

Inspection of Priory Primary School

Greyfriars, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 1JD

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| Inspection dates: | 5 and 6 November 2024 |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Outstanding |

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since May 2014. The school received a monitoring inspection under section 8 of the Act in June 2018. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff know and respect pupils at Priory Primary School. Pupils feel welcome when they arrive at different times in the school year. The majority of pupils speak English as an additional language. The school celebrates the diversity in its community.

Despite pupils' different starting points, the school sets high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Pupils progress through the curriculum and benefit from a wide range of additional opportunities.

Pupils are polite and kind to their peers, helping each other in lessons and in the playground. A range of games and activities take place at playtime led by pupil leaders. Older pupils act as positive role models to younger peers. Pupils' behaviour is strong. Pupils know the importance of learning and generally show positive attitudes to learning in class.

There are a wide range of clubs and activities on offer for all. Pupils enjoy sports, art and musical clubs. Pupils revel in the chance to be school councillors and learning ambassadors. Trips, including an annual visit to Germany, significantly broaden pupils' horizons. Pupils experience things they might not be able to access elsewhere. Priory Primary School is a truly inclusive community.

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

The school has done a lot of work to improve the quality of education. However, the most recent published outcomes do not currently reflect the quality of education at this school. The school checks pupils' knowledge and skills on arrival. Well-planned support is then given to help pupils form their various starting points. Teachers adapt their teaching to ensure it meets the needs of pupils and takes into account what pupils know and remember. While this is the case, pupils who join the school at different times of the school year often do not reach the expected levels of attainment at the end of key stage 2. In contrast to this, pupils who attend the school from early years achieve well.

The school has designed an appropriate curriculum for its pupils. Many pupils do not have real-life experience to draw upon in acquiring new knowledge over time. The curriculum is, therefore, built around experiences. Pupils use these to develop their learning over time. For example, pupils visit Warwick Castle at the beginning of their history unit. This is then the basis for what pupils learn through the castle topic that follows.

Children make a positive start in early years. The early years curriculum is carefully designed to support children's ability to learn and play effectively. Children focus successfully on learning tasks. Planned activities are meaningful and adults interact positively with the children to understand their needs and further their learning. As a result, children make strong progress from starting points, which are typically behind where you would expect.

The development of pupils' communication and language skills are a priority at this school. Children are successfully taught to develop their spoken language. This begins in the Nursery Year. Pupils learn to speak confidently in full sentences. The school ensures early reading is central to the school's curriculum. Trained staff deliver the planned phonics programme effectively. Many pupils become confident fluent readers. Equally, when pupils join the school, they receive bespoke support to develop their early language and reading skills. As a result, in time, most pupils become competent readers.

In contrast, pupils' writing skills are not as well developed. Across the curriculum, the school does not always set clear enough expectations or offer pupils enough opportunities to write. This means that some pupils do not develop their ability to write accurately and at length. As a result, some pupils do not communicate what they know through writing as well as they might.

The curriculum is typically taught effectively. Pupils learn subject-specific knowledge and vocabulary over time. Adults revisit key concepts with pupils to help them to learn and remember things. Adults check pupils' learning and adjust lessons if pupils find something difficult. As a result, pupils are generally successful in learning the planned curriculum. However, on occasion, the curriculum is not delivered as effectively. Sometimes, the activity pupils complete does not help pupils learn the planned content because it is not focused on what pupils need to know. When this occurs, pupils develop some gaps in their knowledge.

Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn the same curriculum as their peers. However, where necessary, pupils with SEND receive additional, tailored support so that they learn a curriculum that is right for them.

Positive relationships between pupils and adults are central to the way pupils behave. Adults set clear expectations and model warm, polite, and respectful interactions with pupils. Pupils respond positively to this. In class, if a pupil loses focus, adults bring pupils back to their learning quickly and effectively.

The school supports the wider development of pupils and their families very effectively. Pupils respect and value the many cultures and beliefs in their school and know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils' personal development is also supported by the work the school does with their parent community. Breakfast and homework provision is provided for pupils and their families. Parents attend alongside their children and learn together. Parents fully appreciate the inclusive culture this creates.

Governors champion the way leaders support pupils' wider development but also recognise the need to improve standards further. They are now monitoring more effectively. The workload and well-being of staff are carefully considered. This means changes and improvements are sustained. Staff are proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is some variation in the way the curriculum is delivered. As a result, some knowledge is not taught to pupils as clearly as it could be. This means some pupils do not retain their learning as well as they might. Leaders need to keep developing their strategic approach to teaching and monitoring the curriculum at all levels.
- The school does not always suitably prioritise pupils' writing across the curriculum. This means some pupils do not develop the fluency and stamina to share their learning through writing effectively. The school needs to provide further opportunities and clearer expectations so that pupils write effectively across all areas of the curriculum.

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

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| Unique reference number | 109436 |
| Local authority | Bedford |
| Inspection number | 10345081 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 205 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Carolyn Stebbings |
| Headteacher | Juliet Fraser |
| Website | www.prioryprimary.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 30 June 2018 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. |

Information about this school

- The school is part of the LEAP Community Trust. This is a group of three primary schools within the local area that work together and support each other.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. The lead inspector heard pupils read to a member of staff.
- The inspectors reviewed examples of pupils writing from across different curriculum subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: 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.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including attendance records, pupil records, records of governing body meetings, school development plans and school self-evaluation documents.
- The inspectors observed pupils’ behaviour around the school and during breaktimes.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents through responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View and conversations during the inspection.
- The inspectors gathered the views of pupils and staff through Ofsted’s pupil and staff surveys, as well as discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Jonny Wallace, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Rachel Kirk

Ofsted Inspector

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