

Priory Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110702
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	356799
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Kempton HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Skinner
Headteacher	Tracy Gould
Date of previous school inspection	17 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed nine lessons and nine teachers. They held meetings with the senior and middle managers of the school, the chair and one other governor, a group of six parents and carers, four outside professionals associated with the school, and met the school improvement partner. They spoke to seven groups of pupils in all year groups. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, as well as subject development plans. Evidence was also provided by the 114 parents' and carers' questionnaires, and those by staff and pupils who completed questionnaires to express their views of the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- Why students make better progress in English than mathematics.
- Why, unlike in the majority of schools, boys achieve better than girls.
- The extent to which the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.
- The extent to which middle leaders' plans focus on raising standards in their subject areas.
- Whether there has been enough progress since the last inspection in 2008.

Information about the school

Priory is a large junior school situated in the market town of St Neots. Pupils attending the school come from a wide area of the town, including the nearby village of Hail Weston. The percentage of pupils who are identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, and the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below. The majority of pupils are White British. The school was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark for the third time in 2009 and achieved the Activemark for sport in 2008.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Priory Junior is a satisfactory school that is poised to make rapid improvements. It has leaders and managers at all levels who have the potential to improve the school and act on the issues raised in this report. The caring attitude of staff and the value they place on supporting every child is valued highly by parents and carers. One described the school as a place where adults, 'respect every child as an individual'. After a period of staff turbulence, there is more stability now and a willingness to be part of the drive to raise standards. The headteacher with her sheer hard work, determination and high expectations, has focused and re-energised the staff on the core business of identifying weaker areas of performance and making a difference. As a result, all pupils are now making quicker progress.

The school has a number of strengths:

- the core values of the school that pupils learn to adopt: courtesy, consideration, co-operation, contribution, patience, perseverance, honesty, mutual respect, equality and fairness
- the good behaviour of the overwhelming majority of pupils
- the care, guidance and support provided for all pupils, especially those who, at times, may be in challenging circumstances
- the improving profile of attendance
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils
- the support provided for pupils who show signs of falling behind with their work
- the calm and smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis.

Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are above the national average. By the end of Year 6, their 2010 test results were also above the national average in both English and mathematics. While the trend of progress over the last three years showed that pupils made satisfactory progress as they moved through the school, there is clear evidence from the school data and from lesson observations that pupils are now beginning to make quicker progress. At the last inspection, boys were attaining higher standards than girls, contrary to the national trend. Now, the gap between the attainment of boys and girls is closing. Girls are catching up. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall as at the last inspection, but a growing proportion is good. In the better lessons observed during the inspection, the teaching pace was brisk, the behaviour of the pupils was good and they wanted to learn. In the less successful lessons, the marking of work in books was not detailed enough to help pupils know what they had to do to improve; questions were too closed and did not challenge pupils or check for understanding and; the learning

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within lesson activities did not show sufficient progression and was not stimulating enough.

Ambition is tangible in leaders and managers at all levels. However, whole school and subject plans do not contain enough measurable success criteria to allow governors to evaluate and challenge the impact of actions. Subject leaders too, are not set enough targets by senior staff in order to measure their impact on raising attainment in their subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that at least 80% of lessons are good or better by:
 - devising a questioning strategy to be used by all teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that all pupils: understand the task; are appropriately challenged; can justify their thought processes and; can provide extended answers to open questions
 - ensuring that pupils' work is marked in more detail, and teacher feedback prompts a response from pupils
 - ensuring that lesson activities are more exciting and appealing and that there is more progression of learning between activities
- Ensure that development planning at all levels contains measurable success criteria to aid self-evaluation.
- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels have targets to raise attainment against which their impact can be evaluated.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils joining the school are capable learners and by the time they leave, their above average levels of attainment have been maintained. Pupils demonstrate particular strengths in English. Pupils' progress as they move through the school is more variable. A task orientated emphasis in lessons means that pupils have become preoccupied with immediate concerns over spelling and handwriting. Opportunities for them to describe their learning or to connect ideas within subjects are missed so they are not all able to reinforce their understanding. The school's regular tracking system and pupil progress meetings highlight groups of pupils where progress is slowing and steps to address these inconsistencies have resulted in sharp improvements. A small minority of pupils now make much better progress in both English and mathematics. Special arrangements for those pupils joining the school later in Key Stage 2 have increased their progress. Pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and, as a result, School Action pupils make good progress, better than that of most other pupils.

Most pupils are thoughtful and have well considered views of the part they play in their community. They are sensible about potential risks and they feel safe. When questioned, pupils describe a balanced perspective about equality and diversity, in the same way, they

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accept that responsibility brings both privilege and dilemma. They are ready volunteers as play leaders, and younger pupils aspire to take on the roles they see older pupils fulfil. Membership of the fund raising committee provides a valuable opportunity for elected pupils to make decisions and develop effective organisational skills as they devise charity events. Over ?2000 was raised during the last twelve months; a considerable achievement! Most pupils are clear about the standards of behaviour they expect and their natural fairness means they sensitively encourage one another to do the right thing. The lead taken by the school in organising a number of local athletics events means that a very large majority enjoy sporting success. The pupils' record in the National Indoor Rowing League is impressive. Recent initiatives to improve attendance have been effective but the impact has yet to be sustained over longer periods of time.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Working relationships within the school are good and pupils progress within a calm and mutually supportive learning environment.

