

Priory Primary School

Bicknacre Road, Bicknacre, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 4ES

Inspection dates 12–13 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Teaching is good and there is much that is outstanding. Leaders and managers, including governors, have helped sustain good performance over a considerable period.
- Standards have been well above average at the end of Key Stage 1 since the last inspection, and are improving at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is often exemplary. Pupils show strong care and consideration towards each other. The school's arrangements for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being are outstanding.
- The school's topics and subjects, as well as activities before and after school and regular visits, enrich the pupils' learning experiences. They make an excellent contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Governors keep themselves well informed about the school, and use their knowledge extremely well to ensure that the school has an accurate understanding of how well it is performing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, lack pride in their work so it is too often poorly presented and inaccurate.
- Teachers' marking is not always effective in helping pupils to improve their work. Sometimes, work is left unmarked for long periods.
- Sometimes, teachers plan work which is too easy for pupils, especially those who are more able. As a result, some pupils make less progress than they should.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited eight lessons or part lessons. Some lessons were observed jointly with either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. Inspectors also made a number of other short visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, and looked at work from each year group in Key Stage 2, much of this with the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors attended an assembly, visited after-school clubs and also spoke to pupils in the playground.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, and records on behaviour, safety and attendance. They also looked at information on individual pupils' progress, anonymised records of teachers' performance and records of meetings held by the governing body.
- Inspectors met with pupils, interviewed a sample of staff, and spoke to parents. They also spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents were obtained through the school's surveys and the 56 responses to the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Martin Mangan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. A small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A small proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. This is additional funding provided for pupils who are looked after by the local authority, known to be eligible for free school meals, or from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Bicknacre Pre-School is situated on the same site. This is inspected separately.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed, and there have been several other changes in governors. The school appointed two newly qualified teachers in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding to accelerate progress in reading, writing and mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide activities which stretch and challenge pupils to achieve higher standards
 - marking is undertaken regularly to help pupils to understand how well they are doing, and what they need to do to improve their learning
 - pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, pay greater attention to the accuracy of their work and take more pride in how they present it.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children are given an excellent start in the Reception class. From starting points which are typical for their age, they quickly become confident in using the wide range of equipment and resources within a vibrant learning environment. They acquire skills quickly, and show considerable concentration when engaging in activities. For example, a small group of children, who were using the outside area to construct a scene from a story they were exploring, persevered until they found a solution. Others quickly learnt how to use remote-controlled toys by following directions and exploring how these toys worked.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been well above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics since the last inspection in 2010. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are not yet as high, but are improving as pupils who have achieved well at Key Stage 1 move through the school. In 2013, standards at the end of Year 6 were above average in writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar, average in mathematics and below average in reading. This represented good progress from lower starting points than is currently the case for the great majority of pupils, although a few pupils underachieved in reading. The school's current data and observations on inspection show that progress is accelerating and pupils are achieving well throughout Key Stage 2.
- Pupils write fluently and have a wide vocabulary. They have a good command of spelling, punctuation and grammar and, by the time they are in Years 5 and 6, express ideas confidently and with good expression. For example, pupils in Year 6 constructed thoughtful arguments about school uniform using persuasive language, taking into account different points of view. Pupils' progress in writing is good across the school.
- Results of the screening check for phonics (the sounds that letters make) in 2012 and 2013 were above the national average, indicating good progress in the development of early reading skills. These skills are now consolidated across the school, so pupils are achieving well in reading.
- Pupils for whom the school receives additional funding through the pupil premium make good progress. In 2013, these pupils achieved similar results to other pupils at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. Current school data show that, across the school, these pupils achieve as well as their peers. Close attention is given to meeting their needs through small-group work, and funds are also spent ensuring that they can play a full role in all school activities, including visits and residential trips.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well and make progress in line with their peers. Additional adults support them with well-designed activities and good questioning which helps them keep pace with their peers.
- Pupils who are more able are sometimes taught in small groups. As a result, many make rapid progress. For example, pupils in Year 6 rose to the challenge of producing complex problems to test their partners. They used their knowledge of shapes and different formulae to get a secure understanding of mathematical language. However, not all planned activities help more-able pupils reach higher levels in their work.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching continues to improve, so that all teaching is at least good and some is outstanding. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and across Key Stage 1 has been particularly strong over time. Skilful questioning by all adults maintains high expectations.
- Teachers usually provide work that challenges pupils at the right level for their ability. Just occasionally, work for more-able pupils is too easy and they do not make enough progress.
- Pupils achieve good standards in their writing, as teachers' strong subject knowledge and effective questioning help them to develop their writing styles. For example, the teacher's good understanding of the characteristics of persuasive writing and probing questions helped pupils in Year 5 to develop a well-organised persuasive argument and to discover different writing techniques.
- Pupils learn to read quickly as they are taught in small groups organised by their different abilities in Years 1 and 2. Pupils support each other, and help each other to correct mistakes. Regular opportunities are provided to engage pupils in reading, and regular reading is encouraged at home as well. As a result, pupils read widely and apply their reading skills well to unfamiliar texts.
- Teaching in other subjects is also strong. For example, work adapted for different ability groups in Year 3 meant that pupils made rapid progress as they learnt about vertebrates and their skeletons. The teacher provided good examples and well-directed questions to develop their ideas. Pupils also benefit from specialist teaching of sports and physical education.
- Marking is not consistently helpful in raising standards, especially across Key Stage 2. Some work is left uncorrected for long periods, and some pupils are not given guidance on what they do well and what they need to do to improve their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' good behaviour in lessons means that there are few interruptions to learning. Their behaviour around the school is often impeccable. They show a great deal of care and consideration for each other. From the Reception class right through to the oldest classes, they play well together and cooperate willingly in class.
- Pupils usually have very positive attitudes towards learning. They respond with enthusiasm when asked questions, and engage well with all activities. However, occasionally pupils in Key Stage 2 do not take enough care with their work. As a result, their presentation is slapdash and untidy, and they make too many mistakes. By contrast, the work produced by children in the Reception class is presented immaculately, and shared regularly with parents.
- Relationships between pupils are strong. As one said, 'Any time you are upset, someone will help you.' There have been no exclusions for many years and few incidents of note. This reflects the tolerant and caring community atmosphere created by school leaders.
- Pupils show an excellent understanding of how to keep safe. They are well informed about how to use computers and other electronic equipment safely, and what to do if something happens that concerns them. They say that bullying never happens, and they are confident that adults will help if there is a problem. Consequently, the school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is

