

The Priory Church of England Primary School

Wick Lane, Christchurch, BH23 1HX

Inspection dates 5–6 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The rate of pupils' progress is inconsistent across the school. Achievement requires improvement.
- The quality of teaching varies. It is improving, but not fast enough. Particular inconsistencies exist with regard to the use of progress data to set sufficiently challenging work, and the degree to which some teachers check on pupils' understanding during lessons and in marking.
- Although pupils usually behave well, the school does not always sufficiently track how effective its actions have been in reaction to any incidents of bullying, or communicate this sufficiently to parents and carers. Consequently, remedial action is not as effective as it could be.
- While senior managers can show a positive impact on improving teaching and pupils' progress, there are shortcomings in the experience of some subject managers and their analysis of the impact of school work.

The school has the following strengths:

- There is an increasing amount of good teaching; over half of the sessions seen during the inspection were judged to be good.
- Pupils' progress is showing signs of improving. Last year showed improvement on the previous year. Pupils currently in Years 2 and 6, in particular, are on track to improve further on the standards of the last two years, and this includes those pupils known to be entitled to free school meals. Better progress is being made by upper junior pupils.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their work, and the vast majority say they feel safe and enjoy school.
- Senior leaders and governors use a broad range of strategies to oversee the work of the school. They conduct accurate evaluations and this leads them to identify very appropriate development plans.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 11 lessons, including guided reading and linking sounds to letters (phonics) sessions.
- They listened to a sample of readers from Years 3 and 6.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at progress and attainment data, the school's development plan, curriculum plans, governing body documentation and policies and procedures. Those relating to health and safety and safeguarding of pupils were carefully scrutinised.
- There were 131 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. Inspectors also took account of the latest parent and carer survey conducted by the school.
- Discussions were held with senior and other leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body, pupils, parents and carers and a representative from the local authority.

Inspection team

Michael Pye, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Vivian Venn

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is of average size.
- The majority of pupils come from a predominantly White British background. The next largest minority ethnic group consists of those pupils from an Any other White heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported under pupil premium funding, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, children from service families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The main needs of these pupils relate to moderate learning and speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment, were met by the school. The progress measures for mathematics were not met in 2012, however the attainment was above average.
- No pupils from this school attend any alternative provision.
- Over recent years the school has felt the effect of high levels of staff turbulence, much of it beyond its control.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and progress by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use assessment information to plan work that appropriately challenges pupils of different abilities
 - use appropriate strategies to identify in lessons any shortcomings in pupils' learning so that they then take appropriate action to fill those gaps
 - make clear in marking how pupils can improve their work.
- Maximise the effect of all leaders through ensuring that:
 - when monitoring they have a clear and rigorous focus on progress, including that of the various pupil groups
 - behaviour incidents are recorded in more detail, analysed at regular intervals for the effectiveness of any school actions taken, and that the findings are communicated to parents and carers
 - action plans clearly show how subjects support whole-school development priorities, and that measurable success criteria are used that help the school judge the effect of any actions taken.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Data show that pupils, given their starting points, have not, overall, tended to make the progress of which many of them are capable by the end of Key Stage 2.
- However, more recent evidence, from lessons and in the work seen, shows a picture of improving rates of progress, especially for the pupils in Years 5 and 6. There remain some inconsistencies: there are examples of good progress in certain subjects in some years, and dips in progress in other areas.
- Until last year, pupils attained at well above average levels by the end of Year 2. In 2012, attainment overall was average.
- Currently, by the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is average. The 2012 results were higher than the previous year as a consequence of improving teaching.
- Most pupils, including those few from minority ethnic groups, which include pupils from Any other White heritages, are currently on track to further improve their attainment. This also includes those pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- Children enter Reception with skills and knowledge that are broadly as expected for their age. On occasions the entry levels dip to below those expected, with particular weaknesses in some aspects of literacy. Improvement since the last inspection has been particularly strong in this area of the school's work.
- Small pupil numbers make national comparisons unreliable. However, the school has already recognised, and taken action to address, the need to help improve boy's writing and the attainment of higher-ability girls in mathematics. Consequently gaps are closing.
- In 2012 the four pupils known to be entitled to free school meals and in receipt of the pupil premium attained average point scores that were above the national average in English and mathematics. They did much better than their peers in mathematics but less well in English. Their achievement was good overall.
- Pupils read regularly in school, but opportunities are lost to involve parents and carers more in developing their child's reading through the effective use of the home-school diaries.
- Reading standards are average. Pupils, when reading, are able to separate words, but low attainers find difficulty in correctly pronouncing the letter sounds and blends. This is partly the consequence of the need for more flexible phonic ability-group arrangements to challenge pupils at their respective levels.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching mean that it is not yet consistently good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress across all years.
- On occasions, the range of strategies used during lessons to identify gaps in pupils' learning tends to be limited. In particular, opportunities are missed to conduct ongoing sessions to consolidate pupils' learning and take appropriate action to fill the gaps and meet the individual learning needs of pupils.
- Not all teachers use assessment data well enough to set work that challenges pupils of different abilities, or to reflect these different expectations in learning objectives. Consequently progress sometimes dips.
- Nevertheless, teaching is improving. Teachers benefit from a regular cycle of lesson observations and valuable feedback by senior leaders. This can be seen in the increasing numbers of good or better lessons.
- Positive relationships in lessons help ensure that pupils want to get involved in their learning and are motivated to do so. This was seen in an English lesson where pupils willingly came to the front to give their versions of events which they had seen on a video clip. Pupils' good social

development was seen as they listened quietly and showed respect for the individuals providing the commentaries.

