

The Priory Primary School

Dorsett Road, Friar Park, Wednesbury, West Midlands WS10 0JG

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is an improving school with effective leadership. The headteacher is committed to the school and is well supported by his senior leaders.
- Leaders are relentless in their drive to improve teaching. As a result, the quality of teaching is better than it was at the last inspection.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their different starting points. This includes disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- However, some pupils, particularly those who need to make more rapid progress in order to catch up with their classmates, are not secure in their understanding of mathematical concepts. This holds them back.
- In key stage 1, pupils do not spell common words accurately in their writing.
- Behaviour in the school is outstanding. Pupils understand and apply the school's values in their daily work and play.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is effective. Pupils talk about feeling safe, knowing that the staff look out for them.
- Pupils' attendance has improved over the past three years.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils are able to learn about topics which they may not experience outside of school.
- Children receive a good start to their education in the early years provision.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school links this work to learning about British values. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further, so that more pupils make even better progress through each year group, by:
 - checking that pupils, especially those who need to make more rapid progress, are secure in their mathematical understanding before moving on to harder work
 - insisting that pupils in key stage 1 use their secure phonics skills to spell common words consistently accurately in their writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and senior leaders form an effective leadership team. They focus their day-to-day work on supporting teachers in delivering the best lessons that they can. Leaders' commitment has ensured that teaching has improved since the last inspection. Their ambition is clear as they strive to raise pupils' attainment further in order for pupils to have the best chance of success when they transfer into secondary education.
- Senior leaders are skilled in working with staff to help them develop new leadership skills. The deputy and assistant headteachers meet regularly with teachers who are keen to lead on improving certain aspects of the school. For example, two teachers spend time with these two leaders in order to help them gain a good understanding of how to improve teaching and learning in reading and mathematics. There is good leadership capacity in the school.
- Teachers' performance is supported and challenged well through rigorous systems established in the school. Senior leaders meet with teachers at least three times during the year. Teachers and leaders prepare thoroughly for these meetings so that they are ready to talk about how well pupils are progressing. If pupils are identified as needing additional support, then specific actions are agreed and put in place. Leaders monitor these actions closely. Over the past two years this has led to improvements in teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Staff new to The Priory are inducted to the school well. This year, newly qualified teachers visited the school prior to their starting dates and spent two days learning about school policies and expectations. The importance of safeguarding was made clear. These teachers talked about how they valued this time as they understood the school systems designed to keep pupils safe before starting their teaching role.
- Other leaders in the school are effective in their work and the pupils for which they are accountable make good progress. These leaders include those responsible for the early years and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. By listening carefully to staff, senior leaders have developed an effective training programme. This is designed to support staff in their own professional development. Teachers value this attention and talk positively about how well they are supported by senior leaders.
- Leaders are well supported by the local authority. The adviser knows the school well, acknowledging the effective leadership of the headteacher and governors. She is able to articulate what the school does well and where further improvements are required. Other external consultants come into the school to check out leaders' judgements, including their accuracy at evaluating how well pupils are performing. This has meant that leaders and teachers are confident that their work is accurate and reliable.
- Senior leaders have ensured that funding for disadvantaged pupils has been used effectively. Working with governors, they have established a clear rationale for the use of the funding. This is to enable pupils to make better progress and for them to access enrichment activities, such as learning a musical instrument and visiting places of interest. Additional teaching staff have been employed to work with disadvantaged pupils. These pupils make good progress at school.

