

# Inspection of a good school: Priory Fields School

Astor Avenue, Dover, Kent CT17 0FS

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 May 2024

## Outcome

Priory Fields School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Casey Hall. This school is part of The Whinless Down Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Kelly Brown, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alison Mackintosh.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy learning, behave well and are happy and confident at this welcoming school. One parent, reflecting the views of others, commented: 'There is always a friendly smiling face to greet every pupil when they arrive at school, which surely sets them up in a positive frame of mind at the start of the day.'

Pupils know and demonstrate the values of the school, which are represented by 'aspirational ant', 'adventurous aardvark', 'respectful rabbit', 'open-minded octopus', 'collaborative cat', 'responsible raccoon' and 'happy hippo'. These values shine through in pupils' attitudes to work and play and stand them in great stead for later life.

Inclusion runs through all aspects of school life. The school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve, whatever their starting points, and the majority of pupils learn well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), other disadvantaged pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Pupils' well-being and safety are paramount. Positive and trusting relationships between staff and pupils mean that all pupils know they are safe and well cared for. Pupils are respectful and have a strong sense of acceptance of the differences between pupils from different backgrounds and with different needs.

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

The school has designed a broad and ambitious curriculum for all pupils. It is equally ambitious for the many pupils with SEND, other disadvantaged pupils and pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language as it is for all others. In all subjects,

there is a clear sequence for learning important knowledge, skills and vocabulary from Reception to Year 6. The school identifies the needs of pupils accurately. Appropriate adaptations and skilled support ensure all pupils have equal opportunities to learn. There is a strong focus on ensuring that children in Reception rapidly develop the knowledge and skills they need to be ready to continue learning in Year 1. Actions taken as a result of a curriculum review and the trust's teaching and learning strategy have led to improved achievement for pupils, following below-average outcomes in 2023 at the end of key stage 2.

Reading is a high priority. Starting in Reception, children learn to read through a well-structured phonics programme and plenty of opportunities to listen to and enjoy books and stories. They learn phonics skills well and read books that match the sounds they know. Those who are struggling are given additional support to catch up and develop fluency. Pupils are introduced to a carefully chosen wide range of high-quality texts and are encouraged to read widely and often. Reading for enjoyment is promoted successfully throughout the school.

Pupils' current work show that most are learning and achieving well. Teachers have secure knowledge about the subjects they teach. Teachers explain ideas clearly and model new learning accurately. The trust's approach to teaching and learning has the aim of ensuring that all children are being taught the right thing at the right time. The school has rightly identified that this could be more effective and consistent. Importantly, checking and addressing pupils' misconceptions does not always happen as well as it could. This means that some pupils are not achieving as well as they might. Additionally, the school is rightly aware that the quality of the presentation of pupils' work and their handwriting is not consistently high enough.

The school is highly committed to ensuring that pupils' horizons and experiences are broadened through a range of trips, visitors to school and a range of clubs. The school makes very good use of the local and wider area to expose pupils to cultural experiences and activities. Pupils who sometimes have difficulty in expressing and managing their emotions and behaviour in appropriate ways are supported very effectively.

Improving pupils' attendance is a high priority for the school. The school works with unwavering determination, doing all it can to identify and addresses barriers to pupils' attendance and provide support to pupils and their families. While these actions have resulted in some improvements, there are still too many pupils who do not attend regularly, meaning they miss out on vital learning.

The staff are a strong team who are happy and proud to work at the school. They appreciate the consideration given to their workload and well-being and feel well supported, including those at the start of their careers. Trust leaders and governors know the school very well and ensure that all responsibilities are carried out effectively. They work closely with the school to continue to make improvements, providing effective support and challenge.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- The school's agreed teaching and learning approaches are not always consistently implemented. Misconceptions are not always identified or addressed effectively and gaps in learning remain. Therefore, some pupils do not always achieve as well as they can. The school should have careful oversight of the implementation and ensure that gaps are being addressed so that outcomes are consistently the best they can be.
- Some pupils are not yet attending school as regularly as they could. As a result, they are missing out on crucial learning. The school should continue to work with parents to support improvement in the attendance of these pupils.
- Pupils' handwriting and presentation skills are not always of a high quality. The school should ensure that there are consistently high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work and their handwriting across the curriculum subjects.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2018.

### 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	143073
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322018
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	358
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Alison Mackintosh
<b>CEO of trust</b>	Kelly Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Casey Hall
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.prioryfields.kent.sch.uk">www.prioryfields.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Whinless Down Academy Trust. There are two other local primary schools in the trust.
- There have been a number of changes in leadership since the previous inspection.
- The headteacher was appointed as an interim headteacher in September 2023 and became the substantive headteacher in April 2024.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of the school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher and the assistant headteachers. The inspector met with subject leaders and many staff.
- The inspector met with the CEO of the trust and the trust school improvement leader. She also met with the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the local governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector looked at curriculum information for a range of other subjects. The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness, priorities for improvement, trust and external reviews. She also looked at information relating to behaviour, attendance and SEND.
- The views of staff and pupils were gathered through both formal and informal discussions. The views of parents were gathered through parents' responses to Ofsted Parent View and free-text comments as well as the school's own parental surveys. The inspector also spoke to some parents at the beginning of the school day.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

### **Inspection team**

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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