

# Priory Park Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110687
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	356797
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Parker

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	183
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tracey Crawshaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angela Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 March 2008
<b>School address</b>	Almond Road St Neots PE19 1DZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01480 398010
<b>Fax number</b>	01480 398011
<b>Email address</b>	head@park.cambs.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Nineteen lessons or parts of lessons, taught by 10 teachers, were observed. Meetings were held with pupils about their reading, writing and mathematics. Inspectors also held discussions with the headteacher and subject leaders, and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, such as the school development plan, and a sample of the pupils' work. Questionnaire responses from pupils, staff and 59 parents and carers were analysed.

## Information about the school

This is an average size school. A small, but increasing, proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very few pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A similarly small proportion speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has fallen sharply this year to well below average.

Since the last inspection there have been several changes of leadership in a relatively short time. The current headteacher took up the post in January 2010.

Childcare is provided in premises adjacent to the school by Apricot Day Nursery and Out of School Club, and Priory Park Early Years Centre; both are subject to separate inspections.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety</b>	<b>2</b>
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

## Key findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Following a period of considerable change and uncertainty in the leadership of the school, the headteacher is providing clear direction and determined leadership. She has established a long-term vision for the school which has galvanised the staff, who share her desire and ambition to make marked improvements. The drive for improvement is well focused but many of the changes are relatively recent, and the benefits are not yet evident in the pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2. Currently, the pupils are achieving satisfactorily.

Over the last year the school has focused on improving the Early Years Foundation Stage and introducing the systematic and regular teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) and guided reading throughout the school. The greatest impact of these initiatives can be seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where the children are making good progress. The benefits of the teaching of phonics and guided reading are beginning to emerge in Years 1 and 2, where the pupils are using their knowledge of phonics with increasing effect in both their reading and writing. The teaching and learning of mathematics have not yet benefited from the same drive for improvement. The pupils are, nevertheless, making satisfactory progress, although the more-able pupils are not consistently challenged to reach high standards.

There is much good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but there are some inconsistencies in Years 1 and 2 which result in the teaching being satisfactory overall. The school has a very positive ethos, where the pupils' well-being is paramount. The pupils feel safe and behave very well.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, and where leadership and management is no better than satisfactory, may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 and 2, so that 8 out of every 10 lessons are good or better by the end of the summer term 2012, by ensuring that:
  - all lessons have a consistently good pace
  - the tasks set for the pupils always build on their previous learning
  - instructions and explanations are clear and explicit for all groups of pupils.
- Accelerate the progress the pupils are making in mathematics so that attainment is significantly above the national average by 2013, by ensuring that the leaders and managers of the subject are sharply focused on improving learning, progress and challenge, particularly for the more-able pupils.

## Main report

The headteacher and her senior team have systematically put into place a secure foundation for sustained improvement. Through a well-focused school development plan they have set out the priorities for improvement over three years. Some of these priorities are key building blocks that are essential elements of success – for instance, establishing a culture of high expectations focused on learning. Discussions with teachers show that they are increasingly committed to change, and recognise, not only the extent of improvements that have taken place, but also that there is much still to do and that a great deal can be achieved. They are excited by the prospects.

Over the last three years attainment has been broadly average and occasionally higher. In reading last year, for example, attainment was significantly above average. Currently, in Year 2 reading standards are not as high as they were last year, but they are stronger in Year 1. The work to improve the teaching and learning of phonics is beginning to bear fruit. The school's assessments show considerable improvement in the pupils' knowledge of phonics and an improvement in standards of writing this year. In mathematics attainment is broadly average, but too few pupils are reaching the higher level of attainment by the end of Year 2. Overall attainment is broadly average.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage the children are making a good start. They are making good progress because the teaching is consistently good. Learning is sharply focused, through teacher-led activities and activities that the children choose themselves. The teaching of phonics is particularly strong in the Reception classes. It is systematic and regular, and makes good use of information and communication technology to motivate and interest the children. Guided reading is similarly effective.

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The teachers make good use of opportunities to extend the children's communication skills by, for example, developing their use of words to join and sequence sentences. The outdoor learning area is well organised and provides a wide range of opportunities for the children, although occasionally they are left a little too long without adult intervention to focus their learning.

In Years 1 and 2 the pupils are making satisfactory progress. The pupils find their lessons interesting and clearly enjoy many of the tasks set for them. The teachers question the pupils well, particularly in guided reading lessons. However, there are inconsistencies in the teaching. The pace of some lessons is a little too slow. Consequently, the progress and engagement of the pupils ebbs and flows. While some ability groups within classes make good progress because the work they are set builds successfully on what they already know, other pupils are set tasks that do not move them forward as successfully. In most lessons the teachers explain things clearly, but there are occasions when the instructions given to groups expected to work independently are not clear enough. As a result, they do not make the progress they should, because misunderstandings are not clarified quickly enough. The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is often well focused and effective, but there are similar situations where small groups are not given sufficiently clear instructions to ensure that they make good progress. The work of the inclusion manager is particularly effective in building the confidence and communication skills of those identified as needing additional support in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the very few children who speak English as an additional language.