- Marking in literacy is usually good, and pupils are given clear guidance as to how to improve their work. However inconsistencies exist, especially in mathematics.
- Resources are well used by teachers to motivate pupils and to aid their learning. This was seen in a mathematics lesson for younger pupils where low attainers had a range of artefacts and visual aids to help them identify coinage when shopping. Others had other practical learning aids to hand, such as number lines and number cards.
- Teachers are adept at deploying teaching assistants effectively. For example, in a guided reading session for younger pupils, the assistant supported pupils in writing acrostic poems. Meanwhile the teacher supported lower-attaining pupils. In Reception the assistants regularly carry out ongoing recording of achievement while encouraging children to remain on task.
- Teachers and their assistants use good open questioning to explore pupils' understanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The school has rigorous systems for dealing with incidents of poor behaviour and bullying, but there are weaknesses in tracking the impact of any actions taken. A very few parents and carers and older pupils expressed concerns about bullying and the impact of school actions in coping with such incidents.
- The recording of behaviour incidents makes it difficult for the school to analyse in depth and see whether the strategies taken are fully effective. Behaviour logs are not sufficiently detailed about when and where incidents take place, and the outcomes of any actions taken. Analysis of such recording is insufficiently rigorous so that really informed decisions can be taken about future actions which can then be relayed to parents and carers. The school is already working to introduce a new initiative, working with parents and carers to identify an 'escalating ladder' of actions to combat any incidents.
- The school has a wide range of provision and strategies designed to combat such incidents: restorative justice, friendship and other groups, playground buddies and anti-bullying topics are used to raise awareness and support pupils. Most pupils say that they believe such methods are effective and that the school deals with incidents well.
- The very large majority of parents and completing the online parent survey believe their children to be happy and safe at school. This was confirmed by pupils spoken to in the school.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive, and they show respect for each other in lessons. Lesson observations, playground visits and conversations with pupils show behaviour to be usually good. There is a positive ethos in the school and the vast majority of pupils behave well, are courteous and polite.
- Pupils from Years 1 and 6 speak enthusiastically about coming to school. They say that 'every teacher' helps them learn, that the school is friendly and that younger pupils are well looked after by the older ones.
- Attendance is above average and helps support the survey results about pupils' enjoyment of school.
- Teachers promote positive messages of equality and respect for others, and pupils' moral development is well promoted through the use of codes of behaviour and the earning of 'golden time'.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Not all subject leaders have sufficient experience to maximise their effect on school improvement. Their analysis of data and other monitoring information is, at times, insufficiently rigorous, and shortcomings in action-planning result in missed opportunities to contribute fully to whole-school development.

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have led a concerted drive for improvement based around raising the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress. The headteacher has a realistic vision about where the school needs to improve and has shared this effectively with other leaders. This has not been helped by the staffing turbulence. However, the impact of regular checking of the school's work and consequent actions can be seen in these improvements.
- Such improvement, together with the high levels of attainment and progress until the recent past, shows capacity to improve, although the pace of improvement has not been fast enough.
- Particular successes have been the introduction of half-termly pupil progress meetings and the sustained, above-average attendance rate. Leadership responsibilities have been well distributed. English and mathematics leaders are fully involved in overseeing their areas of responsibility and have, as a consequence of accurate evaluation, introduced successful initiatives such as 'rainbow words', and related staff training.
- Performance management is well focused on teaching and, where appropriate, leadership targets. It is a rigorous and robust process with the headteacher holding staff to account where necessary for their roles and responsibilities. There are clear links with classroom performance and professional development, and staff see the process as a good developmental experience.
- The pupil premium budget is explained fully on the website and shows appropriate expenditure on personnel, resources and a range of other support to aid learning.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of activities and some positive opportunities for supporting literacy and numeracy across the school. Pupils say that, 'We have lots of good things to do', including visiting places and receiving visitors. The pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is well developed through the Bible Club and their charity work, for example, Operation Christmas Child and the food bank initiatives.
- External partnerships bring positive experiences for pupils. Links with local schools bring benefits in areas such as sport, music and transition into secondary school. The local pre- and after-school organisation praises the close links and cooperation which the school fosters, and which aid transition.
- Links with parents and carers include literacy and numeracy workshops which help them support their children's learning. Parents and carers spoken to praise the regular curriculum information that they receive. A particularly beneficial initiative is the way the school encourages and trains large numbers of volunteers.
- Local authority support is light touch, recognising the recent successes of the school but also the school's need of support during the period of staff turbulence.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors employ a wide range of ways in which they oversee the work of the school. Visits to school, reports from leaders and analysis of data help them have a secure understanding of the school's work and where it needs to improve. Their commendable attention to professional development enables them to have a secure understanding of where the school needs to improve and how it compares with schools nationally. This also enables them to challenge the school over issues such as the quality of teaching and the tracking of the impact of the pupil premium. They are developing a more in-depth understanding of how well these pupils are achieving. Governors are fully involved in performance management and set challenging targets. There is a clear determination and understanding that rewards for adults must link to the quality of pupils' attainment and progress. Minutes of meetings reveal that they track regularly the progress towards these targets.

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	113847
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	403215

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judy Jamieson MBE
Headteacher	Claire King
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2008
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