

The Priory City of Lincoln Academy

Address: Skellingthorpe Road, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN6 0EP

Unique reference number (URN): 135564

Inspection report: 9 December 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have thoughtfully designed the personal development programme. They have carefully considered the risks that pupils in the school may face. Leaders encourage pupils to keep themselves safe and healthy and foster positive relationships, including online. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their beliefs and experiences, respect others' values, understand right and wrong and engage thoughtfully with ethical issues. Pupils develop their understanding of fundamental British values and the importance of respect between different groups of people well. For example, in religious education, pupils debate thoughtfully which British value best represents each of the Ten Commandments in Christianity.

The school provides a wide range of enrichment opportunities that support pupils' talents and interests. The uptake for these is a strength, with equal participation by disadvantaged pupils. For example, pupils benefit from a multi-sports club, book groups, chess club and choir, as well as museum trips, visits to The Globe Theatre, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) festivals and author visits. Pupils experience different cultures through, for example Brazilian artwork and music throughout the curriculum and trips abroad such as the ski trip to Italy.

Pupils have the opportunity to take on responsibility through leadership roles, including wellbeing ambassadors. Many pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, developing resilience and teamwork skills, as well as gaining volunteering experiences.

Leaders make sure that all pupils access high-quality, impartial careers advice and guidance through the thoughtfully designed careers programme 'Priory Futures'. This includes the well-attended careers fair. The programme provides pupils with important information about the next steps. Pupils and students in the sixth form meet a range of representatives from education, employment and training. As a result, they are well informed about their future options and build important employability skills. The proportion of pupils who are not in education, employment or training after Year 11 is exceptionally low.

Post 16 provision

Expected standard 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the quality and suitability of the sixth-form courses. They have designed well-sequenced curriculums that meet students' needs and the needs of local employers. Staff have appropriate expertise, including industry experience. They use this knowledge to teach the courses well. Students gain valuable experience through high-quality work placements that strengthen many technical and vocational programmes. They value facilities such as the professional kitchen, digital suite and industrial workshops for construction and motor vehicle courses. Leaders ensure that these facilities, alongside effective teaching, support students' progress from their starting points. Students produce work of a high quality, and retention on courses is well above average. Typically, students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well in national tests and examinations. As a result, students are well prepared for their next stage of education, employment or training.

Students also experience a broad personal development programme. This includes comprehensive careers information, advice and guidance, education on healthy lifestyles and relationships and topics such as financial awareness. Students take part in volunteering, enrichment and leadership activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and roles such as student council representatives or wellbeing ambassadors.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are beginning to make stronger progress, but achievement across several subjects is not yet as secure as it could be. Consequently, by the end of key stage 4, not enough pupils achieve the GCSE outcomes that reflect their full potential.

Leaders have begun to put measures in place to strengthen pupils' achievement. These include adapting the curriculum, improving staff training and securing the school's approach to improving literacy. These improvements are beginning to be seen in better outcomes. Pupils' work is starting to show that they are deepening their learning and that they are typically making better progress through the well-sequenced curriculum. However, pupils' progress remains inconsistent because adaptations are applied unevenly, and teaching is not effective enough.

Pupils are generally well prepared for their next steps, whether this be in education, employment or training. The proportion of pupils who are in education, employment or training when they have finished their courses are well above average.

Attendance and behaviour

Needs attention 

Leaders recognise that some pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, do not attend often enough. Leaders continue to support these pupils and their families.

The school is implementing strategies to reduce absence, and this is beginning to improve pupils' attendance. Leaders follow clear procedures and work closely with parents and carers to promote regular attendance. Persistent absence is decreasing, and overall attendance is rising.

Some pupils do not have positive attitudes to learning or respect for staff and other pupils. Consequently, some pupils become disengaged from their learning. Some staff feel unsupported in managing pupils' behaviour, and some do not apply the behaviour policy consistently, so low-level disruption and apathy in lessons are not consistently challenged. This frustrates pupils who want to learn. Some pupils are not confident that staff deal with derogatory language or bullying well. Leaders have introduced new strategies to improve pupils' behaviour. However, these strategies are in their infancy.

