Ofsted
raising standards
improving lives

Priory College Swindon
Independent Specialist College

Inspection dates	22–24 May 2019

Overall effectiveness			**Inadequate**
Effectiveness of leadership and management	**Inadequate**	Provision for learners with high needs	**Requires improvement**
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	**Requires improvement**		
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	**Inadequate**		
Outcomes for learners	**Requires improvement**		

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective. Staff have not ensured that all students are safe and know how to keep themselves safe.

- Senior leaders do not monitor the quality of provision or put actions in place to improve it.

- Students' personal development, behaviour and welfare are inadequate as a result of ineffective safeguarding arrangements.

- Senior leaders do not use data effectively and therefore are unable to identify areas of concern, for example gaps between the achievement of groups of students.

- Governance is ineffective. Governors do not ensure that senior leaders bring about improvement across the provision.

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not good enough; too many tutors do not have high enough expectations of what their students can achieve.

- Leaders and managers have not used high-needs funding quickly enough. As a result, students do not have access to equipment that they need to support their learning.

- Students do not have specialist impartial, information, advice and guidance or advocacy services. They are therefore unaware of the range of opportunities available to them on leaving the college.

- Too few students gain appropriate skills to equip them for living independently in their future lives.

The provider has the following strengths

- The majority of students who complete their course gain externally-accredited qualifications. Those who study at partner colleges gain higher-level qualifications that enable them to move on to higher education.

- Students significantly improve their spoken and written English during their time at college. This is demonstrated through better communication and improving written work.

- Students who study off-site have access to very good resources and benefit from extremely knowledgeable tutors who share their experiences and support students to achieve well.

- The vast majority of students produce work at least at the level expected of them. Those studying at higher levels produce work of a good standard.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Priory College Swindon (PCS) was established in 2004. It is part of the Priory Group, an international provider of healthcare, education, children's services and adult care. The college provides residential and day placements for young people with social and communication barriers, in particular those with autism spectrum disorder. A minority of students also have mental health difficulties.

- PCS works with local colleges to provide a wide range of academic and vocational programmes. Students come from a wide geographical area.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- To improve the effectiveness of safeguarding, as a matter of urgency leaders should:
  - make sure that all staff have a detailed understanding of aspects of safeguarding that relate to students with complex needs
  - ensure that senior leaders have oversight of incidents and complaints and ensure that staff resolve complaints in a timely manner and get students the help that they need
  - develop students' understanding of how to keep themselves safe both online and within the wider community
  - ensure that staff are updated on relevant safeguarding issues such as county lines and peer-on-peer abuse
  - develop a more comprehensive 'Prevent' risk assessment and action plan and review it regularly
  - make sure that staff document safeguarding cases thoroughly and learn from these, in line with safeguarding procedures.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that governors hold senior leaders to account and support them to improve the provision swiftly
  - developing quality assurance processes throughout the organisation so that the provision improves quickly
  - improving the collection and managers' use of data so that declines in performance are identified promptly and remedial actions put in place swiftly
  - developing the impact of the curriculum so that students gain appropriate independent living skills to equip them for their futures.

- Ensure that students are given access to a wide range of support including high needs funding, advocacy and specialist careers advice.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate

- Senior leaders have failed to maintain or improve the provision since the previous inspection in 2016. They have not taken appropriate actions to implement improvements recommended at the previous inspection or those that they identified through their own self-assessment.

- The delivery of education programmes by the college is not leading to rapid gains in knowledge, skill and understanding for many of its students. Ineffective strategic leadership, weak systems to secure consistent delivery and an absence of a clear understanding of what constitutes effective individualised programmes for students have combined to expose serious weaknesses in the education offer at the college.

- The management of partner colleges is ineffective. Senior leaders do not evaluate accurately the quality of provision or visit other college sites in line with their own policies. While service and financial agreements are in place, the commitment made by both parties to monitor quality has not been implemented. Therefore, the quality of what is offered is not known.

- The processes adopted by the Priory Group hinder senior leaders' ability to access high-needs funding quickly. Leaders are therefore unable to respond effectively to individual student requirements. They fail to provide equipment that is recommended in education, health and care plans in a timely manner.

- Insufficient staffing and resources have been made available with which to provide students with a positive learning environment and challenging experiences. Poor teaching resources in art and design, for example no sinks in the classroom, limit students' ability to experiment with new techniques. Students have difficulty in setting up email accounts and accessing internet sites to carry out research about getting a job due to the highly restricted access to the internet. Too many sessions have been cancelled due to a lack of tutors who are able to teach these subjects.

