

Princethorpe Infant School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103245
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376859
Inspection dates	1–2 March 2012
Lead inspector	Anne Pitt HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Bentley
Headteacher	Sarah Jane Wright
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2009
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Age group	3–7
Inspection date(s)	1–2 March 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Anne Pitt

Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Gregory

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors visited 18 lessons and observed seven class teachers. Meetings were held with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, the staff and groups of pupils. Inspectors looked at school documents such as the school development plan and governor meeting minutes, pupils' work, and questionnaires from pupils and staff including 88 from parents and carers

Information about the school

The school is average in size. Most pupils, but not all, are from White British backgrounds. The main minority ethnic groups represented in the school are Indian, Caribbean and African. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high as is the proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school which is improving. It has important strengths. Pupils are very well behaved. They feel safe and happy at school. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and say such things as, 'The best school ever. Every child matters'. The leadership and management are good. The headteacher is implementing effective initiatives which are having a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work, including the teaching of reading.
- The progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There is an upward trend of improvement in the satisfactory progress currently made by pupils in Years 1 and 2. Pupils' attainment is broadly average by the time they leave the school. It is stronger in reading and mathematics than it is in writing.
- Competent and encouraging teaching underpins the warm and caring atmosphere in the school. The teaching seen during the inspection was in the main judged satisfactory or good. Teaching assistants provide sensitive and helpful support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and conduct in lessons and around the school are consistently good. Pupils take a pride in their work and the school is tidy and litter-free. Pupils say that they get on well together and bullying is extremely rare. Attendance figures are average and rising.
- School leaders have successfully addressed all areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Self-evaluation is well-embedded into the school culture and leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Performance management systems are robust. The school is not good because: standards in writing, although improving, are not high enough; not enough teaching is good or better; and higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

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Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching so that pupils make consistently good progress by:
 - ensuring teachers plan and adapt activities to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities, especially the more-able
 - sharing the existing good practice across the school
 - improving teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and the pace of lessons
 - ensuring that teachers use open-ended questions to challenge pupils' thinking effectively.

- Raise standards in writing by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to write
 - ensuring that pupils are taught to use interesting vocabulary in their writing
 - ensuring that pupils' writing is on display and visible
 - setting clear and measureable school targets related to writing and monitoring improvement closely.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and this judgement matches the school's self evaluation. Parents and carers who returned questionnaires all agree that they are pleased with the progress their children make.

Children make a strong start to school in the Nursery and Reception classes. They interact well together, gain a good level of social awareness and acquire a confident approach towards working in groups or independently. The skills levels shown by individuals when they start school vary considerably from year to year but are generally below where they are expected to be. Nonetheless, children make good progress in relation to their starting points and generally reach average standards by the start of Year 1. Children show a good and growing knowledge of letter sounds, which is helping them make good progress with reading. They acquire a good grasp of basic number facts to 10.

Current progress in Years 1 and 2 is satisfactory and improving. Standards in reading and mathematics are broadly average. However, progress in writing is not as good and standards are below average. Test results and teachers' assessments also show this pattern over recent years. The school has sensibly adapted the way it tackles the

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teaching of writing. This means that pupils are now starting to spell words accurately, write confidently and at length. However, they are not yet proficient at using a wide range of interesting vocabulary to enliven their texts. Nevertheless, the work in books and in the lessons seen show pupils making better progress this year than last year. Analysis of the school's data, shows that this upward trend is likely to continue.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils. Effective work with external agencies helps ensure that pupils have the necessary skills to enable them to access all aspects of the curriculum.

Quality of teaching

The teaching seen during the inspection was mainly satisfactory. Good teaching was seen in all year groups. Parents and carers speak highly of the teaching staff. One wrote, 'I am very pleased with the quality of teaching. The staff are very professional and approachable'. The productive links with parents and carers are a strength of the school. Children regularly take home their reading books and spellings so that their parents and carers can help them.

Teaching for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective. The curriculum is planned well to ensure that children are involved in a wide range of lively and interesting activities indoors and outdoors. Children's learning is boosted well by the work of additional adults, for example when promoting mathematical and scientific language as children built a bridge out of blocks for the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff'.

Typically lessons in Years 1 and 2 are well organised and pupils respond well. Good use is made of electronic whiteboards to provide visual examples that stimulate interest and help pupils learn. Teachers and support staff know pupils well and behaviour management is positive and encouraging. Teachers provide careful instructions and explanations but sometimes these slow the pace of the lesson and limit the time pupils have to work independently. There is targeted and competent support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Teachers' marking of work is very good and provides guidance to pupils about how to improve.

