

The Priory Academy LSST

Cross O'Cliff Hill, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN5 8PW

Inspection dates	11/11/2014 to 13/11/2014	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Outcomes for boarders	Outstanding	1
Quality of boarding provision and care	Outstanding	1
Boarders' safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management of boarding	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

The boarding provision is outstanding because

- This is a calm, relaxed and safe boarding school in which boarders develop into mature, responsible and successful young adults in a highly supportive and nurturing environment. Boarders make exceptional progress in personal and social development and educational achievement.
- Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous across all areas of boarding life: comprehensive whole-school systems keep boarders safe. The quality of pastoral support is also very strong: care practice is consistent and effectively coordinated.
- Leadership and management of boarding is securely integrated in all aspects of school governance. Systems for internal and external quality assurance demonstrate a continual and challenging drive for improvement.
- Boarders are unanimously positive about their experience. Regular consultation by boarding staff demonstrates the value placed on boarders' views and in turn, they report that they are highly satisfied with the arrangements for their care and education.
- All minimum standards are met. This first inspection of the boarding experience finds that it matches the school's already outstanding educational provision.

Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school meets the national minimum standards for boarding schools

Information about this inspection

Ofsted carried out this inspection with three hours' notice. Inspection activities included: observation of boarding practice over two evenings; formal group meetings with boarders, as well as informal discussion during shared meals; meetings and discussions with boarding staff; contact with the statutory safeguarding authority to gather their views; and scrutiny of a wide range of documentation about boarding. Parent View information was not specific to boarding and there were no responses to Ofsted's point-in-time surveys by parents.

Inspection team

Christy Wannop

Lead social care inspector

Full report

Information about this school

The Priory LSST is one of four academies that form the Priory Federation of Academies Trust. This is the only boarding school in the academy group and offers mixed boarding to a maximum of 60 sixth-form students. It is within the city of Lincoln and opened in September 2012.

There is one boarding house, with male and female accommodation on separate floors. It can offer fully accessible accommodation for two boarders with physical disabilities. It has its own entrance away from the main school and is quite separate, but across the school's grounds.

The majority of boarders are European Union residents, or are British Citizens who live overseas: 13 nationalities are represented in the boarding population. More than half speak English as an additional language.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide better access for boarders to the school's electronic systems.
- Improve the good practice links between the external nursing service and boarding provision.
- When concluding complaints, consider a 'lessons learnt' section in the record of the final resolution.
- Strengthen the formal review of the provision by governors and head of boarding to reflect boarder's experience and demonstrate the impact and outcome of boarding.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for boarders

Outstanding

Outcomes for boarders are outstanding. Their journey to independent adulthood is enriched and enhanced by the opportunity of boarding. They are motivated, articulate and engaged. They feel they have excellent support under the overarching care of boarding staff. They are confident in their relationships with each other and with the staff caring for them. Boarders feel there are plenty of ways that they can have a say. Their views and opinions are canvassed and respected by the school and boarders can identify many improvements made as a result of their input: activities at weekends; healthy grills in common rooms; juice and the salad bar in the dining room, and revised register arrangements at weekends and evenings. They have furnished common rooms very well, to their taste and needs.

Boarding has been a positive choice that has extended their horizons. Boarders develop sound leadership skills through boarding prefect and house council responsibilities and in volunteering in the local community. They practise negotiations, budgeting and project management skills in their consultation and decision-making about change, furnishings, and changes to the boarding routine and events. They do say they would like more fixed computer terminals at 'prep' time, or more reliable access to the school's electronic systems. They feel frustrated if they lose school work when the school system disconnects: the school is working on improving access.

Boarders develop strong friendships across different ethnic, cultural and religious boundaries. There is a positive, fraternal atmosphere. They benefit from the school's proactive anti-discriminatory approach and show respect for others' opinions and beliefs, even where they may disagree. They develop self-confidence from the boarding ethos of acceptance of their individuality. Standards of behaviour are excellent and they say that racism is unknown. Boarders develop tolerance and have time to talk through any issues in school and boarding time with plenty of staff, whom they trust and respect. Boarders describe the staff as 'kind and helpful.' They say they are consistent and very easy to talk to. One said: 'Doesn't feel like talking to a teacher'. Boarders feel liked and they like the staff. They are fully 'signed up to the big picture' - which is about their future. In a recent in-house survey of boarders, 100% strongly agreed that they enjoyed boarding.

