

Priory School

Beatrice Avenue, Whippingham, Isle of Wight PO32 6LP

Inspection dates

22–24 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The proprietor has built a caring school with pupils' needs at its heart. Staff have high expectations of pupils and of what they are able to achieve.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are outstanding. Staff care for and support pupils exceptionally well. The school has a family atmosphere and pupils thrive. Safeguarding is effective.
- Leaders have ensured that the rich curriculum is supplemented by a wide variety of clubs, visiting speakers and trips.
- Pupils' attitude to the school is impressive. They are keen to learn and proud of their school.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching is effective so that current pupils make strong progress. Teachers are passionate about their subject and inspire pupils. However, the quality of teaching is variable in the junior section of the school, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils' attendance is not high enough.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the support and education that their child receives. The vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire would recommend the school to others.
- Children make an excellent start to their learning in Reception. They make outstanding progress due to first-rate teaching and an inspirational curriculum.
- There are too few sixth-form students to comment about trends in outcomes over time, although students achieved well above national averages in 2017. They receive good preparation for their future.
- Leaders have not monitored the success of their improvement plans sharply enough.
- Those responsible for governance are suitably experienced and skilled and make sure that the school complies with the independent school standards. The proprietor is strengthening governance arrangements so that the leadership of the school is sustainable into the future.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, especially in mathematics in the junior school, by:
 - ensuring that teachers' questions find out what pupils know and what they can do, adjusting plans accordingly
 - making sure that pupils do not spend too long completing tasks on skills that they have already mastered.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders monitor sharply the outcomes of their actions
 - those responsible for governance keep a close eye on trends over time of the progress and attendance of groups of pupils
 - the proprietor continues with plans to strengthen governance arrangements.
- Improve attendance of pupils across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The proprietor, who is also the principal, has made sure that all staff put children at the centre of the school's work. The strong leadership team shares the proprietor's vision to ensure that standards of education are high. As a result, there are high expectations set for staff and pupils. Leaders are uncompromising in their aim to ensure that pupils get the best education possible.
- The staff at the school say they enjoy their work and morale is high. They feel that leaders support them well. Leaders monitor the work of their staff effectively. They observe teachers' lessons and scrutinise pupils' work to ensure that levels of teaching meet requirements. At senior school level, monitoring of teachers' performance is highly effective but it is not replicated at junior level in similar depth. As a consequence, teaching standards and outcomes vary in quality across the age ranges.
- The vast majority of parents have a high regard for the school. Staff at all levels strive to make good relationships with pupils' families. A number of parents have moved their children to the school from other settings and stated that their children are thriving and making good progress. A parent, one of many who made positive comments responding to the Ofsted questionnaire, said, 'Every single teacher has gone above and beyond to meet our child's needs.'
- Leaders have developed an exceptionally rich and varied curriculum. Leaders encourage pupils' deep interest in their work by supplementing the curriculum with many trips. Pupils in Year 6 spoke with enthusiasm about a recent residential trip to York to learn about the Vikings. Pupils take part in trips to places of interest locally and further afield, including in foreign visits so that they have a wide appreciation of life outside of their own vicinity.
- Leaders supplement the physical education curriculum with a range of competitive sport clubs. Pupils participate well in rugby, football, hockey and athletics among other sports.
- The proprietor has made a valuable link with the local authority to find out about good practice in other schools. Local authority advice and guidance have helped leaders to strengthen safeguarding arrangements at the school.
- Leaders regularly make plans to improve the school and carry them out diligently. However, leaders do not measure the success of their actions sharply enough. While the school provides a good level of education for its pupils, there are some areas of comparative weakness, such as the overall level of attendance, which are not picked up quickly enough.

Governance

- The proprietor has developed governance through an executive committee that has among its members several independent and skilled individuals. They meet regularly to review the work of the school. Minutes of meetings do not reflect a high level of challenge to school leaders regarding pupils' progress or their attendance. For example, analysis of different groups of pupils, such as pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is not explored and trends cannot therefore be identified.