Many pupils have positive relationships with staff, and staff treat pupils with respect. Pastoral care is a strength. In the main, pupils behave sensibly around the school. At

breaktimes and lunchtimes, most pupils socialise well together.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The quality of teaching is too variable. Teachers often use questioning and other checks to effectively gauge how well pupils have learned the curriculum. However, sometimes they do not apply these checks on learning well enough to inform future learning. At other times, pupils move on to new content too swiftly without the opportunity to practise what they are being taught. Teachers use their subject-specialist knowledge well, particularly in the sixth form. They choose suitable strategies to teach new content.

Teaching does not always help pupils to produce high-quality written work. Some pupils make basic errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar or complete work with limited detail. The school provides structured opportunities to read and strengthen pupils' literacy. Leaders monitor reading closely. They offer targeted support when pupils need help with accuracy or fluency.

Leaders ensure that staff are provided with guidance on how to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, the impact of this support varies because the strategies identified are not yet precise enough to ensure that all pupils with SEND access the curriculum well.

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum. They have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching.

Inclusion

Needs attention 

The school has recently introduced a clearer framework for staff to identify emerging special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Although its 'SEND journey' work is still in its early stages, the school is beginning to strengthen the accuracy and consistency with which it identifies and assesses the needs of pupils with SEND.

The impact of staff training on how to plan, provide and review support for pupils with SEND has had a variable impact. Some teachers lack the expertise to adapt learning effectively, and staff's expectations for pupils with SEND are inconsistent. Leaders do not monitor the impact of interventions thoroughly enough. However, they are committed to building an inclusive culture and have taken steps to improve the support they receive.

Leaders ensure that appropriate targeted support is offered to those pupils known to children's social care. The school works effectively in partnership with other agencies, pursuing the best outcomes for pupils. The school has a strong relationship with the virtual school, and leaders work collaboratively to ensure that children in care are supported effectively, including through pupil premium plus grant funding. More widely, leaders ensure that the pupil premium strategy is informed by evidence and reflects disadvantaged pupils' needs. This is having some positive impact, for example by reducing the absence of disadvantaged pupils.

Alternative provision (AP) is commissioned by leaders appropriately. Leaders conduct robust checks on the welfare, safety and progress of pupils attending AP.

Leaders provide effective support for the high number of young carers. This includes access to counselling.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The leadership team has changed significantly since the previous inspection. Leaders' improvement work is in the early stages and has not had a positive enough impact, particularly on pupils' achievement, behaviour and teaching. Furthermore, some staff do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do and achieve.

Leaders have identified appropriate areas that the school needs to improve as a priority. They have a clear ambition for what pupils can achieve and how pupils should behave. Leaders have established a high-quality professional learning programme for staff to underpin the recent developments in how effectively the curriculum is taught. This is helping to secure improvements in teaching.

Trustees and school leaders make decisions that are in the best interests of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those known, or previously known, to children's social care and/or those who face other barriers to learning and/or wellbeing such as young carers. Trustees meet their statutory duties and hold leaders to account well in relation to managing resources, for example the pupil premium grant funding. They provide clear support and challenge that is leading to improvements, and are mindful of staff workload and wellbeing. However, a minority of staff express concerns about workload.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Many pupils say they like this school and generally feel safe. Typically, pupils have positive relationships with their peers and staff. However, pupils have mixed experiences at this school. Pastoral support is a strength. Some pupils are concerned about behaviour and how well bullying is dealt with. Pupils benefit from effective support for their mental health and wellbeing.

While classrooms are typically purposeful, on occasions, staff do not apply the behaviour policy consistently well to address low-level disruption. As a result, some pupils' poor behaviour negatively impacts their own and others' learning. Suspensions are high, though reducing. Sixth-form students show highly positive attitudes to their learning and enjoy their courses.

