

Princes Risborough Primary School

Wellington Avenue, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire HP27 9HY

Inspection dates 8–9 December 2015

Overall effectiveness **Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Teaching is weak. Teachers plan tasks that are not well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Progress in reading, writing and mathematics is too slow for many pupils including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Leaders do not gather sufficient information about pupils' progress to evaluate school performance robustly. As a result, leaders' evaluations are often overly generous.
- Standards of achievement for disadvantaged pupils are declining and these pupils are not catching up with other pupils nationally. This is because, until very recently, support has not been targeted to where it is needed most.
- Pupils with special educational needs, including children in the early years, do not make the progress they are capable of, particularly in reading and writing.
- The teaching of mathematics is poor. Many pupils do not have the basic skills they need in order to achieve success.
- Persistent absence is too high. Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough.
- Leaders have not halted the school's decline. Some new ways of working have been introduced but have had too little impact on raising standards.
- The school has not effectively promoted pupils' knowledge of e-safety, their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding, or their awareness of fundamental British values.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders provide effective additional care and support for pupils who are vulnerable.
- Most pupils are well mannered. Many show high levels of respect to adults.
- Teaching in the special unit meets pupils' needs well.
- Governors have identified weaknesses in teaching and achievement. However, leaders' responses have lacked urgency in bringing improvement.
- Some middle leaders are making well-judged changes so that standards in early years and in reading at Key Stage 1 are slowly beginning to improve.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management to ensure that:
 - the achievement gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally narrows quickly in all subjects
 - information about pupils' progress is gathered more routinely, shared with parents and used to inform the school's action planning, including in the early years
 - leaders use information about pupils' progress to accurately evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses
 - middle leaders monitor their subjects more closely and act promptly on their findings
 - the curriculum is broad and balanced in every class and all pupils access the full range of subjects
 - pupils' understanding of e-safety is developed appropriately
 - teachers are held to account robustly for the progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics
 - provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is strengthened
 - persistent absence is tackled effectively, so more pupils attend school regularly.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to accelerate pupils' progress, including in early years, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving in reading, writing and mathematics
 - pupils have regular, high-quality opportunities to read widely and often
 - pupils have mastered key mathematical concepts, including the basic calculation skills expected for their age, and know how to apply their skills to solve problems
 - activities in lessons cater well for all pupils of differing abilities and are pitched to take account of pupils' needs, including for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils
 - teaching assistants develop their skills and expertise so as to have a positive impact on pupils' learning
 - pupils' presentation and pride in their work improve.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders have been too slow to halt the decline in standards over time. Not enough teaching is good so pupils do not make sufficient progress to help them catch up in reading, writing or mathematics. Furthermore, work to support disadvantaged pupils is inadequate and, as a result, attainment gaps between these pupils and others nationally have widened. Recent changes are appropriate but leaders' actions lack urgency or understanding of the scale of improvement required.
- Leaders have been too slow to agree new ways of gathering information on pupils' progress. Leaders were alerted to pupils' slowing progress last year as standards fell. However, there is very little and, in some cases no, progress information available for this term. As a result, leaders are unable to say if new ways of working, such as the implementation of a new reading scheme, are having any impact on pupils' progress.
- Leaders' self-evaluation is not sufficiently rigorous. Their evaluations do not probe in any depth how well pupils are progressing. Monitoring activities to evaluate the school's effectiveness have not been robust enough. The use of new processes, including the school's assessment tracking system, is at a very early stage and not yet fully understood by all staff.
- Additional government funding, including pupil premium funding and sports funding, is not used well. Pupil premium funding is not targeted to where it is needed most and, consequently, disadvantaged pupils have fallen further behind. Likewise, some parents express concerns about the behaviour and safety of pupils in sports sessions with outside providers. During the inspection, pupils were slow to respond to instructions in a physical education lesson and additional adults did not actively encourage good behaviour. More recently, leaders have begun to make better use of additional funding but it is too soon to evaluate the impact. For example, there is now an increased range of sports clubs including archery and football.
- Aside from the additionally resourced provision, the leadership of special educational needs is a particularly weak aspect. There is little analysis of how well disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are learning. Leaders do not monitor or evaluate this aspect of the school sufficiently well. As a result, weaknesses in teaching that have a direct impact on the progress of disabled pupils and those pupils with special educational needs remain unchallenged.
- Leaders have failed to ensure that teachers are held to account for their performance. For example, last year teachers were not set targets to improve their performance. This term, despite a more robust system being established, some targets are either unrealistic or simply not challenging enough. Consequently, teaching over time has not improved sufficiently rapidly to halt the decline in pupils' performance.
- Standards in mathematics have sharply declined since the previous inspection and attainment is low. Not all pupils have fully covered the required mathematics curriculum. There are other weaknesses in the curriculum including the development of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding, and their knowledge of e-safety. Some pupils have limited understanding of a range of faiths and/or do not understand modern British values.
- External advisers recognise that last year the level of support and challenge to school leaders was not robust enough. However, in recent times, the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust together with the Wycombe and Marlow Teaching Alliance have provided better support. Both advisers work closely with the headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body to review school performance. Discussions are limited because of the lack of available information on pupils' performance, although some leaders, including the early years leader and the leader for reading, are beginning to develop their skills as a result of the support.
- The headteacher has spent her first three terms establishing some basic systems to improve the school. For example, there is now an established calendar of review that covers many aspects of the school's work. The headteacher is determined that staff receive the help and support they need to improve their skills and expertise. She is equally committed to ensuring that pupils are safe and happy at school. The headteacher describes her first terms as like 'peeling back an onion skin'. With each layer requiring improvement, the next was soon discovered. With strong conviction, the headteacher has taken time to settle and ensured that governors are clear on what needs to improve. Although things are starting to head in the right direction, actions have not had time to have a positive effect on accelerating pupils' progress. Much more urgency is now required.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors recognise that the last 18 months has been a difficult and transitional period in the life of the school, with a decline in standards. Despite this, governors are a steadying influence. They understand the level of improvement needed and are determined to play their part, describing recent times as a ‘call to arms’. Governors offer improving challenge and support to school leaders, but they acknowledge that recent changes to systems and procedures are yet to be borne out in improving outcomes.
- Governors have recently completed a helpful evaluation of their own skills and expertise. A training programme has been set up that wisely focuses on areas that need strengthening. Governor monitoring is at an early stage and governors are committed to ‘seeking’ information rather than simply ‘receiving’ information. A review of governance is recommended in order to accelerate the self-improvement journey that is beginning to emerge.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The designated person in charge of safeguarding ensures that pupils who from time to time require additional support are nurtured and cared for. School-based groups, like the young carers’ group, provide helpful additional support to pupils. All checks on adults’ suitability to work with children are completed. Work to protect pupils from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation is underway, and staff expertise is developing well in this aspect. The school’s work to promote e-safety has lacked rigour and is a focus of further improvement.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is inadequate**

