly respected school leader. He works in close partnership with the deputy headteacher to drive the work of this steadily improving school. Senior and middle leaders contribute to the school's good management.
- The governing body is very effective. Governors have comprehensive knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development.
- This is a school with a fully inclusive ethos and a very strong sense of community. All students are valued and each is known individually. This has brought about a rapid reduction in fixed term exclusions, especially for those who are disadvantaged.
- Students are polite and courteous towards each other and when working with adults. Whatever their backgrounds, students get on very well together. They have a keen sense of right and wrong.
- The school's work to keep students safe is outstanding. Highly effective care and support ensures that relationships between students are mutually supportive and that bullying is virtually non-existent.
- Achievement is good because students make excellent progress in English and good progress in a range of other subjects, including mathematics. The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and that of their peers is narrowing quickly.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers provide very effective support for students and are held in high esteem by students.
- The sixth form is good. Students value the support they receive. The curriculum provides them with the opportunities they need to develop the skills necessary for life after school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Practically all marking is done regularly but its quality is inconsistent. Some marking does not help students to improve their work or extend their understanding.
- The gap between disadvantaged and other students' achievement in mathematics is too wide.
- Some teachers' aspirations for students' achievement are not high enough. This restricts students' progress in a few subjects, most notably in food technology.
- The sixth form is not yet outstanding because outcomes at A and AS level are not yet above the national averages.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons or part lessons, 16 of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, teachers, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons and in a separate work scrutiny. They checked on the frequency and quality of teachers' marking.
- Inspectors took account of the 131 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), two letters from parents and 35 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation relating to the school's evaluation of its own performance, improvement plans and records of checks on the quality of teaching. They also studied information about students' progress, attainment, behaviour, attendance and their safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Caroline Dearden, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Howley	Additional Inspector
Angela Podmore	Additional Inspector
Heidi Swidenbank	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Priory CofE Voluntary Aided School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. It has a specialism in business and enterprise with ethics.
- An Ofsted survey of design technology in March 2012 judged provision in this subject to be inadequate.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- A small number of students attend courses at Reigate Valley College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress made by all students through the development of effective marking in all subjects.
- Ensure that all students know how to improve their work and are provided with opportunities to reflect on and respond to their teachers' comments.
- Further improve teaching by sharing the good practice that is evident in the school and by ensuring that all teachers:
  - encourage and support students to think deeply about their learning and to find things out for themselves
  - have high aspirations for students, especially in food technology
  - exploit students' ambition and desire to succeed to strengthen consistently positive attitudes towards learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school to provide the best education possible. He works in close partnership with the very supportive deputy headteacher and they effectively drive forward the work of the school. All students feel valued and are highly ambitious for their futures.
- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have correctly identified where teachers have underperformed and have implemented effective programmes of support. These include opportunities for teachers to share good practice through coaching and mentoring. Following some staffing changes, the quality of teaching, especially in English and mathematics, has improved significantly over the last year.
- Middle leaders are a strength of the school. They track and monitor students' progress and achievement and implement effective interventions as soon as they identify any potential underachievement. This is most notable in mathematics, where effective training has strengthened leadership. The right strategies are now in place to address disadvantaged students' underachievement.
- Leaders work together closely to check the quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement. Lesson observations, work scrutiny, analysis of students' progress data and extensive departmental reviews are used to hold teachers and subject leaders to account. Leaders keep in regular contact with Reigate Valley College to ensure that students attend the college regularly and make good progress.
- Achievement and progress data is accurate and reliable because leaders have effective systems to moderate and standardise the marking and grading of assessments.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. The range of subjects, which includes religious education and in all key stages and government and politics in the sixth form, ensures that students are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Highly effective information and advice ensure that students are guided towards the right range of vocational and academic courses they need. This means that very few students are not in education, employment or training when they leave the school at the end of Year 11 or Year 13.
- The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills is very strong. Students are provided with regular opportunities, in lessons and through additional activities, to compare their own lifestyle and life chances to those of children in deprived communities at home and abroad. Consequently the charitable work of the school is well established and students are empathetic towards those less fortunate than themselves. The school promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relations and tackles discrimination.
- The school has a very strong family and community ethos. All students feel valued and teachers and school leaders know them well. Many students told inspectors that they are seen as 'individuals, not as numbers'.
- Opportunities for students to contribute towards decisions about the work of the school are provided through the prefect system. The head boy, head girl and senior prefects meet with the headteacher on a weekly basis. They share students' ideas about the work of the school and how improvements can be achieved. Students believe that their views are valued.
- Safeguarding arrangements and the school's work to keep students safe are outstanding. This is endorsed by the exceptionally high proportion of parents and carers who believe that their children are happy and safe at school.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this steadily improving school.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because the work of newly appointed or inexperienced leaders has yet to be evident in outcomes. This is most evident in the sixth form and in design technology, where effective strategies to improve achievement have now been established but have not yet had time to generate consistency and significant improvements in achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are skilled and have the necessary experience to hold school leaders rigorously to account. They ask challenging questions to check the reliability of the information they are provided with including school performance data. They also carry out thorough checks on all aspects of the school's finances. This means that they have in-depth understanding of how the pupil premium is spent and the impact of this spending on students' progress and achievement.
  - Governors are also being proactive in working with school leaders to avoid the projected deficit budget caused by falling numbers of school-aged children in the local area.
  - Governors play an active part in ensuring that the standard of teaching is good enough. They are fully aware of how the performance of teachers is managed and have been instrumental in ensuring that the

