

Priestlands School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116416
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326390
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Emma Ing HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Thomas
Headteacher	Mr Chris Willsher
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 March 2006
School address	North Street Pennington Lymington SO41 8FZ
Telephone number	01590 677033
Fax number	01590 670398
Email address	headteacher@priestlands.hants.sch.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 32 lessons, and held meetings with the Chair of Governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work, and analysed the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, students' books and assessments, the school's website and questionnaires returned by 389 parents, 88 of the school's staff and 914 students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How effective the school's arts specialism and the new curriculum arrangements have been in raising attainment and enriching the lives of students.
- The extent to which the school meets the needs of vulnerable groups of students.

Information about the school

Priestlands School is based in a market town in a predominantly rural area between the sea and the New Forest. Many of the students come to school by bus from hamlets and villages in the New Forest, while others live in the town of Lymington. The school gained specialist arts college status in 2004. The school now has a Performing Arts Centre which is used by both the school and the community. Staff and students have also worked to enhance the sustainability of the school and, as part of this initiative, have cultivated a walled garden and produce eggs, meat, fruit and vegetables. The school has received many awards including Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark, Healthy Schools (Enhanced Status) and Eco School (Silver).

Further information about the school

	School's Figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	1,191	Above average
Free school meals	9.1%	Below average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	12.1%	Below average
Proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities	3.1%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	0.8%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	0.7%	Below average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The overall educational experience offered to students at Priestlands School is outstanding. This is because all students are helped to achieve extremely well and to participate fully in the wider life of the school and community. Excellent systems are in place to ensure that all students are cared for well. In addition, the provision for music, physical education, drama, art and dance is exceptional. Teaching is consistently good and has the potential to be even better if all teachers helped students to take responsibility for their own learning to a greater degree. The school knows itself well and identifies and works on the right priorities. For example, initiatives such as the recent focus on literacy across the curriculum, are matched closely to the school's needs and are well thought out. Where there have been weaknesses, such as students' past achievement in mathematics and English, they have been addressed successfully. As a result, leaders have enabled the school to maintain a very strong performance over time, demonstrating their good capacity to improve. The school correctly recognises the need to refine planning and monitoring, to ensure that it is sharply focused on ambitious and measurable targets.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Refine the school's improvement processes by:

- ensuring that specific, measurable and ambitious success criteria based on outcomes for students are identified and that the school's progress towards these is monitored regularly.

Further develop the already good teaching across the school, to accelerate the progress made by students and enable them to take more responsibility for their learning by:

- making sure that students know precisely what they need to achieve in any lesson or piece of work
- giving students greater opportunity to make decisions about their work, and to work independently in groups and teams
- helping students to assess their own and others' work against clear criteria
- providing students with feedback on the extent to which they have met the

learning objectives and what they need to do next to improve.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

1

Students' achievement is outstanding. Their behaviour is good and in the sessions observed by the inspectors it was clear that they engage well with their learning and enjoy it. This enables them to make very good use of lessons and, as a result, they make consistently good progress, and in some areas exceptional progress. Students respond well to the challenges set by their teachers and work hard to develop their ideas. They are particularly good at working in groups, listening to each other and building on each other's ideas. When students are not challenged, they tend to be more passive and their pace of learning slows. Some do not always arrive punctually for lessons and a few are careless in their presentation of work. In some lessons students are not clear about what they should be seeking to achieve and what steps they need to take.

In examinations, the standards reached by students are well above average, and in some respects outstanding. Virtually all students leave the school with five GCSEs and a high proportion leave with five top A and A* grades. Until recently, students' progress in both mathematics and English was lower than in other subjects. This has now been put right. As a result of the high standards, the school is able to ensure that virtually every student goes on to education, training or employment when they leave. There is no group that underachieves in lessons, or overall, because teachers and learning support assistants work closely with those who are 'struggling', to make sure that they too can make good progress.

Parents, staff and students acknowledge that there is very occasional bullying and disruptive behaviour, but almost all are agreed that these issues are dealt with very well. Students willingly take responsibility for leading others through their work as peer mentors, eco-warriors, eco-monitors and the student council. An example of this is the way in which students are working hard with the whole school community to be sustainable. As a consequence, students are learning a great deal about food production through their small farming enterprise.