- The proprietor is reviewing the leadership and governance structure that will enable the school to have a sustainable leadership model into the future. There is still work to do to strengthen governance arrangements so that the school continues to improve.
- The proprietor has ensured that the independent school standards are met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. The school has taken into account current government legislation to produce a suitable safeguarding policy that is published on the school website.
- Safeguarding is effective because staff know the pupils so well. Leaders have made sure that staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures. Staff know what to do should they have a concern about a child. Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Detailed chronological records of all communications and the outcome of any actions that have been taken are kept, as is required.
- The proprietor makes sure that all statutory pre-employment checks are made. These checks are recorded systematically on a single central register.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They get to know their pupils very well. Mostly plans are adapted to meet the starting points of pupils so that they are provided with the right level of challenge. Planning to meet pupils' needs is more consistent in the senior school and sixth form than in the junior section.
- The teaching of English in the senior school is highly effective. Teachers expect pupils to write with grammatical accuracy. Teaching identifies precisely what pupils need to do next to improve their writing. As a result, teaching inspires pupils and they are keen to read and write with confidence.
- Similarly, mathematics teaching in the senior school is carefully planned and challenges pupils well. Teaching deepens pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts successfully. Pupils are provided with opportunity to talk about their understanding and apply their knowledge to solve real-life mathematical problems. This motivates pupils well and they make good progress.
- In the lower junior school, teaching does not result in fast rates of progress, especially in mathematics. Pupils' work shows that sometimes banks of questions are repeated which do not provide sufficient challenge. Teaching does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to explore their understanding through reasoning and applying their knowledge to solve challenging problems.
- Teachers have developed a positive learning environment across all age ranges. Working relationships between staff and pupils are strong and all pupils focus on learning. Teachers encourage pupils and provide support when needed. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well with individual help and by tackling work at a pace to suit their learning patterns.

- Because of teachers' good subject knowledge, teaching across the curriculum develops pupils' subject-specific skills effectively. In art, teaching develops pupils' skills well and they apply them creatively and independently in the senior school. Teaching in science is very effective, providing challenging activities including practical investigations. The humanities subjects provide a plethora of opportunities for debate and discussion.
- The teaching of literacy is developed well across the curriculum. Pupils are required to write at length in subjects other than English, especially in the humanity subjects. Typically, teachers support pupils to write with accuracy in all subjects.
- Pupils are highly appreciative of their teachers. Parents also say their children are taught well.
- While pupils are eager to talk to their teachers to clarify their understanding, occasionally teachers' questions do not find out what pupils understand and can do. As a result, at times, pupils are ready to move on to more difficult work earlier than the teacher realises.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning. They are proud of their school and are keen to do well. Older pupils, including those in the sixth form, support younger pupils well. The school has a family atmosphere and pupils thrive. A pupil representing the views of many said, 'I love it here, we get lots of support.'
- Pupils are looked after exceptionally well. Staff make sure that the well-being of pupils is put at the forefront of all they do. Daily morning briefings provide an effective forum for staff to share and discuss any concerns they have about pupils. As a result, any remedial action needed to support pupils is taken swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure. They are able to explain how the school helps them to keep safe. Pupils explain that bullying happens rarely because of the caring ethos of the school. Pupils also say that should they have a concern, teachers resolve issues quickly and successfully.
- Pupils benefit from an effective programme of personal, social, health and economic education. Speakers are invited to the school regularly so that pupils learn about others' lives. They develop empathy and understand what it is like to live in modern Britain.
- As a result of the excellent standards of care and welfare, the school is a peaceful and calm haven. An overwhelming majority of parents commented in Ofsted's questionnaire that their children are happy at school and cared for well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, courteous to staff, each other and visitors. There is a high degree of respect for others. Pupils are self-disciplined and support each other to behave well.
- The proprietor, leaders and staff all have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Systems

to monitor behaviour are developed well. Pupils behave respectfully and responsibly during lessons and breaktimes. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare.