system for pay review is fair and robust. The governing body fulfils all its statutory duties, including those relating to child protection, safeguarding and the provision of a curriculum which helps to prepare students for life in modern Britain.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** is good

- The behaviour of students is good. They are polite and courteous towards each other and towards adults in lessons and during social times when students freely congregate in mixed-age and gender groups.
- Students are proud to be members of their school community and respect the facilities that are provided for them. This is typified by the lack of litter following lunch and break times and the absence of graffiti.
- Attendance has improved and is now good. This is especially true for disadvantaged students, where the significant improvements are attributable to the hard work of pastoral teams and the school's attendance personnel.
- Fixed term exclusions have fallen significantly and are now below national averages. Students who have been excluded understand the reasons for the sanction and know how to rectify their behaviour.
- Students who receive part of their education off-site attend regularly, behave well and make good progress.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because students' attitudes towards learning are not yet consistently positive. This is evident when students' learning needs are not understood or catered for well or when teachers' aspirations for students are not high enough.

#### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- Students who receive part of their education off-site know how to keep themselves safe.
- Bullying is extremely rare. All students know who to go to for help and support. Consequently, when bullying does happen, it is dealt with quickly and effectively by school staff. Students know how hurtful homophobic, racist or faith intolerance can be, but have no experience of them. They have good understanding of the impact of derogatory language.
- Students are taught how to keep themselves safe through personal, social and health education lessons and in assemblies. There is a rich programme of activities to teach students about different risky behaviours, including the use of the internet and social networks. Students feel that the drama productions about 'grooming', drug abuse and sexual health have been especially helpful.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching of all subjects, including literacy, reading and mathematics, is good and is continuing to improve. It is characterised by strong relationships between teachers and students. Many students describe their teachers as 'awesome' and 'inspirational'.
- The majority of teachers have high expectations of students and aspire for them to achieve well. This is demonstrated by the high proportion of students who are encouraged and supported to work towards their aspirational targets rather than to simply make reasonable progress.
- Exceptionally high quality and effective marking takes place in English and religious education. In these subjects, students are carefully guided and supported to improve the quality of their work and to think deeply about what they are learning. In mathematics, the quality of marking is improving steadily and is beginning to impact on raising standards.
- However, marking is not consistently good across all subjects and students are not always provided with the opportunity to reflect on and respond to the comments teachers write. In a few subjects, marking is not timed carefully enough for students to improve their work before a different topic is introduced.
- Teachers often use their strong subject knowledge skilfully to question and challenge students to develop their ideas and make links between key concepts. For example, in a Year 10 science lesson, students were able to link the properties of ionic and metallic compounds to make valid predictions about what would happen when a force is applied to a metal.
- In many lessons, students are encouraged to think for themselves. However, this does not always happen and so students sometimes become reliant on the teacher for advice or answers and therefore cannot cope confidently in examinations.
- Teaching assistants contribute well in lessons. They provide valuable support for students and are able to

ask effective questions to help students make progress.

