

# Priory Lower School

Greyfriars, Bedford, MK40 1JD

## Inspection dates

30 April–1May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Children join the school with skills that are much lower than those that are typical for their age. They make rapid progress so that, by the end of Year 4, attainment is in line with expectations with a good number of pupils exceeding expectations, especially in reading.
- The headteacher, with strong support from all staff and governors, shows exceptional determination to ensure that all pupils thrive in this school. As a result, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are both outstanding.
- Teaching is outstanding because teachers know and support their pupils extremely well. They prepare stimulating and challenging activities that are carefully tailored to the needs and abilities of all pupils, including the most-able.
- Pupils are frequently told by their teachers how they can improve their work. Teachers' precisely written marking also gives pupils useful advice to help them improve.
- Staff work tirelessly to ensure that those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are given high quality support which enables them to make rapid progress.
- Pupils are extremely polite and well behaved. They come from a wide range of faiths and cultures which are celebrated by the school. They treat each other and adults with great respect. Pupils are eager to learn, come to school well prepared and ready to participate enthusiastically in lessons.
- Pupils feel extremely safe at school and have a well-developed understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe at all times.
- Attendance has improved steadily and is now above average. The vast majority of pupils arrive on time to school every day.
- The curriculum, together with the vast range of enrichment activities on offer, ensures that pupils are provided with many memorable experiences which ignite their enthusiasm for learning. This helps pupils develop very strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural values.
- The school involves parents very well in their children's learning. As one parent told an inspector, 'the school inspires the children then they come home and inspire their parents'.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 parts of lessons taught by six teachers. They also observed small-group support sessions. Five of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, staff, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at documentation that included teachers’ planning, the school’s analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and resulting development plans, information on pupils’ attainment and progress, records of the monitoring of teaching and minutes from governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, spoke with them about their learning and behaviour and reviewed the work in their books.
- No parents responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors spoke informally to parents as they brought their children to school.

## Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Martin Fitzwilliam

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This lower school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding which in this school supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- Most pupils come from a range of minority ethnic groups, the largest group being of Bangladeshi heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at other than the usual time is higher than that normally found.
- The vast majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. Most pupils joining the school other than at the usual times speak little or no English.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage has a 'morning-only' Nursery and a Reception class.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education (LLE).

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

- Make sure that pupils use the guidance they get from their teachers to correct their work.
- Work with all parents to ensure that their children arrive at school on time every day so that they do not miss out on any learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The majority of children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with exceptionally low levels of skills in language and communication. Most speak very little or no English and have had few pre-school opportunities to develop their social skills. They settle quickly and, owing to the excellent range of well-planned activities and care that they receive, they make rapid progress in all areas.
- Since the previous inspection, attainment, both at the end of Key Stage 1 and when pupils leave at the end of Year 4, has risen steadily. Although overall standards by the end of Year 2 have generally been below average over time, those pupils who have completed the entire key stage in the school typically reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The 2013 Year 4 cohort, including the most-able pupils, made rapid progress from their starting points in Year 3 to attain national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics, with some exceeding expectations especially in reading. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that pupils currently in Year 4 are on track to continue this upward trend with even higher proportions attaining and exceeding national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils make rapid progress in their reading because it is taught extremely well. The proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the expected level in the national phonics check is above average. The school invests in a wide range of books that meet the interest of all pupils. From the moment pupils enter the school, parents are helped and encouraged to read with their children. Any pupils experiencing difficulties are given additional adult support by both staff and the many volunteers who come into school regularly to read with pupils. Love of reading is further promoted by a weekly whole-school assembly taken by a group of volunteers, who read and act out stories with a moral message. Pupils, who work hard, are rewarded by the school with books. As a result, pupils become enthusiastic and confident readers.
- Pupils written work improves at a fast rate as they progress through the school. Pupils are given many opportunities to write across the subjects. They learn how to use complex sentences very well and how to adapt their writing style for different purposes.
- From Nursery onwards, pupils are encouraged to develop a real enthusiasm for mathematics. Every week children in the Nursery take home a mathematical game pack to play with their parents and carers. Across the school teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to practise their mathematical skills across the subjects and apply them to real-life situations. As a result, pupils make rapid progress in mathematics.
- Discrimination of any type is not tolerated. All pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, those from different ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language, have an equal opportunity to make outstanding progress. The most-able pupils are identified quickly and given a personal development plan to ensure that they are given appropriately challenging work to help them reach the standards of which they are capable. Pupils with learning needs, including those that join the school at other than the usual time, are identified at a very early stage, and well-focussed support ensures all groups of pupils make excellent improvements in their skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium receive extra tuition, support for their families and opportunities to engage in educational activities, such as visits to the theatre. In 2013, the

