

Prendergast Vale College

Elmira Street, Lewisham, London, SE13 7BN

Inspection dates 22–23 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	N/A
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Leaders have not had time to ensure that all teaching is consistently good or to implement all the school's plans, for example to give parents and carers more information to help them to support pupils' reading at home.
- Pupils' achievement from their starting points requires improvement because they do not yet make good progress in each year group.
- Teaching requires improvement because it is not yet consistently effective in promoting good progress, particularly in primary classes.
- Where teaching is weaker, activities lack variety for pupils to learn in different ways or work is not always planned to match pupils' earlier attainment closely.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, supported by a very effective governing body, provide inspiring and skilled leadership. The school has quickly established a positive atmosphere for learning so pupils are proud of their school and their achievements.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school, and attendance is above average.
- In its first year in temporary accommodation, many pupils made good progress, most notably in Years 6 and 7.
- Senior leaders, the governing body and the local authority have worked in close partnership to enhance provision within the community.
- Leaders ensure that pupils and staff share their views about what is working well and make improvements quickly if systems are not working effectively.
- Children make a very positive start to school in the Nursery and Reception classes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed significant parts of 29 lessons involving all teachers, a small number jointly with the executive headteacher or headteacher. Inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, local authority, staff and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, attended assemblies, and scrutinised pupils' work, progress data, evaluation and development documents, safeguarding information, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and the governing body minutes.
- Inspectors took account of 37 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as questionnaires completed by 52 staff.

Inspection team

Helen Hutchings, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Evelyn Riley

Additional inspector

David Sleightholme

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Prendergast Vale College opened in September 2011 as part of the Leathersellers' Federation of Schools. Pupils and staff from Lewisham Bridge School transferred to the school on its closure in August 2011. The school is designated to become a full 3–16 school where pupils would transfer into another federation school for the sixth form. It currently has pupils from age three to Year 8, with a new year of intake joining the secondary phase each year.
- The primary phase has one class in each year group, which is similar to primary schools nationally. The secondary phase is designated to take four forms of entry, which is below the average size of secondary schools.
- For its first year, the school was housed in temporary accommodation on two sites, with pupils in the primary phase brought by bus to premises in New Cross, while Year 7 pupils were taught on the site of the partnership school, Prendergast Ladywell Fields College. The former primary school has been refurbished and developed to accommodate a full all-through school and the school moved into these premises in September 2012.
- The school is led by a headteacher, under the oversight of an executive headteacher of the three schools in the federation.
- There is one governing body across the three Leathersellers' Federation of Schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding made available to schools by the government) is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is high, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching so that it is at least good, enabling all year groups to make consistently good or better progress, by:
 - using the information about pupils' attainment to make sure that tasks are set at the right level, neither too hard nor too easy
 - checking on how well pupils are progressing during the lesson and changing the approach if pupils do not fully understand
 - making sure that no time is lost by allowing tasks to carry on longer than necessary so that pupils lose their concentration
 - widening the range of lesson activities to help pupils to learn in different ways.
- Move quickly to implement the plan to establish the partnership with parents and carers, and the wider local community, placing priority on:
 - making better use of the home school contact books in the primary phase to help pupils to practise their reading at home
 - setting up workshops for parents and carers to understand the school's approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because their progress was uneven in the primary phase last year and attainment was below average by the end of Year 6. However, the good progress being made in Year 6 is enabling pupils to make up for earlier underachievement and is bringing attainment closer to the national average. Across the school, pupils' previously weak achievement in mathematics is improving.
- In the secondary phase, pupils' attainment is broadly as expected for the age. Last year, most pupils made good progress across all their subjects from their below-average starting points.
- Children start school in Nursery or Reception with skills which are typically below those expected for their age, particularly in their communication skills. Throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, they are prepared well for starting Year 1 because early literacy and communication skills are taught effectively.
- Improving pupils' literacy skills is a key school focus. Pupils are keen to use the new library and to explore new books. They enjoy reading and many say that they read at home or in school every day. However, some pupils in Key Stage 1 are not consistently reading books which are appropriate to their skills, with some attempting to read books which are too difficult, while others are capable of reading at higher levels. The home school contact books are not always used effectively to develop a dialogue with parents and carers about their children's work, particularly about their reading and how parents and carers can give additional support at home.
- Pupils' achievement in lessons is variable in Key Stage 2 particularly. While their books show that pupils are steadily improving their literacy and numeracy skills, in some lessons, teachers do not expect enough of them in the time available. A few pupils chatter rather than settling quickly to their tasks. Consequently, there are variations in progress rates in English and mathematics from class to class.
- The school's records show that prompt action has been taken to improve the performance of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium. Rigorous systems are in place to review their progress regularly, and pupils are given the support they need for their personal and academic development, including linking with external agencies. Consequently, although their attainment remains below that of their peers, the latest data show that the gap is closing rapidly in most classes.
- There are no significant differences in the performance of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, including those who speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils in the primary classes are benefiting from specialist teaching in subjects such as physical education, art and music, which is laying good foundations for secondary work.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement to enable pupils to catch up from previous underachievement. Although there is some very effective teaching in the school, it is not yet consistently strong enough to promote good progress for all pupils. Overall, teaching is stronger in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 6, 7 and 8 than in other years.
- Because the school is expanding, a number of teachers joined the school at the beginning of this academic year and are adjusting to the school's expectations. Additionally, some teachers are relatively inexperienced and are being supported to develop their skills.
- Teachers plan their lessons carefully and have a good understanding of pupils' different starting points. In the best lessons, teachers use this information well to plan work which takes account of these differences. For example, in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were extending their understanding of the impact of the Peasants' Revolt, the teacher expected different groups to respond to short, focused questions of varying difficulty. In this lesson, there was also an emphasis on extending pupils' literacy skills by ensuring that the meanings of words were

explored in detail, particularly helping pupils who speak English as an additional language. However, this approach is not consistent across the school, and sometimes not enough is expected, including of the most-able pupils. Lower-attaining pupils often need the support of skilled teaching assistants to complete their tasks, but because this happens frequently, these pupils are not learning to work independently.