- Teachers’ planning is weak. Lessons do not cater well for pupils of different abilities and starting points. As a result, many pupils’ learning needs, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and most-able pupils are not well catered for and progress slows.
- Teaching in the specially resourced unit is more effective than that generally and makes a good impact, because pupils’ needs are well known and support is built around those needs.
- The quality of teachers’ feedback to pupils varies considerably from class to class and much is weak. Pupils do not know how to improve their work or, equally, what they have done well. In some classes, teachers are beginning to offer constructive advice although pupils do not always reflect on or follow it. Similarly, verbal feedback during lessons varies considerably in quality from class to class.
- In many classes, teachers do not ensure that the purpose of the lesson is fully understood by pupils. They emphasise which tasks pupils need to complete but not why. Inspectors noted that because of this, many pupils were unclear on what they were learning to do or how they could improve their work.
- Teachers’ explanations and demonstrations of what is expected in learning is weak. Teaching does not make good use of a range of resources, including computers, to enhance and support learning. Learning slows when pupils are not clear what to do in order to be successful.
- Many parents comment that they do not receive information about how well their children are progressing. Frequent staff changes also hinder the sharing of information between home and school.
- The teaching of reading is poor. Pupils say they do not read often enough to their teachers. They would like to read more and make better use of the library. In Key Stage 1, average-ability pupils are beginning to make better progress. More pupils met the standard in the national Year 1 check on phonics (the sounds letters make) in 2015 than in the past. However, standards remain below the national average. Adults do not monitor reading closely enough. For example, pupils with special educational needs do not always have books that are within their reading capabilities.
- Teaching assistants are not yet effective at supporting learning. Recently, roles have changed and teaching assistants now work in classes more regularly. However, their skills and expertise are underdeveloped and, as a result, they have a very limited impact on accelerating learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **requires improvement**

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils’ understanding of how to keep themselves safe online is insecure. The school does not emphasise this aspect of the curriculum strongly enough and, consequently, pupils have very limited knowledge of the type of rules and expectations they should adhere to.