- Leaders have developed a curriculum that enables pupils to achieve well in a range of subjects and broaden their understanding of different cultures and faiths. They check that discrimination does not occur and that pupils understand and follow behaviour rules. This enables them to work and play well together at all times of the school day. As a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Pupils understand the importance of democracy and show this in their tolerance, respect and interactions with peers and adults. Leaders make sure that pupils understand democracy and have an equal opportunity to succeed through the school curriculum. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have ensured that their aims of providing pupils with a wide range of sporting activities and competitions have been met. They have used their primary school sport funding successfully to employ sports coaches. These coaches deliver sessions for pupils, both during and after the school day. This means that pupils enjoy a range of sporting opportunities at school. Those who are very able enjoy representing their school in competitions. Many clubs, such as gymnastics, are oversubscribed.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has reviewed its own performance, facilitated by external consultants, since the last inspection. It has learned how to assure itself that the school is performing well. Meetings of the full board are held termly. During these meetings, governors challenge the work of leaders effectively, using reports from senior leaders to inform their discussions. As a result, governors are effective at holding the school to account.
- The chair of the governing body has a good knowledge of the community served by the school. She is determined that pupils attending The Priory receive the best education possible and leave the school with the skills required to succeed in later life. She works closely with the headteacher to plan training opportunities for governors. This training is specifically designed to support them in understanding the work of the school and to help them provide constructive challenge to leaders.
- Governors know that targets are set for teachers to improve the quality of their work and the progress of the pupils they teach. There are close links between performance and salary rewards. Governors ask pertinent questions when weaker performance is identified. Minutes from meetings show that such questions are always answered clearly by senior leaders, with actions stated when it is appropriate to do so.
- Governors ensure that statutory duties are met, including safeguarding. Staff and governors attend timely safeguarding training. Governors then visit school and talk with staff to check if they understood the training and what it means for them in their daily work; for example, they discuss what staff might look out for as indicators of concern when on playground duty.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Parents are supported well in their work with their own children. For example, the school website contains a variety of links, including on how to stay safe when using the internet, which parents find useful.
- During the inspection, a variety of staff talked about their secure understanding of safeguarding and what they would do if they became concerned about a pupil. They appreciate the weekly discussions led by senior leaders which are designed to explore situations which staff might encounter in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good in all year groups. The headteacher and governors have made it a priority to recruit carefully, ensuring that new staff have the potential to develop excellent classroom skills. When new staff are appointed, they are supported well. This includes newly qualified teachers who have their own mentors. The teachers value these arrangements, which help them to identify what is working well in their classrooms and specific areas for improvement.
- Teachers are held to account by leaders for the progress of their pupils. Teachers know that they are expected to prepare for meetings in which pupils' progress is discussed. They reflect on the progress of disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make sufficient progress.
- In every classroom, pupils settle quickly to their work. This is because they know what they need to do, which often means reading their teachers' comments from previous lessons and responding. Time is not wasted. In Year 6, for example, pupils practised their spellings as soon as they came into their classroom after an assembly. Teachers now have high expectations in their classrooms and pupils rise to this challenge.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught well. Leaders encourage teachers to be flexible in how they deploy teaching assistants. This means that when pupils are working in groups, they may be taught by either a teacher or a teaching assistant. As a result, pupils do not become reliant on certain staff and quickly realise that they need to think for themselves.
- In the past, the teaching of reading has had some weaknesses and pupils' comprehension skills were underdeveloped. This is no longer the case. All pupils in key stages 1 and 2 now receive additional reading activities. Weaker readers are identified and receive extra support and time for additional reading. As a result of this focus, progress in reading has improved and was better last year than in previous years.
- Phonics is taught well, in both the early years and key stage 1. Teachers and teaching assistants use their good subject knowledge to question pupils and check that they have secured accurate pronunciation of sounds and spelling patterns. Inspectors heard pupils of different abilities read and found that they use their phonics skills well when decoding words in their reading books. The most able readers demonstrated their effective use of higher-level skills, such as deduction and prediction of what will happen next. This led to them gaining a deeper understanding of their books.
- Overall, mathematics is also taught well. The subject leader ensures that teachers provide pupils with a balance of calculation and problem-solving work. Good progress in this subject is evident over recent years. The most able mathematicians are challenged particularly well and are expected to think hard about their work. Learning for this group moves on speedily. Some pupils, however, and particularly those who have fallen behind in the past, still struggle at times. This is because teachers do not do enough to check that they have grasped key mathematical concepts before moving on to harder activities. For example, pupils with lower starting points in key stage 2 struggled with addition problems because they did not have a secure understanding of place value.

