



# Priory Woods School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 131425  
**LEA** Middlesbrough  
**Inspection number** 282209  
**Inspection dates** 7 February 2006 to 8 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr John Atkinson

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Tothill Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Netherfields
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 19		Middlesbrough, TS3 0RH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01642 321212
<b>Number on roll</b>	142	<b>Fax number</b>	01642 326800
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Salter
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 November 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Bernadette Knill

<b>Age group</b> 4 to 19	<b>Inspection dates</b> 7 February 2006 - 8 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 282209
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

## **Description of the school**

Priory Woods is a large day special school. Nineteen pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and sixteen have a first language other than English. Two of the pupils are in public care. There is a wide range of special educational needs including severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties and a small number of pupils present very challenging behaviour. The school was awarded Beacon status in 2002 and has applied for Arts College status from 2006. It holds Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Priory Woods school is an outstanding school that students and pupils love attending. Parents appreciate the dedication and support their children receive from all of the staff. All pupils achieve well based on the individual targets they are set. Post-16 students' achievements are outstanding because of the successes in accredited courses and work placements that contribute significantly to their outstanding personal development. Teaching is good throughout the school with elements of outstanding practice. The outstanding curriculum, including the extra-curricular activities and the wide range of vocational courses, is made highly relevant to the students' and pupils' needs. Pupils with complex communication difficulties benefit significantly from the specialist teaching, but not all staff have a detailed understanding of these specialist techniques. Pupils and students behave very well, are highly motivated and thoroughly enjoy their time at school. The school works very effectively with a wide range of specialist services to ensure that the individual needs of learners are central to what the school does. The outcome is that pupils and students feel safe, secure and prepared for the future. The provision in the Foundation Stage is good and is improving because of its stronger focus on meeting the needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The headteacher and senior leadership team provide outstanding leadership and the inspection agrees with the accuracy of the school's evaluation, including the identification of its strengths and its priorities for further development. The governing body is both supportive and challenging and well able to take difficult decisions in the best interests of the school. The staff work very harmoniously and respond positively to the professional development opportunities that are made available. The school has maintained the very high standards identified in its previous inspection and has good capacity to improve further. The school provides outstanding value for money.

not applicable

### What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the expertise already available for teaching pupils with complex communication difficulties to all staff.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 1

It is not appropriate to compare the standards of pupils' and students' work with all schools nationally but all pupils, including those who learn English as an additional language, achieve well when compared to what they are capable of. Pupils make good progress against the targets that are set in the key skills of literacy, numeracy, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and information and communication technology (ICT). In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils' progress is good in basic literacy and numeracy

skills. Pupils improve in their recognition of words and symbols and can follow number patterns. Pupils achieve well in creative subjects such as music, art and physical education. In Key Stage 3, pupils achieve well in English and mathematics and in ICT progress is improving because of the very specific nature of the targets now being set. In Key Stage 4, progress is good with all Year 11 pupils achieving an accredited award in English and mathematics. Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding and students are highly motivated by the opportunities to follow accredited courses and have vocational experiences. All students achieve at least four accredited awards and this represents outstanding progress. The ways in which achievements are recognised – through certificates and other celebrations – are influential in raising aspirations and the enjoyment of learning.

Pupils and students achieve well because of the clarity of the targets set and the impact of the good, and better, teaching. Pupils with complex communication difficulties make good progress, particularly when taught using specialist techniques. Where the school has identified areas for improvement in achievement, the actions taken are effective in securing sustained progress. A major success for the school is that all students and pupils are making outstanding progress in their personal and social development and this means that progress in other forms of learning is so much better.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' and students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. The school is very successful in giving the pupils and students a high level of confidence and self-esteem. They feel safe and secure in school and are therefore willing to try new activities with enthusiasm and purpose. This is a real achievement for many students and pupils and leads to them enjoying and participating in the opportunities that are available. As a result, attendance is good and behaviour is excellent. Students and pupils enjoy outstanding relationships with the adults who teach and support them. These relationships are crucial in fostering students' and pupils' preparedness to become involved in community activities, such as fundraising and working as volunteers, and taking their responsibilities to each other seriously.

Students' and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is reflected in the sensitivity that they show to each other and the way in which they work collaboratively. Students and pupils are very clear about the correct ways to behave and will confidently remind each other of this. They feel that their opinions are valued and taken account of through the school council, circle time and the willingness of all staff to listen to their views and concerns. This encourages them to believe that they have a real say in their future and as such raises their aspirations and ambitions.

