



# Priestley Smith School



**Priestley Smith Specialist School for Children and Young People with Vision Impairments**



# PROSPECTUS



# Priestley Smith School

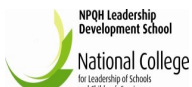
[www.Priestleysmith.com](http://www.Priestleysmith.com)  
[enquiry@priestley.bham.sch.uk](mailto:enquiry@priestley.bham.sch.uk)

0121 325 3900



[www.facebook.com/priestley.smith.school](http://www.facebook.com/priestley.smith.school)

**“Priestley Smith School is a wonderful place to learn. The school has high expectations for all pupils. Staff spend time getting to know each pupil. The quality of care and education is exceptional.” (Ofsted 2024)**



# About our school

**The aim of the school is to develop confident, caring and independent young people**

## Who are we?

Priestley Smith School caters for children from age 2, delivering nursery education, Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. We also provide specialist education for Sixth Form students at all academic levels.

Priestley Smith School is a unique school in the UK. It is the first co-located all-age special school for students with severe sight loss and shares a campus with 4 mainstream schools. The school is purpose built for students with visual impairment, and is very well resourced to meet their needs, providing the specialist equipment they require to access the curriculum e.g. large print and braille materials, specialist ICT software with speech, adapted technology etc. Our teaching staff are experienced and qualified teachers of the visually impaired.

Our support staff are also all trained to a very high standard. Students are taught to challenge any barriers placed before them and to realise that, while they might tackle a task in a different way to their peers, all things are possible. Their visual disability does not define who they are.

## What do we do?

We are committed to providing an exciting, stimulating and highly differentiated learning programme for all our students and to ensuring that each child is supported to reach his or her potential.

We provide both a mainstream curriculum, personalised to meet each child's visual and learning needs, and the additional specialist subjects of braille, habilitation (previously mobility and independent living skills) touch-typing, specialist ICT, and perceptual development. Every student leaves the school with a range of accreditation, qualifications and skills to help them make their way successfully in the world.



## **Message from the Head Teacher – Joanna Garvey**

**At Priestley Smith School, we aim to support our students, all of whom have a visual impairment, to do their very best, to enjoy school and to develop into caring, confident, independent and resourceful young people. We seek to develop well informed, respectful young citizens who celebrate the diversity in our world and help to shape the future, who are eager to share their thoughts and views but who also listen and respond appropriately to the opinions of others.**

**We have high expectations for our students and have created an environment in which each individual is supported and challenged to achieve their full potential, both inside and outside the classroom. Our students have a very rich and varied curriculum which focuses heavily upon first hand experiences and develops a love of learning. We want our students to leave us with the best possible academic qualifications but also with strong Independent Living Skills and the ability to move around the wider environment independently and safely so that they can succeed in the world.**

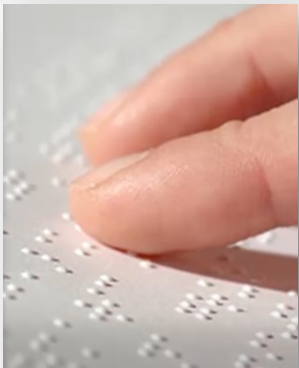
**We expect our students to be ready to learn, to work hard and to take pride in their achievements. We also believe that a strong partnership between student, parent and staff will ensure the best possible outcomes and therefore work closely with children and their families to identify the next steps in their learning and ways to support them to achieve these.**



**Our Mission:  
Through high quality teaching, learning and pastoral care, to develop confident, caring and independent young people who are able to succeed in the world in their chosen field.**

**Our Vision:  
To be an outward-looking centre of excellence in the education of children with visual impairments**

# **Our Aims At Priestley Smith School we aim to provide:**



**A safe, caring and supportive learning environment which enables all students to achieve to their maximum potential and encourages them to be as confident, resourceful and independent as possible**

---

**High quality first hand learning delivered by specialist teaching experiences for all students, and support staff**

---

**Consistently high quality resources and materials for all students, including specially adapted information and communication technology**

---

**Small groups with a high teacher-student ratio**

---

**Opportunities for both academic and social inclusion throughout all phases with campus and local schools**

---

**Full access to a broad, balanced and highly differentiated mainstream curriculum, modified to meet the visual, learning and social needs of each child.**

---

**A range of additional extra-curricular activities to supplement class-based learning**

---

**Individualised training in mobility and independent living skills, delivered by specialist, on-site Habilitation**

---

**An environment in which diversity is celebrated and in which all barriers to inclusion are challenged**

---

**A close working partnership with parents and carers, which enables them to be fully involved in their child's learning**

# Priestley Smith School is a Gold Rights Respecting School

The Rights Respecting Schools Award puts children's rights at the heart of schools in the UK.