- Pupils make good progress in their writing in every year group. Grammar and punctuation skills are taught well. Pupils use these skills to write accurately for different purposes and audiences. Teachers give good attention to developing pupils' fluent handwriting skills and this has led to writing being presented more carefully in books. Although teachers ensure that pupils in key stage 1 have secure phonics skills, they do not check that pupils use these skills to spell common words with consistent accuracy in their writing. This restricts the progress that they make.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This is because staff understand pupils' needs and find ways to make them feel very safe and secure at school. Pupils say that they know who they can talk to if they are worried and that they do so whenever the need arises.
- Pupils are confident in their learning. They enjoy lessons and contribute by asking well-phrased questions. This helps their classmates think more deeply about their own ideas. This collaboration begins in the early years, where children settle immediately into the class environment and show curiosity in the topics they are learning about.
- During the inspection, pupils were asked to share their views about The Priory's strengths. Many pupils talked first about the caring attitude of the staff. This related to their academic development as well as to how staff support their physical and emotional well-being.
- Pupils understand the importance of being aware of the dangers of using the internet. Pupils read written statements about the dangers of being online and the impact of bullying, which are on display around the school. These prompt the pupils to think about what they would do in certain situations. Pupils articulate their responses well, showing a clear understanding of what not to do, as well as what to do.
- Bullying is very rare. This is because pupils put their school values into practice during the school day. They show empathy by looking out for one another and making sure that their interactions with other pupils are friendly and supportive. Staff are vigilant in their day-to-day work and ensure that, if they spot any potential form of discrimination, they support pupils in choosing to do the right thing. Surveys of pupils, parents and staff show that they feel pupils are very safe at The Priory.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils understand what the staff expect of them and step up to these expectations in classrooms, during lunch and when playing outside.
- Pupils' conduct and manners around the school are impeccable. They move around the school sensibly and are always aware of others. They show this by holding doors open for each other and for adults. On one occasion, an inspector asked a pupil about his views on behaviour. However, before the pupil would answer, he asked how the inspector was and if he was enjoying his visit to the school.
- Pupils' attendance has improved this year. The attendance rate for all pupils is now slightly above the national average. All different groups of pupils attend regularly,

including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff work tirelessly in supporting parents to ensure that their children attend school as regularly as they possibly can. Staff have implemented systems that enable them to engage well with parents. Punctuality has also improved this year when compared with the same period last year.

- Disruption in lessons is very rare. Pupils enjoy their learning and persevere when they find work challenging. If pupils do become distracted, teachers and support staff are quick to motivate them to concentrate on their tasks.
- Staff and pupils respect each other. They develop trusting relationships. For example, pupils attending the breakfast club start the day well by talking freely with friends and staff. At lunchtime, staff play with pupils and encourage activities such as skipping. Such positive relationships contribute to the school's caring ethos.
- The school's work in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is very effective. Pupils gain a comprehensive knowledge about people from other faiths and understand how cultures differ. For example, they learn about different festivals and foods. As a result, significant incidents, including racial discrimination, are very rare. Any such incidents are reported to governors, who check that leaders have investigated them thoroughly and resolved them appropriately.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress at The Priory. Last year, pupils made stronger progress than they did in previous years. Although yet to be confirmed, outcomes from the end of Year 6 assessments in 2016 indicate that pupils made close to average progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils also make good progress in other subjects. One example is physical education. As a result of funding, pupils are developing skills well in a range of sports. They enjoy playing sport, both with their peers and competitively with pupils from other schools.
- Since the previous inspection, most pupils have made stronger progress in writing and mathematics than in reading. Current assessment information shows that progress in reading has now strengthened. While progress rates in mathematics continue to be strong overall, a few pupils struggle to keep up because of gaps in their subject knowledge.
- Over the same period of time, disadvantaged pupils have performed well at The Priory. The difference between the attainment of these pupils and those of other pupils nationally has diminished.
- Disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics last year. The most able disadvantaged pupils made particularly strong progress because funding enabled staff to spend more time teaching this group of pupils. Teaching took place during the school day and in after-school clubs. The rate of progress was checked during the inspection by looking at pupils' work and school records that track pupils' progress.
- Pupils in key stage 1 now make good progress in reading. Their early language needs are addressed well in the early years. This work, coupled with the effective teaching of phonics in the Nursery, ensures that pupils do well in the Year 1 phonics screening check. The proportions of pupils meeting this expectation have been above the national figures for the past three years.