- Teachers try to make learning interesting for pupils, seen in an English lesson when Year 6 pupils were using the topic of graffiti to practise their letter writing skills. This engaged all pupils well, and had a positive impact on boys' learning, helping to reduce the gap between boys' and girls' attainment in English.
- In some lessons, the pace of learning is too slow. This is because teachers sometimes do not bring enough variety to the lesson or allow tasks to go on for too long without making it absolutely clear to pupils what is expected of them in the time.
- Across the school, pupils are given good written and oral guidance about the quality of their work and how to improve, and this helps them to evaluate their own work accurately. Secondary pupils find their weekly 'prep' lessons helpful in enabling them to address difficulties with their mentor and to consolidate their understanding, such as through online mathematics programmes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' behaviour and safety require improvement because not all pupils are yet responding positively to the school's high expectations. However, these are a small minority and most pupils are engaged and interested in their learning.
- The large majority of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire indicate that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved and that any bullying is dealt with effectively.
- Much has been done to establish a whole-school atmosphere which promotes consideration and pupils' achievements in assemblies, and sets clear boundaries for pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils have settled quickly into their new surroundings and the school is calm and friendly.
- Pupils feel safe within the campus, and staff manage safety and security well.
- Older pupils have confidence in the new behaviour management system and say that behaviour is improving in lessons. However, during the inspection, a few teachers did not move through the behaviour steps quickly enough and the pace of learning slowed while waiting for quiet.
- A few primary-aged pupils are adjusting to the presence of older pupils, for example in the dining hall. Strategies such as 'Big Brother or Sister' are helping to break down barriers and older pupils value the opportunity to support younger pupils in lessons and around the school.
- Bullying and racist incidents are rare. Pupils know about different kinds of bullying, such as cyber-bullying, and know that any incidents will be taken seriously and dealt with effectively by staff.
- Attendance is above average. The good support for those experiencing difficulty in attending regularly is reflected in the low number of pupils who are persistently absent.

The leadership and management

are good

- The executive headteacher, headteacher and governing body have successfully recruited a team of talented and energetic staff with the capacity to take the school forward quickly. They share high expectations and a good start has been made in setting up systems for day-to-day management and for future improvement. This is seen in the school's record of strong improvement in teaching and pupils' achievements, although there are a few remaining inconsistencies.
- The local authority has worked closely with senior leaders and the governing body to establish the school as part of a federation, to secure its new buildings, and to support its early stages of development.

- Leadership is shared effectively across senior and middle managers. All aspects of the school's work are kept under constant scrutiny and changes made quickly if something is not working well, for example the creation of an additional Year 6 class to help pupils make up for the slower progress they made before the school opened.
- Staff responding to the questionnaire show pride in working in the school and that they willingly work hard because of the school's values, aspirations, and inspirational leadership.
- Teaching quality is checked frequently and strong action is taken to tackle any underperformance through effective systems for performance management. Staff also have access to a comprehensive programme of training, coaching and mentoring.
- The curriculum gives pupils in the primary phase good opportunities to link learning across subjects, which makes lessons interesting and relevant. In the secondary phase, the extended day enables pupils to have more taught time than is the norm and to participate in regular enrichment activities which promote their achievement. For example, pupils reflected on how activities such as a newspaper project helped their writing skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the curriculum and in assemblies. In many lessons, pupils are required to think deeply about ethical issues, such as when writing on 'Can a Dalek be good?'
- Tackling discrimination and ensuring equality of opportunity is central to the school's work. The allocation of pupil premium funding is focused effectively, for example by ensuring easy internet access. As a result, the gap between the performance of groups of pupils is closing at a much faster rate than nationally.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body and the executive headteacher have been instrumental in working with the local authority to implement a vision for a new school to add to the educational provision in Lewisham. Governors have a wide range of skills and expertise, and successfully support the school. For example, they provided expertise to manage the building programme which released leadership capacity to concentrate on pupils' achievement. The clear structures for governance ensure that governors are well informed. They are outward looking and have a good understanding of the challenges and early achievements of the school. They use this information effectively to hold senior leaders to account for the school's performance. They also oversee the robust performance management procedures to ensure that leaders and teachers are only rewarded for good performance. Funding is allocated to ensure that it has the maximum impact on pupils' achievement, such as employing additional specialist staff to support pupils who have special educational needs. They also ensure that funding earmarked for pupils entitled to the pupil premium is used effectively and that gaps are narrowing for these pupils as a result. The governing body understands its legal responsibilities, ensuring that safeguarding and staff recruitment requirements are fully met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135843
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	400301

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	502
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Cooke
Headteacher	Paul O'Neill
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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