Discussions with pupils about their learning in mathematics show that they enjoy the work they are set, but find some of it rather easy. They welcome the challenge of 'hard sums'. The school has placed considerable emphasis on a practical approach. However, the extent to which the pupils are expected to record their work varies considerably between classes. In some cases the pupils' work is not clearly dated, stored or presented in ways that make it easy for their teachers or the subject leaders to assess or monitor their progress.

Parents strongly support the school's work. The vast majority of parents and staff agree that the pupils behave well. The pupils say that behaviour is good and that they feel safe at school. They have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. In lessons the pupils settle very quickly, concentrate on their work, and collaborate well. They show considerable perseverance, even on the occasions when they are not entirely sure what is expected of them. Most pupils respond well when asked to work independently, although some find it a challenge to maintain their focus for the duration of some independent reading tasks.

A few parents expressed some concern about the way in which the school deals with bullying. This was investigated thoroughly. The school has clear systems for dealing with such incidents, which are rare. Records of the considerable time and support given by the headteacher and the inclusion manager to resolve one incident illustrate

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a strong commitment to the well-being of the pupils and parents involved.

Themes such as the 'Priory Town' and the 'World around us' promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Interesting developments in the curriculum are also making much greater use of the outdoor areas, including the 'Imaginarium' developed with the help of pupils from the junior school.

The curriculum is more effectively led and managed in some subjects than others. In English, for example, clear direction, training and frequent monitoring have resulted in improvements in provision and there are clear signs of future improvements in the outcomes for pupils. The focus on mathematics has not been as sharp or as intense. Consequently, improvements are not as advanced. The teachers who lead music and physical education have the support of the headteacher to promote their subjects strongly to enhance, not only the knowledge and skills of the pupils, but also their spiritual, moral social and cultural development. The school has achieved a silver Sing Up award.

The governing body is involved and committed to the effort to bring improvements. Its members are now making visits to the school to find out for themselves the impact of the changes the headteacher is making. The governing body receives a wide range of information and is increasingly well informed about the school's performance. Its members recognise the need to take a more challenging stance in order to ensure that improvements are rapid. Members of the governing body have checked the school's safeguarding arrangements, and that the premises are safe for the pupils. Consequently, arrangements to keep the pupils as safe as possible meet current requirements.

The headteacher has introduced a comprehensive system to monitor all aspects of the school's work. This includes gathering the pupils' views through 'the big conversation' about, for example, what helps them to learn. Central to the monitoring programme are regular meetings about pupils' progress, which place greater expectations on all teachers to analyse the progress of all of the groups of pupils within their classes. This illustrates not only the strong commitment to ensuring the equality of opportunity of all groups, but also a determination to accelerate the rate of each pupil's progress and to raise their attainment. The school is well placed to improve further.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Priory Park Infant 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 183 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	44	75	15	25	0	0	0	0
Q2 My child feels safe at school	48	81	10	17	0	0	0	0
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	36	61	19	32	3	5	0	0
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	32	54	23	39	2	3	0	0
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	45	76	14	24	0	0	0	0
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	40	68	19	32	0	0	0	0
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	31	53	27	46	1	2	0	0
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	31	53	26	44	0	0	0	0
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	24	41	22	38	7	12	0	0
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	35	59	22	37	2	3	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	31	53	24	41	4	7	0	0
Q12 The school is well led and managed	41	69	17	29	1	2	0	0

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](http://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"> <li>■ The achievement of all pupils.</li> <li>■ Behaviour and safety.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of leadership and management.</li> </ul> <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.</li> </ul>
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.**



10 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Priory Park Infant School, St Neots, PE19 1DZ**

We enjoyed being in your school. Thank you for talking to us about your reading, writing and mathematics, and giving us your views about your school. You behave very well, both in the classroom and when you are outside on the playground. You listen carefully to your teachers and get on with your work. Everyone is friendly, and you told us that you feel safe in school. Some of you also said that the school gives you interesting things to do and others of you told us you would like some harder work in mathematics.

At the moment the school is satisfactory. The headteacher, teachers and teaching assistants are working hard to help you make faster progress. They have changed many things this year and these are beginning to make a difference, particularly in the Reception classes, where the teaching is good. Phonics lessons are helping you all to improve your reading and writing. The teachers are making lessons more interesting. We have asked them to speed up learning in some lessons, and to make sure that the work they set is not too easy, so that you always have to think hard. A lot of time has been spent on improving the teaching of phonics and reading but not as much time has been spent on mathematics. We have asked the teachers to help you to do as well as you can in mathematics.

The headteacher is leading the school firmly, and is constantly looking at how well it is doing, so that improvements can be made to the opportunities that the school gives you.

Your school is improving and is well placed to get even better. You can help by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker  
Lead inspector

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