- Pupils' good progress in reading continues throughout key stage 2. Pupils of different abilities are supported effectively, with staff ensuring that they choose books that are suitably interesting and challenging.
- Pupils' progress in writing is good across the school. Pupils' secure grammar and understanding of how to use punctuation is the result of effective teaching of relevant skills. Pupils apply these skills well when writing in different subjects. Pupils in key stage 1, however, do not spell commonly used words accurately and this slows their progress.
- Pupils' overall progress and attainment in mathematics remain good. Pupils are expected to explain how they solved problems, and work in their books shows that they do this regularly. Nevertheless, at times some pupils do not fully understand the work they have been asked to do because they lack secure subject knowledge. This means they are sometimes unable to solve problems that require such knowledge, which holds them back.
- The most able pupils made good progress through the last academic year. This year they continue to do so, showing secure understanding of harder skills, particularly in reading. This is due to improvements in the teaching of this subject.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Clear action plans, with specific interventions led by different members of staff, are implemented with good effect. The school leader with responsibility for this group of pupils keeps a close check on progress and adjusts support as and when necessary.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years leader, together with her staff, ensures that children receive a good start to their education from day one at The Priory. At the time of the inspection, children in Reception had been in school for 11 days. They had already learned about daily routines and showed that they understood what is expected of them. They engaged well in all activities, eager to learn about different topics.
- Children make good progress from their different starting points, through both the Nursery and Reception Years. Many children enter the early years with skills that are lower than typical in most areas of learning. Children's communication and language skills are often weaker than those seen in other aspects of learning. Staff are quick to address these needs, making sure that the environment provides children with opportunities to acquire the language skills they need.
- When previous cohorts have left Reception, similar proportions of children to those seen nationally have reached a good level of development. Last year, the proportion was much higher than the national figure. In addition, disadvantaged children made similar rates of progress to their peers last year, reflecting the good use of additional funding by the school. All children are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Teaching is good. Adults share their observations about what children do each day and how well they are progressing. Teachers use this information to ensure that subsequent activities help children to develop skills in areas where they are less secure. Children behave well, quickly understanding what is expected of them and making sure that they do it.

- Leaders and staff ensure that children’s welfare is central to their work. They talk with parents every day and consider how they could make the early years environment even safer for the children. They also use knowledge gleaned from safeguarding training and work with external agencies to support individual children.
- The school is expanding. From the start of this academic year, a second Reception class has been created. This increase in numbers has been catered for effectively by the early years leader. The leader is aware of the importance of analysing the progress of different groups of children as they progress through the early years and into Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	131212
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10009278

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Holden
Headteacher	Phillip Butcher
Telephone number	0121 556 1383
Website	www.theprioryprimary.co.uk
Email address	schooloffice@theprioryprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The Priory is an average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years are taught in two part-time Nursery classes and two full-time Reception classes. The school is expanding to accommodate two forms of entry. Currently, all other year groups currently have one class for each year.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased since the previous inspection but remains below average.
- Approximately three quarters of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language has risen recently, but remains below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- A breakfast club runs every day and is managed by the governing body.
- There are two newly qualified teachers.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and visited small-group intervention sessions. They visited 14 lessons, three of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the chair of the governing body and other governors, staff and a local authority adviser. A survey of staff views was taken into account.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading and listened to higher- and lower-ability pupils read.
- Inspectors examined work in pupils' books.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documentation written to support school improvement, including minutes from meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors did not take account of Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire, as there were insufficient responses. Inspectors considered a parental survey conducted by the school and also spoke with parents.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's website.

Inspection team

Jeremy Bird, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Quinn	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Ashley	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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