attainment of eligible Year 2 pupils was only a term behind their peers in reading, writing and mathematics, and the attainment gaps between eligible pupils and their classmates currently in the school are closing.

## **The quality of teaching is outstanding**

- Teachers and teaching assistants have very high expectations of their pupils. They check the progress of each pupil frequently and use the information to plan appropriately exciting and challenging activities to meet the needs of all pupils, including the most-able. As a result, all pupils make rapid progress across all subjects.
- Teachers ensure that there is an extremely positive climate for learning in every lesson. From Reception onwards, pupils are encouraged to try to resolve their problems when they get stuck through the well thought out step by step guidance that they receive in every lesson. In all classrooms, displays are used to celebrate pupils' work and also to provide useful learning guidance, such as key mathematical operations, definitions of key literacy terms like 'onomatopoeia' and definitions of the terms used in phonics [letters and the sounds that they make].
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers and teaching assistants encourage children to develop good communication and social skills and provide well-planned activities in a stimulating environment to meet the children's learning needs. There is an especially strong emphasis on developing children's grasp of English and adults engage children continuously in conversation, and actively encourage reading and early writing. They also use every opportunity to boost children's mathematical vocabulary and to get children to think, to solve problems and to socialise. As a result, children are engaged in purposeful activities throughout the day and make rapid progress in the development of their key skills.
- Across the subjects, teachers plan activities that make a strong contribution to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, work in pupils' books shows that in a very effective history lesson, pupils had been shown how to write accurate and well-informed letters from an historical figure. On another occasion, when considering how to make a fun party, pupils had been encouraged and able to work out the costings of the food and drink.
- Homework is used very effectively to extend pupils' learning beyond the classroom. Each half term, in addition to the regular English and mathematics homework, pupils work with their families on a research project. For instance, Year 4 pupils recently had to research and find out about any internationally famous monument and then build a model of it and make a presentation of it at school. These activities are very effective in helping children to research information and develop both their creativity and their ability to present their ideas clearly and precisely.
- Teaching assistants make an excellent contribution in class and in small groups in supporting the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who join the school later than the usual times or have little or no spoken English. This additional support ensures that all these groups of pupils make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Teachers provide high quality written and oral feedback to pupils on what they have done well and what needs to be improved. This effectively assists pupils to improve aspects of their work. On a few occasions however, this advice is not acted upon by the pupils themselves, so their improvement slows slightly.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Right from the moment they enter the Nursery, children learn to share and take responsibility for their own actions. For example, when some water spilt in the Nursery, a couple of children, without adult direction, went to get some paper towels and wiped up the water.
- Pupils wear their uniform with pride; as some pupils put it, 'it makes us feel like we are in a team.' Pupils take good care of the environment and no litter or gum is to be seen around the school site.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary as they have a thirst for learning. They apply themselves with determination, are ambitious and want to succeed. They arrive punctually to lessons with all the right equipment, follow their teacher's instructions immediately and without any fuss and support each other with their work. They take pride in their work; hence their books are neatly presented. Their outstanding attitudes to their learning make a major contribution to the rapid progress that they make.
- The school's work to foster good and harmonious relations between adults and pupils and between the pupils themselves is exemplary. As a result, the entire atmosphere in and around the school is one where pupils and adults alike, no matter what their cultural, ethnic or religious background, work together with a common purpose and mutual respect, so all can learn and thrive.
- Pupils relish the many opportunities for taking on responsibilities, helping each other and serving the community. For example, every newcomer to the school is paired up with a 'buddy' who helps them settle into their new environment. Playground buddies ensure that no pupil feels lonely during break time, and the members of the 'kindness club' anonymously carry out acts of kindness, such as planting flowers in a public area near the school. Pupils also raise money for a range of worthy causes, including for example, the purchase of a goat to help a poor African community.
- Attendance has improved and for the vast majority of pupils it is now above average. Most arrive at school in good time each day. This supports their learning very well and teaches them how to be reliable members of society in the future. A few parents however, restrict their children's learning by bringing them late to school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils know how to stay safe, both in and outside of school, including for instance, when using the internet or any equipment using electricity, as well as when dealing with issues relating to road, rail and fire safety.
- Pupils know about the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. Very few incidences of bullying occur and, should they do so, pupils are confident that they would be dealt with promptly and effectively.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The devoted headteacher, staff and governors all share a common vision and determination to include all pupils in a supportive learning environment where they are able to thrive academically and socially. They have secured outstanding performance in all aspects of the school's work.
- The headteacher, assistant headteacher and inclusion leader check every pupil's progress