Students develop into well-rounded and well-behaved young people with a strong understanding of right and wrong and of how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe. Indeed, almost every student is involved in after school activities and a high proportion are engaged in sporting and physical activities. The school's specialism in the arts contributes strongly to these outcomes. Students are extremely proud of the school's reputation for drama and the fact that everyone can get involved, even if they are not confident performers.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2

Pupils' attainment ¹	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

The quality of the school's work

In lessons, very good support is given to those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to those who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Lessons are well taught throughout the school. Teaching in information and communication technology (ICT), physical education, textiles and the arts subjects, including art, drama and dance, is outstanding. Staff in these subjects have high expectations of their students, help them to take responsibility for their learning and to work independently. This gives teachers the opportunity to work with small groups and individuals, providing good support and further challenge. In the highest quality lessons seen by the inspectors, students were helped to take greater ownership of their learning and were successfully encouraged to make their own decisions about how to consolidate their knowledge and skills. This was in contrast to some other less effective teaching seen, where teachers missed opportunities to underline the learning points regularly and where students were not clear about the criteria against which their work was being assessed. The inspectors observed that some, but not yet all, staff give consistently clear feedback about the next steps students need to make in their learning and about what level they should be aiming for. Not all teachers take care to correct spelling and punctuation errors.

Staff know their students extremely well, and track their progress well and with care. The outstanding level of care means that tailored support is provided when appropriate. Sometimes this support is directly related to students' learning, but staff also provide excellent pastoral care to help students in managing difficulties they are experiencing in their lives. The needs of all, including those from minority ethnic groups, those who are in the care of the local council and those who are themselves carers, are well met.

The curriculum is extremely effective in ensuring that the different needs, interests and aspirations of all groups of students are well met. Through ICT, across the curriculum as a whole, and through extra-curricular activities, students develop a good understanding of the world of work and work-related skills. Parents and students comment that the range of opportunities available to their children is marvellous. The accelerated progress that students make through Key Stage 3 has enabled them to undertake a wide range of appropriate courses in Key Stage 4 and

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

achieve extremely well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	1
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school works closely with parents and with the local community to ensure the success of all its students. Parents are successfully encouraged to work in partnership with the school and feel that they are very well supported to enable them to help their children. Through the arts specialism in particular, but also through events such as eco-week, the school regularly involves the community in its work and also provides opportunities for the community to benefit from its resources. Although the school has very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds, good efforts are made to ensure that students are aware of the many cultures of Britain. High-quality tracking and analysis of performance data allows the school to know how well individuals and different groups of students are doing and make sure that every student has equal opportunities and that they are all on track to do well.

Procedures to ensure that students are safe are robust. Governors take this and all their responsibilities very seriously. They are well organised and are appropriately challenging, as well as supporting the school. They know the school well and think strategically about the future. However, they, like other leaders in the school, do not always consistently monitor the school's progress against targets that can easily be measured.

Senior leaders ensure that staff feel valued and inspectors judge that they are well led and well supported. The high proportion that returned the Ofsted questionnaire overwhelmingly indicated that they are proud to work at this school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	1
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The parents of over one third of students responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. Their responses are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school. Just a very few expressed concern about behaviour in some lessons and about bullying in school.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-07 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-07 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-07 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2006-07 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
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.



04 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Priestlands School, Lymington, SO41 8FZ

You may remember that, with a small team, I recently inspected your school. My team and I agreed that it was a great pleasure to meet you all and to observe you all at work. Thank you very much for sharing with us your views, showing us your work and talking to us about your lives at school. I particularly enjoyed talking to the eco-warriors and eco-monitors about their work and, of course, seeing the pigs.

We judged your school to be outstanding. You told us that you are proud of the school and that the sports, the drama, music and art are wonderful. You are confident that you have an important role to play in ensuring that the school is a good place to be and that you feel safe. Many of you mentioned how well supported you are and that you enjoy learning.

We agree with your views and could see that all of you thrive and do really well at Priestlands. There were just one or two things which could be further improved. A small but important thing that you could do is to make a big effort to move swiftly to classes and between classes to make sure that no learning time is wasted. In your lessons we have asked teachers to help you become more responsible for your own learning. We could see that you are well able to rise to these challenges.

Finally, we have asked that leaders of school, at all levels, should set ambitious, measurable targets and monitor the school's progress towards them in order to make your outstanding school even better.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Emma Ing
Her Majesty's Inspector

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