- Unicef works with schools in the UK to create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children are respected, their talents are nurtured and they are able to thrive.
- Our Rights Respecting Schools Award embeds these values in daily school life and gives children the best chance to lead happy, healthy lives and to be responsible, active citizens.
- The Award recognises a school's achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice within the school and beyond.
- Article 12 says that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.
- Every year during the month of October students are asked to vote for their School Ambassador.
- The role of the school ambassador is to actively represent students' concerns to staff, SLT and outside organisations, uphold the image and good reputation of the school, attend events as the school student representative, post on social media as the ambassador and take part in school council meetings.



# Our Curriculum

Our fully accessible curriculum not only reflects the needs of our VI students, but also promotes a love of learning and personal growth. We do this through an experiential, creative and relevant specialist curriculum, which inspires and motivates all students to develop as individuals and achieve their potential.



## Curriculum intent

Our curriculum is ambitious and designed to give all pupils the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.

## P.R.I.E.S.T.L.E.Y!

- **P**repared for life
- **R**esilient
- **I**ndependent
- **E**nriched
- **S**elf-advocate
- **T**echnology
- **L**earning to access, access to learning
- **E**mootional well-being
- **Y**es, we can!!



We support our students and equip them with the skills and attributes they need to become confident, independent and respectful young adults, who have ambitious aspirations for their futures.

We recognise the challenges faced by young people with vision impairments and help them to develop the strategies to overcome any barriers.

Our curriculum takes into account the fact that many of our students have additional needs, which include learning, communication, physical and social and emotional difficulties. We follow a stage not age approach across all key stages of the school.

**The curriculum is broad, balanced and ambitious. It supports the individual needs and interests of pupils. Leaders have identified what they want pupils to know and remember. Learning is delivered in small steps. This helps pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. (Ofsted 2024)**



# Assistive Technology

The need for our children learning to access is as important as them accessing learning.

The curriculum foundations are based in the National Curriculum, as well as the Curriculum Framework for Vision Impairment (CFVI) ensuring children can utilise a variety of innovative tools to access, manage and produce information as independently as possible. As well as a range of skills, children are taught when to use particular approaches, managing and navigating an information rich world, and teachers scaffold learning through the preparation of materials, and making accommodations and adjustments to the environment.



Students have access to a number of different resources, for example, iPads, Macbooks, Mantis, Brailnotes, Brailiants, Annies, Code Jumpers, Jaws and screen readers.



**Innovative adaptations help pupils access learning. A reprographics team create resources that engage and excite pupils. Pupils use assistive technology to access the curriculum.**  
*(Ofsted 2024)*



# Primary Department

## Foundation Stage

- We have a purpose built Foundation Stage, including outside area, which caters for children of Nursery and Reception age and which is fully equipped with stimulating and exciting resources to encourage children's learning and imagination at this age.
- The children study all aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum, with regular opportunities gain first- hand experience of the world through educational visits. They also have sessions in mobility, independence, perceptual development and tactile skills.



- The Foundation Stage has a wonderful Sensory Room in order to stimulate and reinforce visual skills. The children benefit from weekly swimming or horse riding sessions, music and Physical Education lessons.
- They also visit a soft play centre each week. Foundation Stage staff work closely with parents and a range of other professionals such as physiotherapists and speech and language therapists to maximize the potential of each child.

- The children benefit from lessons as part of an individualised specialist curriculum to meet their needs, including ICT, touch-typing, braille, habilitation and Independent Living Skills. This runs alongside the mainstream National Curriculum.

- All learning programmes are highly differentiated to ensure that they match each child's level of learning. Students have weekly music, PE, French and either swimming or riding lessons, taught by specialist teachers.



# Primary Department

## Key Stage 1 and 2

In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 the children are taught in small classes with daily opportunities to work and play with their mainstream peers in Beeches Infant and Junior Schools.