All boarders follow a positive plan into adulthood and almost every boarder goes on to a university of their choice. Boarders believe they get a head start in boarding because they have the opportunity to practise self-reliance before going on to higher education. One parent described how their child: 'Had a fantastic time and is now clearly ready to move on to the next stage of his life.'

Quality of boarding provision and care

Outstanding

The quality of boarding provision and care is outstanding. Aspirations and expectations are high across the school and boarding provision: young people are well supported, educationally and emotionally, to achieve. There is good cross-school communication to ensure that each boarder with additional needs is supported by a robust but sensitive welfare net. Some boarders have clear health and welfare plans to ensure that support is coordinated and effectively reviewed. Boarders said that the regular weekly talks they have with boarding tutors were a very constructive indication of the good level of care they experience across their academic and 'home life'.

Boarding staff are engaged, interested and have the skills and personal attributes they need to deliver excellent care. New boarders have a practical induction and good advice from existing boarders. Barriers to inclusion are swiftly identified and reduced with positive learning and

pastoral support. Consequently, boarders are able to maintain high academic standards in their focused time at the school. There is a good balance of free time and self-study after school. Boarders can attend creative and challenging after-school clubs with their peers and then also do further sports in the evenings, before and after 'prep.' There are excellent facilities on site to encourage boarders to keep fit and burn off energy. One said, 'we have fun'.

Good health is promoted through diet, a rich programme of activities, health education and a strong first aid and health care service in boarding. Boarders get the medication and health treatment they need from trained and competent staff. Health practice respects boarders' right to make decisions about their own care, but also keeps good communication with families. There are effective links with parents and external agencies and staff are confident and efficient in liaising to secure secondary health services for young people when needed. The school provides a counselling service for boarders and their parents who may want a therapeutic 'talking' approach. Boarders learn about safe and healthy lifestyles and consequences of risky behaviour in health and wellbeing sessions. Boarders also have relaxation sessions at exam time. The school commissions an extensive school nursing service for 'drop-in' consultation and advice. While each boarder can access this service in school, there is not a specific boarding focus.

The quality, quantity of food and the whole eating experience is excellent. Food is central to the nurturing ethos in boarding and boarders say: 'breakfast is amazing' and, 'I really love the food.' There is an active and effective food committee. The dining atmosphere is social, relaxed and enjoyable and has benefited from boarders' suggestions. Boarders come out of school to a really impressive daily array of healthy snacks and also common room kitchens that are well-stocked with high quality foods. The quality of these arrangements reflects the value placed on boarders' wellbeing and good health through great food and healthy lifestyles.

Boarding accommodation and the grounds and facilities available to them are impressive. Staff encourage boarders to maximise enjoyment in the many facilities that include: a fully equipped dance studio; climbing wall; outdoor and indoor athletic tracks; indoor cricket nets; a swimming pool and horse-riding. One parent said that staff: 'had a way of encouraging (their child) so that she doesn't feel inferior to others during exercise, which is just what she needs.'

Boarders love the space and the feel of the boarding house, which is purpose-built. There is a good range of communal and individual accommodation so boarders can be as private or as sociable as they wish. They have good Wi-Fi and Ethernet internet links to make contact with family easy. Common rooms are well equipped with quality furnishings and snack-making facilities and dishwashers. There is a pool table, table tennis and table football. Boarders all appreciate the privacy and dignity of having bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms and say, 'the rooms are perfect.' It is a welcoming, spotless environment that really suits boarders' needs.

Boarders' safety

Outstanding

Arrangements for boarders' safety are outstanding. Systems for ensuring robust safeguarding are embedded through excellent policy, procedure and practice. There are high expectations of staff professional behaviour and boundaries, which are delivered in practice. All boarding staff have bi-annual safeguarding training and there is a high proportion of senior staff across the school who have had advanced safeguarding training and are ready to take responsibility for any child protection concern. Coordination of safeguarding issues across the school is extremely well managed. Local safeguarding professionals speak very positively about the school's operation within local safeguarding procedures.