- Systems to monitor the performance of students are underdeveloped. Information on students' achievement or where they go after college is not analysed or interrogated. Consequently, leaders have not recognised some significant gaps in the achievement of different groups of students from the previous academic year. As trends have not been identified, managers do not put appropriate corrective actions in place.

- Senior leaders do not have a clear strategic plan to ensure the promotion and development of students' English, mathematics and digital skills.

- Programme leaders do not routinely share approaches to delivery, feedback and how students' progress can be checked. Therefore, not all staff are learning from the stronger practice, such as in art and design. Such weaknesses in leadership stymie the development of a coordinated approach to improve the quality of experiences for all students. This inertia illustrates a lack of understanding in what is and what isn't working well in order to make things better.

- Operational managers understand the needs of their students and have started to develop a curriculum that meets their needs. They have an ambitious vision for the

future, but it is too soon to evaluate the impact of their actions.

The governance of the provider

- Governance is ineffective. Directors do not challenge senior leaders to ensure high-quality teaching and assessment or accurately monitor quality improvements. As a result, senior leaders have taken too little action to raise standards.

- Governors have not obtained findings from monitoring activities. Often there is a lack of monitoring. This hinders their ability to target where improvement and remedial action is required. Consequently, the quality of students' achievement is too variable across the different programmes offered.

- Although effective governance is not currently in place, the Priory Group directors have developed plans which show the potential to rectify the failings in staffing and to implement improvements to the quality of the provision. However, a new operational director only took up post in the week of inspection and had yet to put these plans into action.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

- Senior leaders do not have sufficient oversight of safeguarding at the college. Too few staff have completed appropriate safeguarding training. Furthermore, the training available is basic and has not been updated to include issues such as county lines, female genital mutilation or peer-on-peer abuse.

- The safeguarding team do not manage allegations or incidents appropriately. Too often they do not keep to their internal timescales. Files are muddled, with information missing, which results in students not getting the help they need quickly. Managers do not review allegations or incidents systematically and therefore do not learn from these cases or put actions in place to stop them happening again.

- Managers have a 'Prevent' risk assessment and action plan in place. However, the risk assessment is too generic. It does not link to local issues or the specific student group. Managers do not update the risk assessment frequently enough. Managers do not have clear actions in place to monitor this work.

- Managers do not provide staff with clear guidance on how to ensure that students have a good understanding of e-safety. There are too many reported incidents of student misuse of the internet, including inappropriate use of chat rooms and cyber bullying. Rather than ensuring that students receive training in using the internet safely, managers severely restrict students' internet access while they are on college and residential premises.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable and not typically good. A lack of college-wide consistency of expectation means that students' experiences are too often reliant on the quality of the individual teacher they receive.

- Tutors do not have sufficiently high aspirations for the majority of students. As a consequence, programmes and activities do not extend students' skills for living

independently. Typical examples include trips into the community where students do not get the opportunity to practise using money either when travelling on buses or when buying drinks. Work experience on the college premises is not sufficiently challenging and does not enable students to gain meaningful work skills.

- Students' capabilities in a range of skills are assessed routinely, but information is not shared between tutors and therapy staff. As a result, staff members do not have a full picture of what individual students know and can do. This restricts their ability to plan effectively to meet the full range of individual students' needs.

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge, experience and qualifications. However, not all use their knowledge to meet the individual needs of students. For example, baseline assessments are not used effectively to plan for students' next steps in learning. Some better examples exist, such as in mathematics, where individual programmes are evident and methods adapted to meet specific needs. Such examples typify the wide variation in quality that students experience.

- A few tutors do not provide students with feedback that enables them to know how to improve their work. As a result, students do not further their knowledge and enhance their skills.

- Students who study at partner colleges benefit from well-planned courses which meet their learning needs. Expert vocational tutors and support staff in the colleges communicate well with each other to ensure that the students develop useful skills for further learning and work. Learning support staff ensure that they monitor students' progress closely.

- Where appropriate, students studying at partner colleges are integrated into college courses successfully. Students therefore feel confident and produce high-quality work, for example in art and design.

- A minority of students benefit from well-structured work experience programmes that enable them to develop good skills and knowledge. Tutors ensure that students gain a good understanding of their employment option after college.