The health and safety of students and pupils are central to the work of the school. Many take up the opportunities to be involved in sporting and recreational activities and a substantial number take advantage of the opportunities of outdoor and residential experiences with very good achievement in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching is good with some elements of outstanding practice. Teachers are very thorough in their planning, setting out clearly what pupils will be learning. They use resources - in particular, multi-sensory resources - very imaginatively to captivate pupils' attention and stimulate their interest in learning. Teachers have high expectations of how pupils will behave and respond in lessons by frequently challenging them through skilful questioning. The resulting high levels of concentration and involvement lead to an improvement in pupils' speaking and communication skills.

Teachers are enthusiastic and energetic in lessons and this creates a very positive learning climate where pupils are happy, enjoy their learning and are willing to take risks; for example the Year 6 pupils in a music lesson were thrilled with their steel drum performance - a task that took considerable concentration and timing! Where teaching is particularly effective, teaching assistants are used skilfully and they make a significant difference to the amount of learning that a pupil achieves. This happens when pupils are given the right amount of support but are also challenged to work as independently as possible and, as a result, are more confident in their own abilities. In the very best teaching, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are fully included through the use of highly effective communication techniques and specially adapted resources. Teachers set clear targets and these are tracked effectively and this increases the rate of progress. Where teachers and teaching assistants are highly interactive with pupils then the pace of learning is fast and pupils are fully engaged with the learning. Pupils with complex communication difficulties are well taught in specialist classes and also benefit from good teaching in other lessons. In order to make pupils' learning even better, the school is seeking to extend expertise to all staff to include these pupils more fully in lessons.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. A strong emphasis is placed on ensuring that students and pupils acquire the basic skills to enable them to communicate effectively. A significant strength is that subjects such as physical education, art and music are successful in bringing out pupils' and students' creative skills and help to foster their enjoyment of learning. The curriculum for older pupils in Years 10 and 11 prepares them well for the transition to the sixth form where outstanding vocational and training opportunities are made available.

The enrichment of the curriculum is outstanding and provides many opportunities for sporting, recreational, vocational and creative success. For example the school received Sportsmark and Healthy Schools awards. Students and pupils have many opportunities to undertake additional sporting activities, residential visits and trips to theatres.

Clearly these opportunities enthuse the students and pupils and are highly constructive in extending their personal, social and academic development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Students and pupils, including the most vulnerable, are exceptionally well cared for. The high level of care and support given to the most challenging and vulnerable students reflects the school's priorities. The constructive partnerships with other professional services are influential in ensuring that individual needs are fully met. Child protection systems and risk assessment are secure, well understood and effectively implemented. Intervention and support in lessons by teaching assistants are significant in ensuring that pupils and students gain independence and make progress in their learning. Target-setting is very well embedded throughout the school and these targets are rigorously monitored. Very good careers advice and guidance are given and students are very aware of what they can aspire to.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The leadership and management of the school, including governance, are outstanding. Leaders are thorough, analytical and accurate in identifying what the school does well and what its next steps are. The headteacher works collaboratively with the senior management team in giving a very clear sense of direction and purpose to the school. They have established a very positive climate that ensures students' and pupils' personal development is outstanding. The senior leadership team is very effective in their monitoring of all aspects of the school's work and plans to extend this role to subject leaders so that the understanding of best practice can be shared further. The leadership team motivates the staff in teaching an imaginative and relevant curriculum and are always seeking ways to be as inclusive as possible. Very good support is available for staff to benefit from professional development and this has given staff the drive and confidence to want to improve further.

The senior leadership team engages effectively with parents, students and pupils and regards their involvement and opinions as important to ensuring to the continued success of the school. The governing body is very professional and operates at a strategic level in supporting and developing the school. It is strong enough to make difficult decisions in the best interests of the school. The outcome is a school that has a united sense of purpose with a good capacity to improve what is an already outstanding school.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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07 February 2006

Dear pupils and students

I really enjoyed the two days that I recently spent in your school. Thank you for making me welcome and, in particular, sharing your opinions about the school over lunch on Wednesday. You should be proud of the excellent reputation that your school has and congratulated for everything that you do to help this reputation.

I agree with your views that you go to a great school because of the many strengths it has.

You all get on very well together and help each other.

You work hard, behave well and love going to school.

The sixth form is very good in preparing you for the challenges when you leave school.

The school provides many opportunities in sport and creative subjects for you to do different activities.

I spoke to Bernadette and other teachers and we agreed that you could do even better as a school if:

teachers helped pupils with communication difficulties to take an even bigger part in all lessons.

I know how much you enjoy going to school and it is important that you always work as hard as you can and help each other so that you take advantage of what Priory Woods offers.

Yours faithfully

John Atkinson

Lead inspector