During the lessons observed, teachers made particularly good use of interactive white boards to capture and hold pupils' attention. As a result, the overwhelming majority of pupils were keen to learn and behaved well. Generally, lessons proceed at a steady pace and most teachers ask questions that check pupils' understanding. However, some of these questions do not challenge pupils enough or are insufficiently directed at those who

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do not put their hands up. Time is not always well-managed. For example, some teachers talk too much and take too long to introduce an activity, diminishing the time left for pupils to practise their intended new skills.

The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' written work is not yet consistent. While some teachers mark their pupils' books in detail and use the 'three stars and a wish' system to provide constructive feedback, others write relatively little. In addition, some teachers do not always ensure that their pupils respond to their comments and so pupils are not benefitting fully from teachers' advice. Discussions with pupils reflect this and a relatively high proportion of pupils commented that they do not know whether or not they are making good progress or know exactly what they need to do to improve.

There is an adequate range of clubs and afterschool activities, with sport being particularly popular. The taught curriculum is similar to that found in many schools although lacking in creative opportunities on a regular basis. There have been some more creative opportunities to pursue an independent style of learning in the iDiscover/TASC (thinking actively in a social context) weeks, where pupils spend a whole week pursuing a topic of their own choice in more depth. The school is beginning to develop more opportunities for topics to be linked across the curriculum.

The care guidance and support provided for pupils is a strength of the school. The school works tirelessly with those who are potentially more vulnerable and need additional support. This is noted and appreciated by many parents and carers who acknowledge how the school knows their child as an individual, commenting 'they understand my child', and keeps in regular communication with them. Those pupils with particular needs are very well supported, especially those with health or behavioural difficulties.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides good leadership. She has pulled the staff together and leaders and managers have a satisfactory capacity to improve outcomes at Priory Junior. There have been a number of recent appointments to leadership roles and it is too early to judge their impact or ability to sustain improvements. Expectations are high and leaders and managers at all levels are motivated and inspired to drive improvement. Their focus on the care, guidance and support, as well as careful tracking of pupils ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. Discrimination of any kind is challenged and successfully resolved. The use of restorative approaches and negotiating a resolution to a problem, ensure that any issues are tackled directly with individual pupils.

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Safeguarding procedures are robust and meet requirements. Regular training ensures all staff and governors are appropriately updated. The roundabout turning circle outside the school is a daily hazard as parents and carers drop children off or pick them up. As a result, despite the school's best efforts there remain potential risks to pupils' safety. Governance is satisfactory. Members of the governing body are very supportive of the school and keen to get involved. The Chair of the Governing Body has recently re-structured committees and increasingly holds the school to account for standards achieved. Community cohesion is satisfactory and developing. The headteacher knows the school and its community well. While links are being made with other schools in different contexts within this country, there is still work to do to ensure pupils develop a wider understanding of the different faiths, ethnicities and cultures represented within this country in order to fully prepare them for their future working lives.

The school works well with a range of professionals who support pupils. They speak highly of the pupils' behaviour, the warm welcome they receive and the dedication and willingness of the headteacher and staff to get involved in new initiatives. One described the school as a place where there was, 'real ambition to move the school forward'.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers were overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Every parent and carer who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school kept their child safe. 93% said their child enjoyed school. On every question except one, the positive responses were much higher than in the majority of other primary schools. Parents and carers had the most negative responses (29%) to the question, 'The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour'. Inspectors looked carefully at this concern and also discussed it with a group of parents and carers. Inspectors judge that the behaviour of pupils in and

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around school is good. Pupils are courteous, polite and considerate. A few pupils have specific behaviour or social skills difficulties and the school works hard with these pupils to provide them with strategies to control their behaviour, such as anger management training, or to develop their social skills. This sometimes involves one to one work with adults or withdrawal from some lessons. Parents and carers were concerned that this was perceived as 'a treat' if pupils were in school at lunchtimes in the Play Club and playing games with staff. The headteacher has agreed to explain the rationale and impact of the behaviour management strategy for these pupils to any parent or carer who would like to contact her.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Priory Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 114 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 290 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	43	57	50	6	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	49	43	65	57	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	45	39	58	51	9	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	40	54	47	8	7	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	39	34	67	59	2	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	42	37	60	53	9	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	36	69	61	3	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	35	65	57	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	37	62	54	6	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	13	59	52	27	24	6	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	22	71	62	9	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	25	64	56	11	10	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	44	39	63	55	5	4	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



14 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Priory Junior School, St Neots, PE19 1TF

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me and the inspection team when we visited your school earlier this term. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what you could all do to improve.

You go to a satisfactory school that is getting better. You are well behaved in lessons and around the school and you were very polite, holding doors open for us and chatting in the playground. Your Year 6 test results are better than other primary schools in the country, although I think you could do even better. I have given some suggestions below. Your teachers work hard for you and want you to do well. Those of you who need extra help get good support from other adults in the school. You raise a lot of money, over ?2000 last year for charity to help those people less fortunate than yourselves. Your sporting achievements are impressive. A lot of you get involved in after-school clubs and perhaps more of you should join one!

In order to make your school even better, I have asked your headteacher and senior staff to do the following things:

- make sure all lessons are as good as the best and include more exciting and challenging learning activities. Teachers should mark your books with more detail and tell you how you could improve your work. They should ask you more questions in class, challenge you to give more extended answers and check more often that you have understood the work
- make sure that the plans the senior staff write to improve the school or specific subjects include more measurable targets.

I would like to wish you the best for the future and encourage you to make the most of all the opportunities the school is providing for you.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI

Her Majesty's Inspector

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