outstanding.

- Effective links with the adjacent pre-school and the local secondary school help ensure that transfer arrangements for pupils are smooth. Pupils are known well by all adults, and this helps to foster a warm and friendly working environment.
- Pupils say they enjoy school. Parents agree and many say their children rush to school in the morning and do not want to leave. This is reflected in their attendance, which has been above the national average for several years.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead by example. They set high expectations for teaching, and provide a strong climate for learning around the school. Together with the governors and teachers with additional responsibilities, they ensure that teaching continues to improve.
- Regular checks are made on teaching quality, and only the highest performance is rewarded by pay increases. Staff morale is high and most staff have taken on extra responsibilities to contribute to the school's improvement. Staff are supported in acquiring new skills for these roles, and attend training where required. Strong leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children make a good start and achieve well.
- Senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and identify the correct areas for improvement. They know that more-able pupils are not yet reaching the levels of which they are capable and are taking action to remedy this. As such, they are well placed to improve the school further.
- The curriculum is enriched by many excellent additional activities and visits. Pupils recall especially the school performances which provide opportunities for them to show off their creative talents. The school choir's recent performances at the O2 Centre in London and the Year 6 opera productions are characteristic of the school's vibrant learning opportunities. Together, these make a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school makes the most of specialist teaching to ensure that pupils have a wide experience of different sports. The additional sports funding is being used to extend these experiences and to provide further training for staff in physical education.
- Parents are fully supportive of the school. They speak warmly of the way that all children are treated equally within a family community. This reflects the school's strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity.
- The school commissions support from the local authority. In recent months, this has included help with checking teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and progress, and with leaders' judgements on how well the school is performing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Recent appointments to the governing body have strengthened its role in supporting and challenging the school. Governors use their expertise, some of which comes from backgrounds in education, to help them scrutinise the work of the school. As a result, they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are well informed about how

well the pupils are doing, and how effective teaching is in helping to raise standards. They ensure that robust procedures are used to evaluate how well teachers are doing, so that they are suitably rewarded. They share the headteacher's ambitions for accelerating the progress of more-able pupils. They use secure systems to manage the school's budget. They know how the pupil premium is being spent to ensure that all pupils achieve well and do not miss out on trips and additional activities. They ensure that all statutory responsibilities, including those relating to safeguarding, are met, and that staff are appropriately trained.

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	115000
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	440535

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Feehan
Headteacher	Rachael Plunkett
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2010
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