- Teaching in functional skills is highly effective. Tutors make sessions interesting and engaging which build on students interests successfully. A strong focus on the use of English language, communication and developing students' vocabulary is proving effective. For example, a student produced written instructions on how to play chess.

- Tutors set appropriate targets for students that link to goals in their educational, health and care plans. Managers undertake annual reviews effectively with parents, carers and other key staff to ensure that progress is monitored, and students achieve their qualifications.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare   Inadequate

- Managers do not ensure that all students are safe at all times at college and as a result, too many students are put at risk. Students' understanding of keeping themselves safe online is weak. Tutors do not ensure that students know what is appropriate to write about. For example, a newsletter produced by the students contained salacious content which tutors did not challenge. Staff do not adhere to the providers' own policy on

displaying identity cards.

- Leaders' oversight of behaviour procedures is lacking. Students reports that the reward system is inconsistently applied and does not meet their aspirations. Approaches to avoid and reduce risks do not identify clear steps for staff. Individual behaviour plans do not promote students' self-management of their behaviour sufficiently.

- Not all students take part in purposeful work experience. Managers are not sufficiently ambitious for their students. They do not enable students to undertake work experience where they develop new work-based skills and knowledge. Staff rely too heavily on students undertaking menial activities. For example, work experience in college kitchens does not replicate the skills, knowledge and behaviours required of the hospitality industry.

- Students do not have appropriate access to specialist impartial, information, advice and guidance or advocacy support. As a result, they do not have all the information that they require to make informed decisions about their future.

- The majority of students take pride in their work. Those who study art and design at local colleges are productive. Their practical work is of a high standard. They study alongside full-time students and gain from excellent discussions. In one college they exhibit their practical work at the colleges' end-of-year shows.

- The vast majority of students are happy. They become more confident and form positive friendship groups. Students who study foundation subjects improve their personal and social skills by taking part in group work and by studying alongside other students.

- The majority of students learn how to be fit and healthy. They attend yoga classes and fitness centres and are made aware of healthy eating.

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement

- Not enough students gain the skills they need to live independently, such as cooking for themselves, doing their own laundry and travelling independently. Too few learn how to keep themselves safe.

- Too many students left the college last year before completing their course and therefore were unprepared for their next steps in their career or further education.

- Students' English skills improve during their time at college. Students' written work is of a good standard and improvements are evident.

- Students who enter for English and mathematics examinations pass them at the first attempt. A small minority have moved on to higher-level qualifications.

- Students' work is at the standard expected of them. In a minority of cases their work exceeds the standard expected at the level they are studying. Level 2 art students produce work to a very good standard and are currently preparing for an art exhibition alongside their peers in the further education college where they study. However, the majority of work that students undertake does not challenge them sufficiently and therefore they do not reach their full potential.

- Students demonstrate increased confidence during their time at college. For example, one student has been nominated for a student of the year at one of the partner colleges and

another clearly articulated that she felt more confident since being at college and was more able to discuss personal issues with tutors.

■ The majority of students who leave the college go into appropriate residential accommodation that meets their needs. For example, a small minority of students have moved on to university and are living in halls of residence. Tutors plan students' return to home effectively.

Provider details

Unique reference number	131888
Type of provider	Independent specialist college
Age range of learners	14+/16+/16–18/19+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	34
Acting Principal	Martin Bentham
Telephone number	01793 719500
Website	http://www.priorygroup.com/location-results/item/farleigh-further-education-college---swindon

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	15	3	6	8	2	3	–	–

Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	–	–	–	–	–	–

Number of traineeships	16–19	19+	Total
	–	–	–

Number of learners aged 14 to 16	1
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	38
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Swindon College Commonweal Sixth Form (C6) South Gloucester and Stroud College

Information about this inspection

This inspection was conducted at short notice following concerns raised about the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements at the college. Inspectors from social care and further education and skills examined the quality of education and residential provision together during the inspection.

The inspection team was assisted by the head of education as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection considered all relevant provision at the provider.

Inspection team

Tracey Zimmerman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lyn Bourne	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Attfield	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Rudd	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clifford Shaw	Ofsted Inspector

Learner View

Learner View is a website where learners can tell Ofsted what they think about their college or provider. They can also see what other learners think about them too. To find out more go to www.learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

Employer View

Employer View is a website where employers can tell Ofsted what they think about their employees' college or provider. They can also see what other employers think about them too. To find out more go to www.employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.