# Secondary Department

Priestley Smith Secondary Department caters for young people up to the end of Key Stage 5 . The Secondary Department offers the full range of National Curriculum subjects, which are taught in small classes with specialist equipment to meet the children's needs. These include:

English  
Maths  
Science



Geography  
History  
Modern Foreign  
Languages  
Music



ICT  
Art  
PSHE  
Food  
Technology

All learning programmes are highly differentiated for each child. The students continue to have weekly PE and swimming lessons and individual braille, habilitation, touch typing and specialist ICT lessons.

Secondary students are also able to participate in many learning experiences beyond the classroom, including extra-curricular clubs, curriculum activities, trips and visits and residential

# OPTION CHOICES KEY STAGE 4

As students move into Year 10 they can choose some of the subjects they wish to study (optional subjects) and there are some subjects that they have to continue to study (compulsory subjects).

**Pupils achieve exceptionally well. All pupils are expected to gain a range of qualifications by the time they move on, both academic and vocational. (Ofsted 2024)**



## At Key Stage 4

Maths, English, ICT, Science, Business Admin, Food Technology, PSHE, RE and PE are compulsory and students will also have Mobility, specialist ICT, ILS lessons and Braille, where appropriate.

The following 4 subjects are offered as an option choice—students need to choose 2 out of the 4:

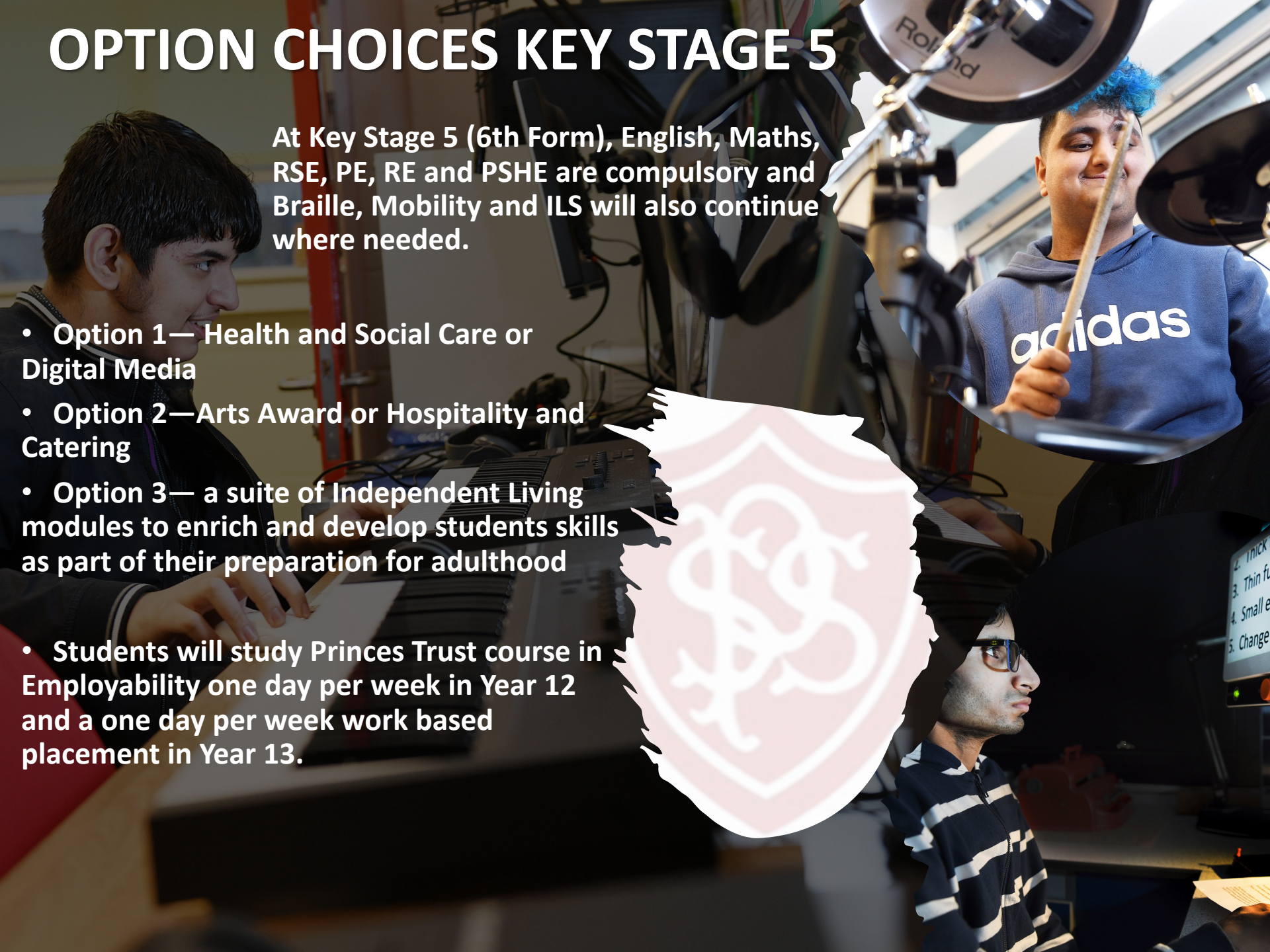
- Option 1: French or History
- Option 2: Music or Art