- Leaders do not monitor trends in attendance over time so they are unable to find out about rates of attendance for groups of pupils. Current records for this academic year indicate that that pupils miss on average half a day's education a fortnight.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Teachers find out about pupils' starting points when they join the school. Current pupils make good progress across the age ranges and across subjects. This is reflected in the school's assessment information and confirmed when looking at pupils' work.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress. Extra support for those that fall behind is well planned and effective. Staff provide helpful guidance and cajole pupils should they feel despondent about their progress. As a result, these pupils also make steady progress.
- At the end of the senior school, pupils take a wide range of GCSE examinations. Pupils make consistently strong progress in their courses and many achieve top grades in their GCSE examinations. There are too few pupils to compare year-on-year performance. All pupils go on to post-16 courses including the school sixth form.
- Teachers track pupils' progress rigorously, especially in the senior school and sixth form. This enables any misconceptions to be identified and pupils are helped to catch up if their progress stalls.
- Teaching encourages pupils to read for a variety of purposes. Pupils' reading skills are developed well in the infant and junior age groups. Staff use the messages in a range of books as a basis for discussion and assemblies. Pupils across all age groups read widely and often.
- In recent years, there have been too few pupils in the school's sixth form to comment on trends or patterns in their achievements. In 2017, students performed well above national averages in their A-level examinations. When they left the school, they all went on to further study at higher education establishments.
- Pupils' work shows that they make weaker progress in the lower juniors in their numeracy skills. This is because teaching does not meet pupils' needs precisely enough.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leadership and management of early years are outstanding. The provision provides an exceptionally rich curriculum and meets every child's learning needs very well. Children are very well cared for and thrive in this positive environment. All the independent school standards are met relating to early years provision.
- Children in the early years show a great enthusiasm for learning. Because the wide-ranging curriculum inspires them, they are eager to explore and investigate the world around them. At the time of the inspection, pupils barely contained their excitement as the teacher prepared them to visit a farm. Pupils' enthusiasm is captured skilfully so that they are motivated to take on challenges in learning.

- The provision leader develops strong working relationships with the families of children in her care. Parents speak exceedingly positively about the education that their child receives in Reception.
- Pupils' emotional development and understanding of other pupils' feelings are developed very well. Should there be a social issue at playtime, teaching is adjusted immediately to allow pupils to speak about how to get on together. In this way, pupils learn at an early age how to interact with others successfully.
- The learning environment is enriched with an interactive outside learning space. Pupils are provided with choices, using indoor and outside spaces to explore and deepen their understanding across a range of curriculum areas.
- Teaching is highly effective, with every opportunity seized to reinforce children's early literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils' achievements are tracked meticulously and activities adjusted so that children make rapid progress.
- Phonics is taught successfully throughout the early years. Pupils are proud to practise their early writing skills. Children brim with delight when asked to read to adults and relish the opportunity to demonstrate their new skills.
- The quality of leadership and teaching is very effective which results in outstanding outcomes. Early years is the strongest area of the school's provision because teaching provides exactly the right support and challenge to each pupil. Pupils are very well prepared for transition to Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	118225
DfE registration number	921/6041
Inspection number	10020826

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Edmund Matyjaszek
Headteacher	Edmund Matyjaszek
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,690–£9,000
Telephone number	01983 861222
Website	www.prioryschool.org.uk
Email address	mail@prioryschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 December 2012

Information about this school

- Priory School is an independent day school for pupils from the ages of four to 18 years. It opened in 1993. At the beginning of 2012, the school moved premises from its previous site in Shanklin on the Isle of Wight. It is now situated in Whippingham in a Victorian school building which has undergone refurbishment and extension.
- The school is registered for 160 pupils. It currently has 151 pupils on roll, three of whom are in the sixth form.
- This is the school's fourth Ofsted inspection. The previous inspection was in December 2012 and was judged as good.
- The proprietor is also the principal. The school's governance arrangements consist of a

strategic executive committee, which includes the proprietor, senior staff and other suitably qualified persons.

- The school states on its website that it is non-denominational although run with a Christian ethos.

Information about this inspection

- Meetings were held with the proprietor, senior staff, the designated safeguarding lead and two further groups of staff. Inspectors received 20 responses from staff to Ofsted's questionnaire.
- The lead inspector had a discussion with a non-staff member of the strategic executive committee, which carries out the function of governance. The lead inspector also spoke with two members of the local authority.
- Pupils and staff were observed working in lessons and around the school. Pupils' work from a range of subjects was scrutinised. Inspectors spoke with three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with parents on the school gate and over the telephone. Inspectors took account of 57 responses from parents to Ofsted's questionnaire.
- A number of documents and policies were scrutinised, including the school improvement plan, safeguarding documents, and minutes from meetings.
- The inspectors reviewed the school's website.

Inspection team

Sue Child, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gerard Strong

Ofsted Inspector

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