

Old Priory Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113320
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	357317
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Garvey

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	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tricia Collins
Headteacher	Rob Phippen
Date of previous school inspection	12 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twelve lessons and a number of part lessons were seen. Meetings were held with governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at policies, records and assessment information. In addition, 90 questionnaires, completed by parents and carers, were analysed, as well as those completed by staff and pupils.

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

- The current attainment, learning and progress in English and mathematics and the progress of different groups of pupils in these two subjects.
- The quality of teaching and the breadth and depth of the curriculum to see whether the needs of all pupils are being met.
- Whether leaders and managers at all levels have sufficient capacity to raise attainment further.

Information about the school

Old Priory Junior School is an average-sized school for its type. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly similar to that found in schools nationally. The vast majority of pupils are White British. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. In the past year, a member of the senior leadership team has been long-term absent and has only recently returned. The proportion of pupils entering, or leaving, the school at times other than at the usual time has been lower than average in recent years, but is above average in the current Year 6. The school holds a number of nationally recognised awards, including Artsmark Silver, the Full International Schools Award and Healthy School.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Old Priory Junior School is a good school. It is a happy and harmonious community where staff know pupils well and ensure that they are well cared for. This encourages pupils to attend school with outstanding success. 'We don't want to leave!' was a comment from some Year 6 pupils. Pupils say they feel very safe and behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils have an outstanding awareness of how to keep themselves fit and healthy and they adopt healthy lifestyles. When asked whether crisps were a healthy food, one pupil replied, 'All foods can be healthy if they are balanced, it is the balance that you've got to get right.' There is a wide range of after-school activities, including a very well attended gardening club and popular sports clubs, which the pupils say they enjoy and about which a number of parents and carers made positive comments.

The school's excellent use of wild and cultivated areas within the school's grounds promotes a sense of wonder amongst the pupils and helps to develop their spirituality. The school recognises the need to continually promote an awareness of the varied lives that people live, both locally and around the world, and it does this in an outstanding way. Pupils get on well together, are very aware of the difference between right and wrong and have a good knowledge of other cultures and religions. Thus spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils readily take on responsibilities such as older pupils being buddies to younger pupils, selling fruit in the break-time tuck shop and looking after the garden and the chickens and ducks. The school council is a well-respected body in the school community, taking decisions such as helping to ensure that solar heating was installed to heat the swimming pool.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well. Their attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average. The school has good systems to check the progress that each pupil is making and this allows well-targeted additional support to boost the progress of any pupils that are falling behind, or those that need additional support or help. Rates of progress are good, but not outstanding, which to its credit is what the school aspires to. This is because teaching and the curriculum, although securely good, are not yet outstanding. There are some excellent examples of teaching which the school is already using as the basis for further development. However, in some mathematics and English lessons, progress is slowed when teachers do not provide sufficiently varied creative activities. Also, the pace of learning is slower when pupils are not given clear enough targets or the opportunity to be involved in their own assessment. Sometimes teacher's expectations of what pupils need to achieve and how to make improvements are not clear enough, either during lessons, or through marking.

The headteacher's good leadership has ensured that all staff, and the effective governing body, work together as a coherent team. Through accurate self-evaluation, the school has a good understanding of its strengths and areas where it can improve. As a result,

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priorities for action are well understood by all. Appropriate developments have ensured good progress since the last inspection, particularly with respect to the use of the school's resources in developing outdoor learning. Thus the school has good capacity to bring about sustained improvement and to embed the imaginative vision of the headteacher and senior leaders. Good monitoring of teaching and learning by leaders and managers at all levels has led to teaching being at least good in all lessons seen by inspectors.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Over the next two terms, increase the amount of outstanding lessons, building on the excellent models already evident in some classes, by:
 - giving pupils clearer targets to show them what they need to achieve during lessons
 - ensuring that pupils play a more active role in the assessment of their own performance
 - improving the quality of written feedback in marking so that all pupils understand what they must do to be able to improve their work.
- Improve the already good curriculum in English and mathematics by increasing the range of creative activities on offer.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enter the school with attainment which is broadly average. By the time they leave, attainment for all groups of pupils is above average. It is higher than this in the current Year 6 for the pupils who have been at the school since the start of Year 3. Good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities from teachers and other adults meets their needs well and means that their progress is similar to that of other pupils. Consequently, achievement overall is good. Other adults provide effective support, both in helping individual pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and in providing good support with teaching. The very few pupils with severe learning difficulties are especially well supported by skilled adults and thus are able to play a full part in lessons.

In the best sessions, which accounts for about a third of lessons, pupils' achievement is enhanced by giving them achievable, but challenging, outcomes and encouraging the pupils to assess their own and each other's work. This is enhanced by marking and assessment which is directed towards showing them how best to take the next steps in their learning. This was amply demonstrated in a Year 6 project which spanned the two days of the inspection, where groups of pupils were expected to research, design and eventually build shelters, the quality of which had to be assessed against clear criteria by themselves and by other groups. The quality of the planning and the feedback the pupils received, at all stages, from adults and other pupils, produced such enjoyment and challenge that both behaviour and progress were outstanding. The school has already identified strengths from this point of view as the basis for further development of teaching and learning.