Students in year 10 will complete a 2 week work experience placement

# OPTION CHOICES KEY STAGE 5

At Key Stage 5 (6th Form), English, Maths, RSE, PE, RE and PSHE are compulsory and Braille, Mobility and ILS will also continue where needed.

- **Option 1— Health and Social Care or Digital Media**
- **Option 2—Arts Award or Hospitality and Catering**
- **Option 3— a suite of Independent Living modules to enrich and develop students skills as part of their preparation for adulthood**
- **Students will study Princes Trust course in Employability one day per week in Year 12 and a one day per week work based placement in Year 13.**



# OPTION CHOICES KEY STAGE 5



- For students who will gain at least 5 GCSEs at 1 – 9 including English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 4, there is also the option of studying 'A' levels and Level 3 courses in partnership with Fortis Academy Sixth Form.

- Such courses will be supported by Priestley Smith School and work will be appropriately modified into large print, Braille and ICT formats, as required by individual students. Students wishing to follow 'A' level and Level 3 courses should discuss this option with Mrs Clabon (Head of Secondary) Ms Peynado (Sixth Form Coordinator)

# Habilitation

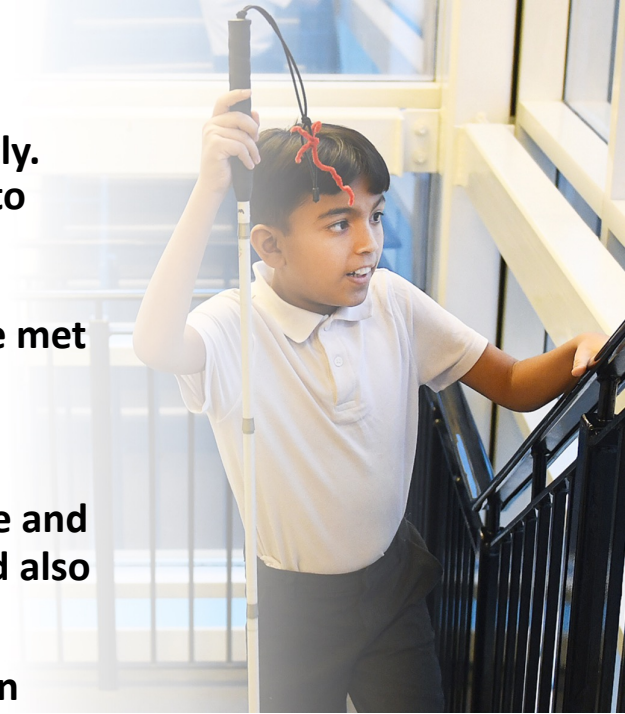
(formerly Mobility and Independent Living Skills)

- Priestley Smith School is also home to the Education Habilitation Service, which offers mobility and independence training to visually impaired children and young people across the city.
- Students have access in school to individual mobility lessons and independent living skills, as well as the possibility of group Personal Social Development lessons and extracurricular activities.
- There is a specially designed mobility teaching room, with high contrast units and a wide range of specialist equipment for teaching independent living skills.



