

Inspection of Penwortham Priory Academy

Crow Hills Road, Penwortham, Preston, Lancashire PR1 0JE

Inspection dates: 3–4 March 2020

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are typically happy and feel safe at Penwortham Priory Academy. They trust staff to sort out issues, such as those related to the infrequent incidents of bullying.

We saw pupils behaving sensibly in lessons and around the school. The pupils we spoke to told us that behaviour is mainly good and that teachers deal with poor behaviour well. Pupils are usually polite and considerate towards others.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who are disadvantaged. Most pupils are keen to meet the high expectations that staff have of their learning and wider personal development.

Pupils are now learning more than in the past. This is because of the widespread improvements that have been made to the quality of education.

Pupils learn to value the differences that exist between different groups of people. They are well prepared to assume their roles in modern Britain, partly as a result of daily 'learning for life' lessons.

Many pupils take advantage of the extra-curricular opportunities on offer, such as the astronomy club and many sporting activities. The recent production of 'We Will Rock You', by all accounts, was a resounding success.

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

Penwortham Priory Academy is a rapidly improving school. Leaders have made significant improvements to most aspects of the school's work.

Leaders have focused on developing the quality of the curriculum. Pupils now study a curriculum that is more ambitious than in the past. As a result, pupils' performance in external examinations at the end of Year 11 has already improved. Many pupils who left the school in 2018 had not learned well during their time at the school. However, those leaving the school in 2019 made overall progress that was in line with the national average. They attained well in many subjects, including English, mathematics and modern foreign languages.

Leaders and teachers of most subjects have thought carefully about what they want pupils to know and be able to do. They plan pupils' learning thoughtfully to help pupils to know and remember more over time. The activities that they set pupils during lessons also help pupils to remember important information. As a result, pupils can confidently recall prior learning. For example, pupils told inspectors about their understanding of different musical elements, such as tempo and texture.

Despite this, some subjects have improved significantly more than others. For example, pupils now learn much better in mathematics because of the support that has been given to leaders and teachers in this area. Other subjects, such as science and history, are at an earlier stage of improvement. As a result, pupils who left the school in 2019 did not attain well in these subjects.

The proportion of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) has been very low. Although this is beginning to change, the majority of pupils currently in key stage 4 are not entered for the EBacc.

Leaders have made sure that the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged. This is helping to transform the learning of these pupils. Disadvantaged pupils who left the school in 2019 had made impressive progress during their time at the school. Pupils with SEND are fully involved in school life. They appreciate the way that staff help them and are learning well.

Pupils' behaviour has improved greatly. This, in part, is because pupils get on well with each other and their teachers. It is also because teachers closely follow the new systems that have been introduced to manage pupils' behaviour.

Overall, pupils' attendance is similar to national figures. However, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND attend less regularly than others in the school.

Leaders think that pupils' wider personal development is very important. They have planned opportunities carefully to help pupils become healthy, responsible and moral citizens.

Leaders have skilfully overseen the improvements made. The staff are extremely motivated and keen to improve the school further.

Until this school year, all pupils in key stage 4 studied for a vocational qualification in information and communication technology. However, leaders have ended this practice because they did not feel it was in pupils' best educational interests.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all appropriate checks are carried out on new members of staff. Staff take part in regular training on matters to do with safety. This enables them to spot signs that a pupil may be at risk from harm.

Leaders work well with a range of external agencies to make sure that vulnerable pupils receive the support that they need.

Pupils are helped to develop an age-appropriate understanding of different risks, such as knife crime, drugs and gambling.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The quality of education provided by the school is improving. However, some departments have improved much more than others. As a result, pupils' outcomes have improved in some subjects, such as mathematics, but remain weaker in others, such as history and science. Leaders should therefore ensure that all departments receive the support that they need to quickly and securely improve.
- The proportion of pupils entered for the EBacc has been very low. Although this is beginning to change, most pupils do not study the full suite of qualifications that make up the EBacc. This is because a relatively small proportion of pupils have opted to study either history or geography, and a modern foreign language. To align with the ambition that leaders have for all pupils, they should ensure that a higher proportion of pupils are entered for the EBacc.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND is not as good as that of others in the school. This could undermine the positive work that has been done to improve outcomes for these groups of pupils. Leaders should therefore further develop their strategy to reduce rates of absence, so that the attendance of these pupils improves.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	138948
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10110909
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	755
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kevin Burke
Headteacher	Matthew Eastham
Website	http://www.priory.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses The Heights Free School for the full-time education of a small number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- During the inspection, we spoke formally with pupils about their work and school life. We also spoke to pupils during lessons and around the school site. Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers, including those who are new to the profession. We spoke with members of the governing body, including its chair who is also the chair of the trust board. We spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- We reviewed documentation, which included leaders' plans to improve the school.
- We considered the views expressed by parents in the 148 responses to Ofsted's survey Parent View, as well as the comments received via the text-facility. We considered the 243 responses to the questionnaire for pupils and the 75 responses to the staff questionnaire.

- We focused deeply on mathematics, modern foreign languages, history, music and art. In these subjects, we met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, met with teaching staff and looked at pupils' work. We looked at other subjects, such as geography, science and English, in less depth.
- We reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school's record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.

Inspection team

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