Recruitment procedures are robust and ensure only suitable adults are working with, or teaching students. Management of any crisis in boarding has been effective and always includes partnership working with parents. Boarders do not go missing; standards of behaviour are

excellent. All boarding staff are trained in diffusing challenging situations, but this is never needed and the school's code of conduct reinforces the high expectations of peaceful behaviour. The ethos of the school promotes respect and so bullying incidents in boarding are unknown. The environment, including fire safety is safely managed for both boarders and staff, through a proper system of health and safety assessment, planning, checking and maintenance. Pupils are confident about keeping themselves safe inside, outside and on-line.

There are several aspects of safeguarding arrangements that are particularly strong. The school has pro-actively invested in external audits of their safeguarding practice. These provide critical challenge to the school and they respond promptly and effectively. This demonstrates an open approach of accountability to local safeguarding services and a commitment to children's welfare. There is clear and unambiguous safe-care advice to all adults and students at the school. Consequently, staff are confident about safeguarding responsibilities, including managing cyber safety on-line. Everyone on site wears an ID badge or swipe card with detail of the designated safeguarding officers and the referral routes. The impact of these excellent arrangements is that boarders feel secure and protected from harm. In a recent school survey, 100% of boarders said they feel safe in boarding.

Leadership and management of boarding

Outstanding

Leadership and management of boarding is outstanding. Boarders stay in a well-managed boarding house that sits within a well-managed school, that has high expectations of its students. Boarding is effectively integrated into the cycle of sophisticated governance and reporting systems within the school. The head of boarding makes a critical annual evaluation of boarding and is reflective about progress. The school has an open approach to improving provision through commissioning external audits. They have swiftly implemented actions arising from external reviews of safeguarding and also against Ofsted's boarding framework. The school is well able to implement change when necessary and to ensure that any improvements are embedded consistently.

The school is strengthening the governor arrangements, to include a boarding and a safeguarding lead. The formal governor review has contributed to shaping and improving the staffing of the boarding team. Consequently, there is the right complement of boarding staff available throughout the boarding day and night. Systems of governance could be improved by a more explicit focus on the impact and outcome of the boarding provision on students' experience.

The adult presence in boarding, from leaders to tutors, matrons, housekeeping, kitchen staff and contract cleaners is respectful, friendly and quietly authoritative. They combine to provide what boarders say they experience as a consistently excellent quality of care. The development, training, support and supervision and appraisal of staff are good. The head of boarding is inducting a 'new cohort' of the boarding team and uses formal induction, training, regular meetings and annual appraisal to set individual targets and feed the aspirational annual development plan. He has the respect of staff and boarders and leads by example with respect and tolerance. One parent described him as: 'a great figurehead for boarding.'

Consultation with parents and boarders is a strength and the head of boarding is proactive about capturing the voice of the less confident. Boarders said they have plenty of opportunities for talking to staff and felt comfortable doing so. One said: 'Always asking us and reminding us to make suggestions.' The boarding provision has established responsiveness to boarder and parent suggestions and in-house surveys demonstrate a very high level of satisfaction. Arrangements to manage complaints are effective. Parents say their issues have had a clear and satisfactory response, which they appreciate. However, it is not always clear from the record what lessons, if any, the school could take from the process to improve boarding practice.

The school promotes an agenda of tolerance and respect and has recently become a 'Stonewall' school. An inspirational external speaker has had a transforming impact on the approach to difference and diversity: which was already good. Staff and students alike were able to reflect on the private and community lessons to be learnt about acceptance and inclusivity. The school succeeds in a harmonious and supportive boarding blend across a significant range of nationalities, languages, religions, ethnicities, cultures, and physical abilities. Parents have praised the boarding staff for the 'taste of life in the boarding house and the friendships that have developed there.'

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of care and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of care that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of care it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and the quality of care has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	135565
Social care unique reference number	SC470149
DfE registration number	925/6907

This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Academy
Number of boarders on roll	56
Gender of boarders	Mixed
Age range of boarders	15 to 18
Headteacher	Mr Ian Jones
Date of previous boarding inspection	
Telephone number	1522889977
Email address	ijones@prioryacademies.co.uk

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