# What is mobility?

- **Mobility is the skill to move through the environment independently. Training enhances this ability by teaching special skills and strategies to help children cope.**
- **Each young person is individually assessed and identified needs are met through one to one mobility lessons to help them become safe independent travellers, both indoors and out.**
- **Great emphasis is placed on safety and work appropriate to the age and ability of each individual child. Students will be assessed in school and also in the surrounding area**
- **Mobility sessions will normally take place at school, but Habilitation Specialists work throughout the year including school holidays, when home visits can be arranged.**
- **Parents are encouraged to be involved so they can support their child and will be provided with regular reports on their progress**



## **Topics covered will vary depending on age and ability, but may include:**

- **Body awareness – understanding body parts and how the body moves**
- **Listening skills – how to listen and what to listen for**
- **Orientation – knowing where you are and how to get to where you want to be, including long cane training, where relevant**
- **Maximising vision – making the most of residual vision and using appropriate low vision aids**
- **Basic personal safety – keeping safe and seeking help**
- **Road safety – including special strategies and techniques to improve safety**
- **Social and life skills – dealing with others, shopping, money and using the telephone.**



# What are independent living skills (ILS)?

The Mobility Service aims to prepare students for safe independent living in the future. By the time students leave school, the majority should at least be able to make a simple meal and drink for themselves. Independent living skills may be one to one lessons or students may take part in small group sessions. Some students may be entered for ASDAN PSD or Personal Progress.

Topics covered will vary depending on age and ability, but may include:

Social and emotional development, asking for assistance, including contacting the Emergency Services, social conventions, manners, confidence and motivation

Independent living skills (ILS) e.g. kitchen skills, including Snack Attack, a progressive course in basic food preparation, eating, personal hygiene, money handling, dressing.

## Habilitation Staff:

Fiona Broadley—Senior Habilitation Specialist

Terri-Ann Bent—Habilitation Specialist

Suzy McDonald—Habilitation Specialist

Jo Shale—Habilitation Administrator

Contact: [mobility@priestley.bham.sch.uk](mailto:mobility@priestley.bham.sch.uk)

0121 325 3904



# Safeguarding students:

At Priestley Smith School we are committed to safeguarding our students and we expect everyone who works in our school to share this commitment. The school follows clear safeguarding policies procedures and addresses not only the general safeguarding issues students face such as e-safety, but also the specific challenges from having visual impairments and associated health and learning issues. This means our students and their families can need additional support. As we teach students from 2-19 years old, we tailor our support to their needs as they reach adulthood.

**Pupil and staff relationships are a strength. Pupils enjoy working together and playing together. Pupils feel safe and understood. (Ofsted 2024)**

Our students have the right to a safe, caring and supportive learning environment which enables them to achieve to their maximum potential and encourages them to be as confident, resourceful and independent as possible. They have the right to feel safe, have a voice, and know that they are listened to.

Adults in our school take all welfare concerns seriously and encourage our students to talk to us about anything that worries them. We will always act in the best interest of our students

**Our Designated Safeguarding Leads are:**

**Lead DSL – Liz Clabon**



**DSL – Jo Garvey**



**DSL – Richard Foord**



# School Governors

Priestley Smith School governors show an enormous level of commitment to the school and work extremely hard in the interests of our students and families.

Our governing body has a wide range of differing experiences. We have representatives from families, business, education and the voluntary sector as well as elected and co-opted staff members.

This helps to ensure we have the right range of skills to carry out our duties. Governors meet regularly in both full governing body meetings and in curriculum, finance and personnel subcommittees. They play a key role in evaluating the work of the School and in securing School improvement .

Priestley Smith School has 12 governors.

**Leaders and governors are a driven and ambitious team. They continue to improve and transform pupils' lives and outcomes. This is a school that never stands still. (Ofsted 2024)**



## The School Council

Priestley Smith School has a very effective and dynamic School Council which meets regularly to discuss issues relating to the whole school.

The council is chaired by students, minutes of the meeting are recorded by students and the agenda is set by students.

Senior school staff attend and contribute to the meetings. School Council members are involved in school improvement, planning, meet agencies which work with the school and meet with OFSTED. They manage a school council improvement budget.

# Working with Parents and Carers

At Priestley Smith School, we believe that children learn best when supported by their families and community.

We aim to work in partnership with parents and carers, to establish mutual understanding and respect and to find ways in which home and school can work together for the benefit of the child.