The work set for pupils usually matches their needs and interests but occasionally it is too easy, especially for the brightest pupils. Similarly some activities do not address sufficiently what pupils are learning about. For example, when children were learning about capacity in a mathematics lesson, the task set was more about pupils' cutting skills with scissors rather than their understanding of measurement. In other lessons, occasionally there are missed opportunities to ask pupils open-ended questions and to encourage them to write so that they reach their full potential. In contrast, in good lessons, every moment is used to move pupils' thinking on. For example in a reading lesson the teacher skilfully interacted with pupils very well to reinforce their understanding of the sounds 'ee' and 'ea'. The tasks were matched well to pupils' abilities and they learnt a great deal from the session.

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Underpinning the sound teaching is a planned and enriching curriculum which has improved since the last inspection. For example, the systematic teaching of words and sounds has enabled pupils to improve their reading and spelling. Pupils are also taught in smaller groups based on their ability and this is contributing to improved standards. Social, moral and spiritual development is emphasised well through, for example, lessons taught in the 'forest school'. Cultural development is less strong and the school is aware of the need to improve this aspect of its teaching.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well in and around the school. Discussions with them indicate that this is the normal picture throughout the year. All parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree and one parent typically commented, 'This school has exceeded our expectations, has set very good standards of behaviour and discipline and created a positive and supportive environment for our son's learning and development'.

In lessons, pupils cooperate with each other and typically respond quickly to the teachers; they have positive attitudes to learning and work hard. Most sustain good levels of concentration even when tasks are not quite pitched at the right level for their needs. Pupils take a pride in their work. They show a caring approach and are sensitive to each others' needs. Pupils are confident that any rare occurrence of bullying is dealt with quickly and efficiently by staff. They have a secure understanding about what it means to keep themselves safe.

Pupils enjoy school and attendance figures have improved greatly and are now average. The effective work of the learning mentor has been instrumental in ensuring regular attendance and punctuality by working directly with parents and carers.

Leadership and management

The highly capable leadership of the headteacher enables the school to run effectively. She is always available to pupils and parents, for example being visible in the playground at the beginning of each day. There is a good team approach to school improvement planning. The school development plan identifies the right areas for development but the success criteria are not always sharp and measurable. The school's lesson observation notes show that there is rigour in checking teaching and a focus on making sure that work consistently matches more precisely the needs of all individuals.

The curriculum is satisfactory and suitably broad and balanced, although music, religious education and opportunities for cultural development are not strongly represented on the class timetables. That said, a walk of the school revealed an enriching curriculum which underpins pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Five-year-olds danced and mimed to an action song, older pupils developed their mathematical understanding by making shapes out of twigs in the outside classroom,

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while others photographed different shapes and learnt about their properties on laptops; a small group was undertaking an interview with 'Percy', a character from a book, and children in Nursery were laying the table for lunch and talking sociably to each other. The 'forest school' provides ample opportunities for children to experience awe and wonder as seen when they were looking at insects through magnifying glasses.

Parents spoken to on the school playground at the beginning of the day showed overwhelming support for the school's leadership. The senior management team has effectively led important initiatives to help staff improve the school's provision in teaching letters and sounds and writing. New teachers feel well supported and mentored, and most staff appreciate the professional development on offer. Senior managers have introduced a reliable tracking system that allows accurate monitoring of pupils' progress from term to term. This is a secure platform for improvement. The governing body has strengthened its support for the school's leadership and the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body articulate a clear vision about how they can become more robust in holding the school to account. The school satisfactorily promotes equality and tackles discrimination. Pupils say that they are treated fairly. Safeguarding procedures are effective, and at the time of the inspection all the regulations and standards were met.

The school's capacity to sustain improvement is good because since the last inspection there has been improvement in results in reading, reflecting the improved teaching of letters and sounds, and in mathematics; in the tracking of pupils' achievement in each class and rates of attendance; in the effectiveness of the governing body.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Princethorpe Infant School, Birmingham, B29 5QB

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and being so friendly and helpful. I particularly want to thank the pupils who gave up their lunch time to talk to me.

What I liked most about your school is that:

- you enjoy school, and do well in reading and mathematics
- you get on well with each other and your behaviour is good
- adults take good care of you so that you feel happy and safe in school
- your parents and carers are involved in helping you to read and spell
- the headteacher, staff and governors are keen to help your school get even better.

What I have asked your school to do now is to:

- make sure that the work you are given is not too easy
- provide you with as many opportunities to write as possible
- teach you to use exciting words in your writing
- display your writing so that you can read the good work of others
- make sure that no time is wasted in lessons
- check that the school is improving the way it teaches you writing so that it is as good as that in reading and mathematics.

You are very lucky that you go to a caring school where everyone gets on so well. I hope that you will do your best to make it even better.

Yours sincerely

Anne Pitt
Her Majesty's Inspector

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