- Pupils say they enjoy learning. However, many do not know how to improve their skills and which things they need to practise. This is because teachers' feedback is not always helpful at identifying mistakes or misunderstandings in sufficient depth. Consequently, pupils do not attack new challenges and tasks with energy and verve; pupils' attitudes to learning are indifferent.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Leaders have yet to fully eradicate rough behaviour, notably among older boys at playtimes. Some pupils are concerned about this. They say they feel unsafe when incidents happen.
- That said, the number of poor behavioural incidents is decreasing and the school is calmer than in the past. Leaders have redoubled their expectations and there is now a much greater awareness of boundaries and consequences. Many pupils respond well and their behaviour has improved.
- Persistent absence is too high for some pupils. Attendance has improved a little since the previous inspection but remains below the national average.
- Parents are positive about recent changes to the school's approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Parents agree that pupils' behaviour is improving. They are unanimous in their support of the recent changes the headteacher has introduced.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are low. Over time, pupils have not made sufficient progress to catch up and many are not achieving the standards expected for their age.
- The additional resource unit serves pupils' needs well. They are well supported, respond well to very specific learning aims and make good progress. However, the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in the main school is weak. Tasks are not always accessible to pupils with specific needs and, as a result, many do not make good progress. For example, in Key Stage 1, phonics sessions are often beyond the capabilities of pupils who struggle to read. This means that although they happily attend sessions, they make slow progress in developing early reading skills.
- Reading progress in Key Stage 2 is too slow. Pupils do not read regularly enough. Pupils say they would like to read more often to their teachers in order to improve their skills.
- Many pupils expressed the view that work is often too easy. This is because teachers' expectations are too low. For example, pupils' spelling and grammatical expertise and handwriting skills have not improved rapidly enough since the previous inspection. Pupils do not show high levels of care and pride in their written work.
- Standards in mathematics have declined in the last 18 months. Many pupils do not have the basic calculation skills expected for their age. Pupils struggle to apply what they know to solve problems, as their understanding of mathematical concepts is not always secure. In part, this is because lessons move too quickly from one aspect of mathematics to another before pupils have fully consolidated their skills and understanding.
- Most-able pupils do not achieve the higher levels. Too often tasks are too easy and do not fully stretch learners and extend or deepen their understanding. Consequently, most-able pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve less well than their peers and other pupils nationally. Funding is not targeted well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive the help they need in order to catch up. In lessons, opportunities to reshape activities to support pupils' next steps in learning are missed routinely by staff.
- Pupils are not well prepared for the next stages in their education. Too few pupils enter Key Stage 1 with the skills and understanding expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. During the inspection, some older pupils expressed their anxiety about having the skills necessary for secondary school. Plans are in place to offer support to older pupils before they move on to secondary school.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- Tasks are not always well matched to children's starting points. For example, in number work, children are not encouraged to move on quickly enough. They spend too long repeating the same tasks when they have grasped the skills required. For example, several children could clearly count beyond ten confidently when doing so independently, but in teacher-led activities there was no opportunity to extend children's understanding of the number system beyond ten.
- A number of adults do not have all the skills needed to accelerate children's grasp of new concepts and skills. Some interact well with children as they work and play, moving their learning on by well-judged questions, while others are not so successful. In the best examples, children show satisfaction with their achievements. In one session, a child was keen to show the inspector the book he had made, commenting, 'I illustrated my farm book all by myself!' In this instance, opportunities to develop children's speaking, listening and communication skills had been used to good effect. This is not done equally well across the early years setting.
- Last year, many children started school with skills and understanding below those typical for their age. Some made good progress and achieved well. However, significant groups, including boys, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities made slower progress. This was particularly true in reading and writing so that children overall were not well prepared for Year 1.
- The early years leader has had support from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and is beginning to plan actions to improve the setting. However, work to tackle weaker aspects, such as improving outcomes for boys, has made insufficient impact.
- Work to strengthen the partnerships between home and school is developing steadily and is well received by parents. They are complimentary about improvements such as more regular communication, including receipt of a weekly newsletter, about their child's learning. Other opportunities are proving popular, such as a workshop about helping your child learn to read.
- Children are well cared for and safe. Parents who spoke to the inspector noted that their children enjoy school. The start of the day is supervised carefully and parents appreciate the signing-in system and chance to communicate important information to school staff.

School details

Unique reference number	133513
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10000453

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	3–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Thompson
Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Kirk
Telephone number	01844 345251
Website	www.princesrisboroughprimary.bucks.sch.uk
Email address	office@princesrisboroughprimary.bucks.sch
Date of previous inspection	22–23 March 2012

Information about this school

- Princes Risborough Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- The early years provision comprises two classes, one Nursery and Reception class and one Reception class. Children attend the Nursery part time and Reception full time.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school has an additionally resourced provision for pupils with a statement of special educational needs relating to autistic spectrum disorder. There are 12 places available. Pupils in the provision have all their learning sessions there.
- The headteacher started in January 2015 as interim headteacher, taking the substantive post in February 2015. Seven teachers, including some with leadership responsibilities, left at the end of the academic year. In September 2015 five new teachers joined. Five teachers are leaving at the end of term.
- The school is in receipt of support from the Wycombe and Marlow Teaching Alliance.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons or parts of lessons, 13 of which were visited jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors heard some Year 2 pupils reading and discussed their reading progress with them. A meeting was held with a group of pupils in Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6.
- Inspectors considered 32 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 27 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, other staff with significant responsibilities and three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- A meeting took place with a representative from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and a representative from the Wycombe and Marlow Teaching Alliance.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors observed pupils at playtimes.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, teachers' planning, records of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records of behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clive Close	Her Majesty's Inspector
Peter Dunmall	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Child	Ofsted Inspector

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