Leaders' work to improve attendance is resulting in more pupils attending school more often. However, leaders know attendance needs to improve further to ensure that pupils achieve more highly.

Leaders ensure that there are varied opportunities for pupils to experience activities beyond the classroom. For example, pupils enjoyed a visiting theatre production of some of Shakespeare's plays and singing in the choir at the Royal Albert Hall.

Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should, and some staff do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. There are some signs of improvement in outcomes in some areas of the curriculum. However, more needs to be done to swiftly raise attainment and progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes developing how effectively staff use the checks that they do on pupils' knowledge and skills, and making precise adaptations to the curriculum for pupils who need extra support to access it. Sixth-form students typically achieve well. They benefit from expert teaching and develop skills in high-quality learning environments.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to ensure that teachers' checks on pupils' learning are used to inform future learning and that teaching allows pupils enough practice to deepen their understanding before moving on, so that pupils achieve well across subjects.
 - Leaders should make sure that pupils develop important writing skills and knowledge across the curriculum, including technical accuracy (spelling, punctuation and grammar), to address pupils' gaps in foundational literacy.
 - Leaders should continue to strengthen staff training to ensure that the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is adapted consistently well, that education, health and care plans are implemented effectively and that the impact of these strategies is monitored rigorously to close pupils' gaps in understanding.
 - Leaders should continue to strengthen their actions to support further improvement in pupils' attendance, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
 - Leaders should continue to ensure that staff manage behaviour consistently well and that all pupils get the support they need to behave well, so that low-level disruption in lessons reduces.
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About this inspection

This school is part of The Priory Federation of Academies trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Ian Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Howard Gee.

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

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other senior school leaders, trust executive leaders and trustees, including the chief executive officer, during the inspection.

The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved

technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The inspection started on 9 December 2025. Inspectors returned on 16 December 2025 to gather additional evidence in line with Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence policy.

Headteacher: Martin Whitaker

Lead inspector:

Anne Maingay, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Deborah Mosley, His Majesty's Inspector

Nyree Parker, His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Halcro, His Majesty's Inspector

Dave Gilkerson, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 9 December 2025

School and pupil context

Total pupils

944

Close to average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,067

School capacity

950

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 1,153

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

35.36%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 28.9%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.39%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

21.50%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 13.4%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	28.7%	45.2%	Below
2023/24 (final)	25.7%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	29.9%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	35.6	45.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	34.0	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	40.0	46.3	Below

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.64	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.33	-0.03	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	16.9%	25.6%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	10.7%	25.8%	Below
2022/23 (final)	10.5%	25.2%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (provisional)	28.8	34.9	Below
2023/24 (final)	26.9	34.6	Below
2022/23 (final)	29.7	35.0	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.97	-0.57	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.91	-0.57	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	16.9%	52.8%	-35.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	10.7%	53.1%	-42.4 pp
2022/23 (final)	10.5%	52.4%	-41.9 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (provisional)	28.8	50.3	-21.5
2023/24 (final)	26.9	50.0	-23.1
2022/23 (final)	29.7	50.3	-20.6

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.97	0.16	-1.14
2022/23 (final)	-0.91	0.17	-1.07

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (provisional)	87%	91%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	93%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	96%	94%	Average

16 to 18 performance

A-level average point score

The average points that students achieved per A-level entry.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	30.89	34.99	Below
2023/24 (final)	26.91	34.38	Below
2022/23 (final)	28.55	34.16	Below

A-level value added

A score showing students’ progress between the end of key stage 4 and the end of their academic qualification studies.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	0.1	0.0	Close to average
2023/24 (revised)	-0.4	0.0	Below

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	13.5%	8.1%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	13.0%	8.9%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	11.2%	9.0%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	34.4%	21.9%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	36.3%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	31.5%	26.5%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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