

# Inspection of Priory Primary School, Bicknacre

Bicknacre Road, Bicknacre, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 4ES

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Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Happy, friendly relationships are at the heart of this school. Pupils trust the adults in the school to listen to them and to help them when they need it. Older pupils are kind and considerate with younger pupils. They encourage them to join in with games at breaktimes. Bullying is rare. Pupils across the school are confident that adults will stop any unkind behaviour.

Most pupils behave well. In most classes, routines and clear expectations help pupils to know what they need to do. Occasionally, some children in early years lose their focus or forget how they are expected to behave. Adults do not spot or correct this quickly enough.

Pupils generally settle well to their learning when tasks are clearly taught. They practise new skills together and encourage each other. When tasks are less clearly explained, some pupils can be slow to start their work.

Children in early years learn to care for each other and the environment. Pupils grow flowers and crops in the school garden. They develop their talents through clubs, such as those for football and choir. Some pupils and their parents and carers would welcome more opportunities for pupils to broaden their interests through trips and clubs.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders have been working to develop an ambitious curriculum. Plans, and the training to put these in place well, are more developed in some subjects than in others.

In some subjects, teachers understand what pupils need to learn and how this will build on what they already know. In these subjects, teachers have the expertise to check regularly what pupils understand. They adjust their lessons so that everyone can keep up. Teachers provide extra explanations and equipment to help pupils to understand new or more challenging ideas. In these subjects, pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well.

In other subjects and in early years, the curriculum is less well developed. Teachers are not clear enough about what pupils already know and what they need to learn next. As a result, they do not always teach new subject knowledge clearly, check how well pupils are mastering new learning, nor provide well-focused support for those pupils who need it.

The phonics curriculum is clearly organised and set out. However, not all adults have had the training and support they need to put these plans in place as intended, including in early years. Regular checks enable most teachers to spot any pupils who are falling behind. Extra help is put in place so that pupils can revise and practise key learning. Older pupils enjoy the books shared by their teachers in regular story

times and class reading sessions. Pupils develop their reading comprehension and fluency as they move through the school. Most pupils are ready for the reading demands of the next stage of their education.

Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is developing. Most pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers in class. Adults know pupils well and help them to join in. A few pupils have bespoke support outside the classrooms. Leaders are persistent in obtaining external advice for pupils with high levels of need. They have organised extra training to increase staff expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND.

Breaktimes are happy and appropriately energetic. Pupils readily select equipment to play together. They explain the rules and systems in place and say that these are fair. Pupils line up and move around the school calmly. In lessons, most pupils behave well. They listen to their teachers and to each other politely.

Pupils are welcoming and tolerant. They learn to keep themselves healthy, both physically and mentally. Pupils have many opportunities to learn how to stay safe when online. They learn about developing kind, respectful relationships. Older pupils appreciate the guidance of their teachers in resolving disputes. Pupils raise funds for national and local charities. Some pupils take part in musical or sporting events beyond the classroom.

Staff appreciate leaders' concern for their well-being. They form a mutually supportive team. Teachers choose to undertake research to improve and develop their practice. However, systems for leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, the curriculum or support for pupils with SEND are not well developed.

Many governors are new to their roles. They are aware that previously, they have relied too much on limited sources of information to evaluate the school's effectiveness. Governors are correctly prioritising their actions but are aware that there is more to do to develop their strategic role and to secure the confidence of some parents.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to identify any signs that pupils and their families need help or may be at risk of harm. Leaders work in partnership with vulnerable families and external agencies to keep pupils safe.

Leaders have ensured that safer recruitment procedures are followed when appointing adults to work in the school. Appropriate checks are in place and accurately recorded.

Pupils know what they must do to alert adults to any worries or concerns. Through the curriculum, pupils learn to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when online.

Leaders are aware that systems to record safeguarding actions have not been adequately followed and maintained. They have taken rapid action to address this.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some areas of the curriculum, planning does not set out clearly enough what pupils need to know and how they will develop their subject knowledge and understanding over time. Teachers do not always have the expertise to check pupils' understanding and to adjust provision where this is needed. Therefore, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that, across all subjects, teachers have clearly set-out plans and the training they need to put these plans in place well.
- Some leaders of subjects and for inclusion have not had the time and training to check how well their curriculum is being taught and whether all pupils learn successfully. These leaders do not consistently know where extra support or training for staff is required to ensure that pupils achieve well. Senior leaders should ensure that all leaders have the expertise and time to carry out their roles effectively.
- In early years, provision across the curriculum is not consistently well matched to children's needs. Where the most important learning is less precisely presented, some children lose focus and achieve less well. Leaders should ensure that staff have the expertise to teach and assess the early years curriculum effectively across all areas of learning.
- Following a period of change that resulted in some turbulence, some parents lack confidence in the school's leadership. Many governors have joined recently, and while they are strengthening their effectiveness, they have had insufficient oversight of the curriculum and the implementation of systems for safeguarding and behaviour. Leaders should ensure that the school's processes are implemented as agreed and that leaders' actions are understood by all members of the school community. Governors should establish clear systems to check that these are consistently in place and fit for purpose.
- Systems to record actions for safeguarding have not been consistently maintained. The resulting gaps make it hard for leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of actions or to identify any patterns that require further investigation. Leaders should ensure that all records are accurate and completed promptly.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115000
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10287087
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	182
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Julie Gilligan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachael Plunkett
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.priory.essex.sch.uk">www.priory.essex.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Leaders do not currently use any providers of off-site, alternative education.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with school leaders, governors, subject leaders and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, art and computing. For each deep dive, the inspectors spoke with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and other staff to discuss safeguarding in the school.
- The inspectors considered the 62 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 49 free-text comments. The inspectors also considered the 12 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey and the 17 responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey.
- The inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil at this school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils at breaktimes and around the school.

### **Inspection team**

Lynne Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Mireille MacRaid

His Majesty’s Inspector

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