Our partnership depends on good communication. As a school we try to ensure that parents and carers are kept fully up to date with their child's progress through:

- Parents' Evenings
- ECHP review meetings
- End of year reports

As many parents do not live locally and many children come to us on School Transport, some of the ways we also communicate are through:

School website | School diary | Text messaging | Facebook | Tapestry | Dojo



# Our Policies and Procedures

## Positive Behaviour Policy

Priestley Smith School aims to encourage pupils and staff to have the highest standards of behaviour, principles and values.

We aim to promote trust and mutual respect for everyone, in an environment where warm relationships, good manners and independence are considered crucial in forming a happy and confident child.

We aim to communicate consistent boundaries, but also recognise that fair does not always mean equal. Reasonable adjustments for the specific social, emotional, mental and physical Health needs of the pupils must be considered.

**There is a calm and supportive school culture. As a result of this, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are kind and caring; they look after each other. (Ofsted 2024)**

## OUR SCHOOL RULES

**Be ready to learn**

**Be respectful to everyone**

**Be safe**

**Be kind to everyone**

**Be honest**

**Behaviour is a form of communication.  
Look beyond the behaviour to see the child**

These five simple statements embody our principles for positive behaviour and are easy to understand. We expect all children and adults in the school to follow the rules.

# **Our Policies and Procedures**

## **Attendance**

Priestley Smith School seeks to ensure the most effective education for all its students. In order to achieve this it is vital that students attend school consistently and on time. Good attendance and punctuality are important characteristics to develop for the future world of work.

The school works in close partnership with students and families to ensure the best possible attendance for each child. We monitor attendance closely.

We keep students and families regularly informed on individual attendance rate, and on school and national requirements. Good attendance can be summarised as 95-100%.

This will always be our target for all students.

Students failing to attend school regularly can be a sign of deterioration in their emotional well-being and we will explore and try to resolve any issues. The safeguarding of our students and our professional curiosity underpin our attendance monitoring systems.

**Pupils' attendance is improving. Phone calls, home visits and multi-agency partnerships are key to this success. (Ofsted 2024)**

Statutory policies can be found on the school website [www.priestleysmith.com](http://www.priestleysmith.com) printed copies are available on request

# Our staff

Priestley Smith School is committed to a team approach to meeting all our learners' needs. Our specialist and experienced staff comprise senior leadership staff, teachers, teaching assistants, multi-agency specialists, volunteers, apprentices, governors, and support staff. Staff are trained to meet the changing needs of students. What Ofsted said about our staff: There is a strong sense of 'team' and staff are proud to work at the school. They want to support and encourage students to be the best they can be.

## Headteacher

Joanna Garvey

## Deputy Head, Head of Secondary

Liz Clabon

## Assistant Head, Head of Primary

Richard Foord

## Senior Habilitation Specialists

Fiona Broadley

Suzy McDonald

## Teachers of Braille

Helen Kadir (HLTA)

Clair Oldacres

## Specialist Habilitation staff:

Terri-Ann Bent

Jo Shale

## Specialist IT Technicians:

P Wilcox

B Dhesi

## Specialist Reprographics

C Cox

## Primary Class Teachers:

Victoria Karim

Emma Cardinal

Carole Ward

Beth Hooper

## Primary Teaching Assistants:

Sarah Jones (HLTA)

Lisa Coyle (HLTA)

Paula Sillence

Chloe Manley

Emily Asson

Ellie Johnson

Toni Simmons

## Administrative Staff:

Jacinta Hill

Narinder Dosanjh

Trudi Nicholls

## Secondary Class Teachers:

Naomal Wijesinghe

Onyx Peynado

Alison Hannington

Julia Weston

Sunita Wijesinghe

Jeremy Adams

Suzanne Bradley

Nathan Burns

Kimberley Blundell

Jonas Aaron

Katie Smith

## Secondary Teaching Assistants:

Amelia H'Ladkiy

Saima Munir

Sonia Jennings

Joyce Farnsworth

Kerry Mellor

Daryl Burn

Lesley Holsey

Rachel Broderick

Donald Munn

Michelle Morris

# Admissions to Priestley Smith



**Priestley Smith School is a Birmingham Local Authority School. Admission to the school is therefore made through Birmingham Education Authority and cannot be agreed by or arranged directly through the school. Parents, carers and professionals are, however, welcome to visit Priestley Smith School at any time to gain an informed view of the school.**