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, good social skills, good relationships with staff and support for each other contribute much to their good progress. Combined with the school's determined attitude to ensure that all pupils attend school, this has resulted in

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outstanding levels of attendance. An excellent range of after-school clubs and enrichment activities exist and these contribute to pupils' enjoyment of school. The enterprising way that the school has developed the grounds and play areas, and uses these to provide varied learning opportunities, has aided pupils' outstanding awareness of health and fitness and helped the school to achieve the Healthy School award. Pupils contribute well to the wider community, participating in charity events, remembrance services, Holocaust Memorial Day and festivals at the neighbouring church.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
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	1
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	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

Good relationships amongst pupils, and between pupils and adults, aid the progress of all learners. Pupils and most parents say that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils have confidence in the school's ability to advise them well. Vulnerable pupils make good progress due to the care they receive. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school. Arrangements to support pupils when they start and leave school are very well managed. The good work of other adults means that support for families is strong, but a few parents and carers feel that the school could listen more closely to their concerns and could inform them better about their child's progress. Consequently, care, guidance and support are good.

Pupils can explain their targets and in some classrooms marking is used well to make clear how they can improve their work, but this is not consistent. Pupils make swift gains in

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their work when work is well matched to their needs, when the curriculum supports their creative thinking and when pupils are clear about what it is the teachers expect from them. In a lesson in which older pupils worked collaboratively with younger ones, pupils were designing and sewing felt badges. Examples of badges made by other pupils were used to create high expectations. Progress here was rapid and pupils' understanding of the task led to good engagement. This was not as clearly seen in a variety of English and mathematics lessons, where the activities were less varied, and this led to progress slowing and to more variable levels of enjoyment and engagement. Pupils have opportunities to learn French, German and Chinese and when these languages were seen to be employed in other subjects, challenge was high and progress swift.

The outdoor environment is used in a creative way, with children's learning being notably enhanced by responsibilities given to them for looking after the animals and gardens. This extends to the after-school activities, which pupils attend enthusiastically. For example, a very well attended gardening club grew fruit and vegetables which the pupils then ate, or sold to parents and carers to help to fund the activity.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Responsibilities are clearly distributed and leaders and managers at all levels have developed their roles effectively in monitoring the quality of the school's provision. Governors execute their role well and are regularly available to talk with staff and pupils in the school. They are able to use the school's internal monitoring information appropriately to challenge and support leaders, although their knowledge and understanding of nationally available information are not as strong. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective and all staff and governors are well trained and aware of their responsibilities. All groups of pupils make good progress, equality of opportunity is well promoted and any discrimination is tackled with success.

The school is a cohesive community and links with the local community are strong. Many local links and especially strong links to schools in a number of other countries, combined with residential visits in this country and to France, benefit pupils' understanding. For example, the headteacher of a partner school in China recently visited the school and told pupils of the work they did there, and a residential trip to France has been established to consolidate pupils' learning in French. Such enterprising links have led to the school being awarded the Full International Schools Award. As a result, community cohesion is outstanding. Good use of partnerships gives opportunities to pupils that the school alone could not provide. This was seen in a large group of pupils enthusiastically participating in

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a cricket club, run by a charity which supported outreach work by members of the local cricket club. The school's award of the Artsmark Silver award has been reflected in work with a range of local arts bodies. Relations with parents are good and are enhanced by activities arranged by the school, for example drop-in coffee mornings and a first-aid course.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A slightly higher than average number of parental questionnaires was returned. Most parents who returned questionnaires were very happy with their child's experience at Old Priory Junior School and said that their child enjoyed attending school. They were especially pleased with the way that the school helps their children to have a healthy lifestyle and with the quality of teaching in the school. A few parents and carers made a point of writing to express their satisfaction with the range of clubs and after-school activities on offer. Parent and carer responses showed that a few had concerns about the way that the school dealt with unacceptable behaviour, but poor behaviour was not seen during the course of the inspection. A few felt that the school did not take sufficient account of their concerns. A few parents and carers also showed concern about the way that the school was helping them to support their child's particular needs and a few did not feel that the school kept them well enough informed about their child's progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Old 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 90 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 234 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	50	41	46	2	2	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	58	64	30	33	2	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	22	58	64	12	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	26	29	53	59	10	11	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	28	31	57	63	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	19	21	54	60	11	12	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	43	46	51	5	6	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)	31	34	50	56	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	33	49	54	7	8	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	26	47	52	14	16	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	21	48	53	9	10	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	32	36	46	51	5	6	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	41	46	43	48	3	3	2	2

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Old Priory Junior School, Plympton, PL7 1QN

Thank you for welcoming us in such a friendly way when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed our visit and seeing you taking responsibility for looking after your garden and the chickens and ducks gave us great pleasure. I am writing to tell you what we have said about your school.

Old Priory Junior School is a good school. You like coming here and, as a result, your attendance is high. You told us that you enjoyed the clubs and after-school activities and we can see that these are strengths of your school. We also felt that you have an outstanding knowledge of other cultures and communities around the world and that your own school community is a happy and friendly place in which you learn to get on well with other pupils and staff. You have an outstanding knowledge of how to tell right from wrong and how to see the good things in nature as a result of working and playing in your lovely school grounds. No wonder that some of the Year 6 pupils said they didn't really want to leave, but they still feel well prepared for secondary school. You make good progress across the school and the standards that the oldest pupils achieve are above average. You have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe and you know outstandingly well how to stay fit and healthy. All staff work together to keep you safe and to care for you well.

To make the school even better, we have asked your teachers to tell you more clearly what is expected of you during lessons and in the marking of your work, so that it always shows you how to take the next steps in your learning. We have asked them to give you more opportunities for peer and self-assessment in your lessons. We have also asked the school to improve English and mathematics lessons to give you more varied and creative activities.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and keeping up the excellent attendance that most of you have. Finally, I would like to thank you again and to wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Garvey

Lead inspector

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