

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



30 June 2017

Mrs Tracy Keefe  
Headteacher  
Priory Junior School  
Longsands Road  
St Neots  
Cambridgeshire  
PE19 1TF

Dear Mrs Keefe

### **Short inspection of Priory Junior School**

Following my visit to the school on 20 June 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2012.

#### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the previous inspection. You and your staff ensure that the classrooms and corridors are vibrant and welcoming. The high-quality displays of pupils' work, especially their art work and different aspects of writing, are a strength of the school. Your clear plan to 'be the best you can be', permeates through the school's calm and purposeful atmosphere.

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes in leadership and teaching staff. New and experienced staff use the professional development opportunities that you provide for them to improve their skills effectively. Leaders are more accountable for their roles and responsibilities and the impact of their work is clearly evident. You have ensured that leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, presentation of work and academic achievements. Teaching, learning and assessment are improving, which is enabling all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged and middle-attaining pupils, to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school. Staff morale is high and they are proud to be members of the school. One staff member commented the school has, 'a calm and supportive atmosphere where everyone is working towards improving progress for the children'.

Governors know the school's strengths and areas for development. They talk knowledgeably about the impact of the school's actions to improve teaching and learning, and pupils' outcomes. As a result, you, your leaders and governors have

good capacity to further improve the school.

Your pupils are very proud of their school. They show respect to each other and to all adults in the school. They behave well in lessons and around the school because of the high standards of behaviour that all staff expect of them. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their interesting learning, exciting educational visits and various sporting opportunities. You are rightly proud of the school's gold sports award and the success of the recent cross-country running event your staff organised, in which over 70 schools participated. Pupils I spoke with say they feel safe in school and that you provide many opportunities for them to learn about being safe. Year 5 pupils spoke enthusiastically about their recent trip to the fire station to learn about fire safety.

Parents are extremely positive about the school. They praised the support your staff provide for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents particularly appreciate the variety of clubs, the enriched learning opportunities and the 'Parent Do Days'. The latter enable parents and children to share learning experiences together, for example designing Escher patterns to support the understanding of tessellations. The views of many parents are summed up by one family's statement, 'Our children have been given great opportunities whatever their strengths and individual needs, bringing great success and academic achievement during their school-life'.

You are building strong professional links with local schools and learning centres to extend the development of leaders' and teachers' skills. This is resulting in greater learning opportunities for pupils. We observed your pupils working together with others from local schools, enthusiastically searching for historical artefacts using clues and map-reading skills, to produce a timeline. Additionally, these links are supporting pupils' smooth transition to your school from the local infant schools and to their secondary destinations at the end of Year 6.

Your focus on improving pupils' writing skills since the previous inspection has been successful, so that writing is now a strength of the school. In 2016, the progress your pupils made at the end of Year 6 was significantly above the national average and a greater proportion reached the higher standard. Pupils' books and displays show that they have many opportunities to improve their writing skills across the curriculum to deepen their understanding. This includes writing and research about the heart, rainforests and Ancient Egypt. However, there are fewer examples of cross-curricular opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts.

Currently, you are focusing on improving teaching and learning in mathematics and reading to improve pupils' progress and raise standards. You have successfully implemented new teaching and learning strategies, including various effective interventions to accelerate the progress pupils make. However, these new approaches have yet to help Year 6 pupils reach higher standards.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

As the designated safeguarding leader, you ensure that safeguarding records are well organised and detailed. You have effective systems in place for staff to report any concerns they may have regarding pupils' welfare. You work effectively with external agencies when required, and follow local authority protocols closely. Staff and governors have received appropriate safeguarding training and speak knowledgeably about issues relating to keeping pupils safe. Your safeguarding team and governors ensure that appropriate vetting checks take place before an adult takes up their post at the school.

The vast majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, believe that their child is safe and happy in school. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and are confident that an adult will listen to and support them if they have any concerns. To improve pupils' safety further, you have recently replaced areas of weak hedging around the school's perimeter with new security fencing.

You carefully monitor the attendance of pupils, which is above the national average. Pupils who have previously attended school less often than they should, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are improving their attendance. You work well with parents on this issue, ensuring that parents understand the positive effect of regular attendance on pupils' learning.

## **Inspection findings**

- In order to check whether the school remains good, my first key line of enquiry explored how well leaders are improving pupils' achievement in mathematics. This is because in 2016 at the end of Year 6, too few pupils reached age-related expectations and progress was lower than the national average. Additionally, middle-attaining pupils and girls did not do as well as others nationally. I wanted to check that pupils currently on roll are making better progress and improvements are sustainable.
- Leaders and teachers are receiving effective mathematics training to ensure that they plan learning that helps all groups of pupils to make at least good progress. Teachers are using new approaches to successfully develop pupils' reasoning and skills in arithmetic. We observed teachers using appropriate questioning to encourage pupils to explain their answers with the correct mathematical terminology. Pupils' work in their books and the school's assessment systems confirm the good progress current pupils are making in mathematics, enabling all groups, including disadvantaged pupils, middle-attaining pupils and girls, to make good progress. This is increasing the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard across the school. However, we saw few opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills across a range of subjects to deepen their understanding; this contrasts with the effective opportunities provided for pupils to improve their writing.
- I also investigated reading across the school. This is because in 2016, Year 6 pupils, especially the boys, made less progress than others nationally. You have

ensured that leaders have quickly raised the profile of reading across the school. Teachers have restructured how they listen to pupils read and question their understanding of a variety of difficult texts. Reading books capture the interest of boys and girls. Year 6 boys spoke enthusiastically about their class text related to spies. These new approaches are supporting both boys and girls to make better progress from their starting points, which is enabling more pupils to reach age-related expectations in all year groups. Additionally, the new stimulating library and exciting reading areas in classrooms are encouraging pupils to read for pleasure. I listened to Year 6 boys read, and they read their texts with fluency and understanding.

- Another line of enquiry I pursued was how well you and your governors spend the school's pupil premium funding, to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make the best possible progress from their starting points. This is because in 2016, Year 6 disadvantaged pupils did less well than others nationally. We also discussed the rate of absence of these pupils, which was in the highest 10% nationally.
- You and your staff quickly identify the challenges faced by these pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants provide appropriate classroom support and interventions to ensure that these pupils now make at least good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. We saw evidence of these pupils' good progress when checking their work in books and information from the school's assessment system. The combination of appropriate academic support and, where required, counselling, is improving disadvantaged pupils' progress, social skills and behaviour. Additionally, you check the attendance of disadvantaged pupils, closely working with parents to improve their child's attendance. As a result, the pupil premium funding is spent effectively.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- the implementation of new approaches in reading and mathematics improves teaching and learning so that pupils make consistently good and better progress to raise standards in these subjects across the school over time.
- pupils are provided with more opportunities to apply their mathematics skills in a range of subjects to further deepen their knowledge and understanding so that a greater proportion reach the higher standard.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Cambridgeshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Julie Harrison  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

- I met with you, other leaders, governors and an external adviser.
- I listened to Year 6 pupils reading and spoke with a group of pupils.
- I looked at a range of documentation including information about the school's self-evaluation and plans for future improvement.
- I examined policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils, including the school's single central record of pre-employment checks.
- I visited all classrooms with the headteacher, to observe pupils' learning and scrutinise the work in pupils' books.
- I took account of the views of 25 staff, 30 pupils and 71 parents who responded to Ofsted's online surveys. Parental views from the free-text service and a letter from a parent were also considered.