**All enquiries regarding visits to the school should be directed to the School Secretary on 0121 325 3900.**

**When parents and schools feel that a placement at a specialist school for the visually impaired would be beneficial for a particular child, this will generally be discussed at annual review meetings, in consultation with Local Authority officers. If there is agreement that such a placement is preferred, students with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) for visual impairment are then referred by the Special Educational Needs Assessment and Review (SENAR) to Birmingham Placement Panel, which determines the appropriateness of a placement within Priestley Smith School.**

**Priestley Smith School caters for students from Birmingham LA and surrounding local authorities including Solihull, Walsall, Sandwell, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton and Dudley. In all cases involving students from other local authorities, admission to the school is arranged through regional Local Authority officers, in consultation with Birmingham SENAR and Birmingham Placement Panel. Birmingham Placement Panel make the final decision as to appropriateness of placement.**

**For more information [www.priestleysmith.com/admissions](http://www.priestleysmith.com/admissions)**



# Life at Priestley Smith School

## The School day

- School is open to children from 8:55am—3:20pm

## Uniform

- Priestley Smith School asks that all students wear school uniform. Sweatshirts and polo shirts with the school logo are available to purchase from the school office all year round.

## Boy's Uniform

- Dark Grey or Black trousers
- White polo shirt
- Maroon Sweatshirt
- Black shoes

## Girls' Uniform

- Dark Grey or Black skirt or trousers
- White polo shirt
- Maroon Sweatshirt or cardigan
- Black shoes

PE Kit Plain White T-shirt, Plain dark shorts or skirt, White socks, Trainers/Plimsolls, Tracksuit (optional for outdoor use), Swimming costume/shorts and towel



# School Meals

## Primary School

School meals are prepared and eaten in the adjoining Beeches Primary school. This encourages integration between our school and the mainstream school. Students will then share a lunchtime play together. School meals are ordered online by parents. Parents are given access to an online account and have the option to order daily or for a whole term. Payments are made online so no need to bring cash to school, there is an option to set up a direct debit or pay as you go. Students are welcome to bring a packed lunch. All students are encouraged to make healthy choices, and meals are fully supervised.

## Secondary School

Our Secondary School students eat their lunch in the canteen within the adjoining Arena Academy. Students are encouraged to be independent when making meal choices and paying for their meals. The only method of payment is cash. Students are welcome to bring a packed lunch. Some of our students will choose to remain in Priestley Smith to eat their lunch.

## Universal and Free School meals:

Universal Free School meals are offered to all students in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 regardless of circumstances. Free School meals are for Parents/Carers on certain benefits, applications can be made at the School office. Proof of benefit must be seen .

# Transport to school

Travel to and from school is organised by Birmingham Travel Assist , part of the Local Authority, or your Local Authority, with parental wishes taken into consideration where possible.

Primary students are normally brought by taxi or minibus to school. Transport regulations have become more stringent in recent years and whilst school will make every effort to help you secure home school transport, if you live within 2 miles we cannot guarantee success.

At Secondary level more children use public transport. They may be accompanied one way by habilitation staff, before progressing to independent travel.

This helps students learn to travel independently, following successful completion of the relevant mobility training and prepares them for life after school.

Sixth form parents will be asked to make a contribution towards travel costs should they wish to remain on transport to School.





**Priestley Smith School,  
Beeches Campus,  
Beeches Road,  
B42 2PY**

**Priestley Smith Primary:  
0121 325 3900**

**Priestley Smith Secondary:  
0121 325 3905**

[enquiry@priestley.bham.sch.uk](mailto:enquiry@priestley.bham.sch.uk)  
[www.priestleysmith.com](http://www.priestleysmith.com)

## **Where are we?**

Priestley Smith School is located on the site of Perry Beeches campus in Great Barr, Birmingham. The campus includes Beeches Nursery, Infant and Junior schools and Arena Academy.

It is also near Fortis Academy, where our students are supported to study Level 3 qualifications facilitating inclusion for our students of all ages.

Priestley Smith School is a city-wide provision. Students attend our school from all areas of Birmingham and also from surrounding Local Authorities, including Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. [www.priestleysmith.com/admissions](http://www.priestleysmith.com/admissions)



# **PRIESTLEY SMITH SPECIALIST SCHOOL**

**An outward looking centre of excellence  
in the education of children with visual impairments**