frequently. Any pupils identified as underachieving are given well-tailored support so that they can catch up quickly with their peers. Pupil progress information is also used to hold teachers to account for their pupils' achievement.

- In this small school, all teachers have a role in leading on one or more subjects. They and senior leaders observe teaching frequently, scrutinise pupils' work and teachers' planning. All leaders therefore have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths. They are never complacent and are always ready to identify what and how the school can do better. These processes have helped the school to secure and sustain outstanding achievement, teaching, behaviour and leadership.
- Subject leaders, are very well trained in their specific subject areas and these leaders, in turn, deliver high quality training to their colleagues.
- The headteacher supports a range of schools in her role as a Local Leader of Education and, in recognition of her work in the school and the local area, has recently been invited to a reception with ministers to celebrate inclusion and diversity within local communities. Other members of the school's leadership team also support local schools. For instance, the assistant headteacher is a local authority lead teacher for phonics and a Key Stage 1 moderator and the religious studies subject leader is a lead teacher in the borough for her subject. Through many other partnerships with local schools and links to some overseas schools, as well as to universities, teachers and leaders both learn from and share best practice.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is excellent. Rigorous planning and frequent checking on the progress of every child takes place in an environment in which all adults work together and support each other very well. This ensures children thrive, both socially and academically.
- The school has used some of the new primary sports funding to acquire the services of qualified sports coaches to both deliver sporting activities to the pupils and to train staff in the teaching of physical education. Additionally, they are training teaching assistants to qualify for a sports leadership award which will enable them to organise even more games and after-school sporting activities. Additional opportunities that are already on offer and that have increased participation in sport include the introduction of 'dodge ball' and netball for boys and girls. The school has also secured additional opportunities to take pupils swimming. All these opportunities ensure pupils' better physical well-being.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is extremely well developed. It is promoted through the broad range of subjects taught and opportunities for example, to work with the resident artist on international art projects, participating in the local 'sing up' and debating competitions, languages days and writing to pen pals in Germany. Plentiful educational visits and the many visitors to the school offer pupils many more enriching experiences. Accordingly, pupils develop into knowledgeable, broad-minded, caring young people who are very well equipped to face the challenges of middle school.
- The local authority knows the strengths of this outstanding school and provides appropriate and effective support as necessary.

**■ The governance of the school:**

- Governors are well informed about the school's work through the headteacher's regular reports, annual reports by each subject leader and through termly meetings, where they analyse pupil performance information. Consequently, they know the school's strengths, including the quality of teaching and areas for further development. Governors make regular visits to the school to talk to staff, participate in workshops aimed at helping parents support their children's learning and to check progress against the school's development priorities. Additionally, governors receive reports of the outcomes of the visits of external consultants who verify many aspects of the school's work. Finances are well managed. For example, governors consider how pupil premium money is being spent and how it supports eligible pupils. They are involved in decisions as to whether teachers should be rewarded with salary increments, and they set and review targets for the headteacher. The school's robust safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109436
<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	443749

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	156
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Trevor Moisey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anita Hemsley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 February 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 261768
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