- Teachers track and monitor students' progress and achievement. They provide timely and well-considered interventions to help students make good progress. Work set is not always the same for all students and therefore it is at the right level for their differing abilities.
- Homework often extends students' learning and helps them to develop their understanding. Students appreciate the many opportunities provided by teachers to support them to complete homework or to prepare for examinations outside of lesson time, including in the school holidays.

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school in Year 7 with broadly average attainment. In 2013 and 2014, 69% of students achieved five GCSE A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics. This was significantly higher than the national average in both years.
- Achievement in English is very good. In 2013 and in 2014, the proportion of students making good and very good progress in English was higher than that seen nationally. Achievement in mathematics is good but not as strong as in English.
- Disadvantaged students do not attain as well as their peers. In 2013, at the end of Key Stage 4, they attained approximately one grade lower than other students in the school and than that attained nationally in English and mathematics. In 2014, this gap closed in English but widened in mathematics. The subject leader for mathematics has accurately identified how to accelerate students' progress. Information provided by the school indicates that the gap between disadvantaged students and their peers is narrowing rapidly for present students.
- A few students join the school with very low prior attainment in English and mathematics. The school uses the Year 7 catch-up funding to provide very effective literacy and numeracy support for these students. Information provided by the school shows that these students make rapid gains in both English and mathematics.
- Students who are disabled or who have special educational needs are well supported because their teachers and other staff know them well and how to help their learning. They make very good progress and achieve outcomes higher than similar students nationally.
- The few students who attend alternative provision at Reigate Valley College make good progress and achieve well. This is because they follow courses which are well suited to the learning styles and ambitions for the future.
- The most able students make good progress to achieve high grades in a range of subjects. Many students aspire to attend top universities and all move on to post-16 education.
- In previous years, students were entered early for GCSE examinations. This was an effective strategy for disadvantaged students who benefited from additional opportunities to improve their grades, particularly in mathematics. However, as these students will not sit their examinations early this year, the school has used some of the pupil premium funding to provide one-to-one coaching by highly qualified staff for these students. Information provided by the school demonstrates the positive impact of this work on students' ability to retain information and to develop examination skills.
- The recently appointed subject leader for design technology has taken very effective steps to secure the necessary rapid improvements in students' progress and achievement. Consequently, the proportion of students achieving grades A\* to C in resistant materials tripled and was above national in 2014. However, because teachers' expectations are too low in food technology, students do not make the progress they should in this aspect of the subject. In a few other subjects as well, teachers do not consistently have high enough expectations of what students can achieve.

### The sixth form provision is good

- As a result of highly effective information, advice and guidance, students are guided to follow courses which suit their aspirations, talents and ability. This means that the sixth form is small; the school refuses to promote retention from Year 11 where courses provided by other institutions better support students' career or life choices.
- Achievement in the vocational subjects is exceptionally strong, with outcomes significantly above the national for similar students. Students say that they benefit from small class sizes as they are able to get support and help from their teachers quickly when they get stuck with something.
- The recently appointed head of sixth form is providing effective leadership. He ensures that the sixth form

curriculum offers both academic and vocational courses so that students are well supported to make the right choices for their education, training or employment when they leave.

- All students who do not achieve grade C or above in GCSE English or mathematics by the end of Year 11 are supported to retake these examinations. The vast majority achieve at least grade C by the end of Year 12 and all improve by at least one grade.
- Teaching is good overall and teachers' strong subject knowledge is helping to improve outcomes for A and AS levels, which are now in line with national results.
- Attendance rates are good and students are punctual to lessons. Students feel safe and their very positive behaviour makes a strong contribution to learning.
- A level and AS results are not yet high enough but they are improving.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	125281
<b>Local authority</b>	Surrey
<b>Inspection number</b>	448855

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	907
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	143
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Janet Hockley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andre Sohatski
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 July 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01306 887337
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