

Priestmead Middle School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102195
Local Authority	Harrow
Inspection number	286304
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Barry Jones

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Middle deemed primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	8–12
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	371
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Savage
Headteacher	Mr Brian Robertson
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002
School address	Hartford Avenue Kenton Harrow HA3 8SZ
Telephone number	020 8907 2768
Fax number	020 8909 1603

Age group	8–12
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves an area that is more advantaged than most. It has a higher proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds than in the great majority of schools. A higher proportion speak English as an additional language than in most schools. Attainment on entry to school is above average. The proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school during the course of a year is low in Years 4 to 6 but higher in Year 7. Over the last two years, three out of five members of the senior leadership and other key teachers have had extended periods of absence through serious ill health. During these periods the headteacher has taken on extra responsibilities to cover for absent colleagues.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Priestmead Middle is a good school. It is emerging from a turbulent period during which it has maintained pupils' high standards and provided good care. This has been possible because the headteacher has carried a very heavy load. He has shown excellent leadership in steering the school through difficult times but inevitably some aspects of management have not received full attention.

Standards on entry to the school are above average. By the time that pupils leave at the end of Year 7 standards are well above average. Consequently, achievement is good overall but the progress made by pupils is not even through the school. It is satisfactory in Year 4 and the school should develop further its close working with its feeder first schools to ensure smooth continuity of experience on transfer into the school. Progress is very good in Years 6 and 7 because of a high proportion of outstanding teaching. Some pupils do not do as well as they should in mathematics in Key Stage 2. The school has not been able to fully determine the reason for this slower progress because there have been weaknesses in the use of data to monitor pupils' progress. The school has considerably strengthened the monitoring of work in mathematics and there are signs of improved provision. In 2006, some pupils with learning difficulties made slower progress than their classmates. This was because the management of the support was one of the many roles taken on by the headteacher who could not give it the amount of dedicated time that it merits. This has been rectified in the restructuring of management roles and this aspect is now managed well.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and some aspects are outstanding. Relationships in the school are excellent. This stems from the good role models set by adults and through the excellent provision for personal and social education. The curriculum is outstanding and is enriched by a wide range of sporting and musical opportunities. As a result, pupils greatly enjoy school, their behaviour is excellent and they have an excellent understanding of healthy living issues. This is also reflected in the response of parents who are very appreciative of the school's efforts. One parent summed this up, 'My children have had a brilliant start to their education and they have grown into happy, confident children.'

Partnerships are strong generally. The school has successfully reviewed and strengthened its management structure. Pastoral guidance continues to be very good. Academic monitoring has not developed as quickly because the leadership team was under strength but this is now being corrected. Apart from this, the school has a good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- Ensure that the progress made by pupils is monitored rigorously and that intervention is timely.
- Work with feeder first schools to ensure that pupils continue to make good progress when they move between schools.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are consistently above average in English, mathematics and science in the national tests at the end of Year 6. In 2005, the value added by the school was good. In 2006, much of the school's energy was devoted to implementing national policies for reviewing teaching and learning responsibilities. Given the gaps in the leadership team, this stretched the school's capacity to the limit. As a result, there was a dip in performance in 2006, the school narrowly missed its targets and value added was only satisfactory. A small minority of Black Caribbean pupils did not make the progress they should. The school has reviewed provision and is now participating in a relevant national project and this group of pupils is now back on track. Progress has been consistently very good in Years 6 and 7. Achievement is also consistently good in all year groups in physical education and drama.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school encourages the pupils to be reflective and to be considerate to others. As a result the school is a very harmonious community. Pupils are frequently consulted about all aspects of school life. The active school council play an important part in this process and say that their views are valued. For instance, the school council asked the governors to refurbish the toilets and this was done. In 2005/6, the poor behaviour of a very small minority of pupils affected the attitudes and learning of other pupils. This in turn took up a disproportionate amount of staff time, including that of senior managers. Effective action has been taken and behaviour is now excellent. The pupils are encouraged to share their concerns through talking to the teacher, using the question box or bullying box, or through Year 7 buddies. Pupils are confident that their concerns will be addressed quickly. The pupils are given, and readily accept, responsibilities within the school. They also make a good contribution to the wider community by raising money for charities. There are very good links with high schools and the pupils are prepared well for the next stage in their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are particularly successful in providing opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and thinking skills. This is given a high priority by the school and is implemented consistently well. Pupils speak confidently and are able to develop their arguments persuasively. Teachers also use a wide range of strategies which means that the pupils find lessons interesting and this contributes to their very positive attitudes and enthusiasm. They use interactive whiteboards well and pupils enjoy being actively involved. Classroom management is consistently good with well-established routines. Teaching assistants are deployed well and contribute significantly to pupils' good progress. Pupils are usefully involved in assessing how well they have done for themselves. The school is developing this aspect of the work further. The quality of marking varies. There is some excellent marking which shows pupils how they might improve further. Marking in mathematics is done

conscientiously but does not identify patterns in pupils' errors or misconceptions sufficiently well. The frequent absence of some teachers has slowed progress in their classes on occasion.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. Provision for personal and social education is excellent and contributes significantly to the pupils' personal development. The school is innovative and its participation in the national project 'building learning power' is having a very positive impact in classrooms. There is outstanding provision in information and communication technology (ICT), music, drama and physical education. The school makes very good use of specialist teaching in these subjects. The rich range of the work is celebrated in excellent displays around the school. One pupil reflected this when she said, 'All the displays are made by you. We make each classroom our own. Everything is exciting, nothing is dull.' This is complemented with a rich range of experiences outside of school including residential trips and other educational visits, which are carefully chosen to extend and illuminate work in the classroom. Pupils speak enthusiastically and appreciatively about these experiences and their popularity is demonstrated by very high take up. The strength of the curriculum has been acknowledged by nationally accredited awards for 'Healthy Schools', arts and physical education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, support and guidance are good. A strength is the individual attention given by each teacher that underpins the high quality of relationships in the school. Pupils feel that there is an adult to whom they can turn if they have a problem. The pupils are given good guidance on how they can contribute to resolving disputes through 'peer mediation'. There is good working with other agencies. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities has improved this year and is now good. It is too early to judge the impact, however. Academic monitoring is satisfactory and is improving. Where the school identifies underachievement it uses the data well to provide additional support and this leads to improvements. However, the long interval between the assessments has meant that the school cannot be sure that it identifies underperformance early enough. This was the case with some minority groups in 2006.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The clear strategic planning and vision of the school are shared by governors and senior leaders within the school. Progress in implementing some of the agreed plans has been slowed by the absence of key staff in the last few years. This has had an adverse effect on the provision for pupils with learning difficulties for a while; it has also disrupted the implementation of the 'building learning power' initiative. Pastoral team work has always been strong. The new structure means that there is now an even greater focus on 'every child matters' issues. This is an imaginative approach and early indications are that it will lead to even greater cohesion in support for pupils in the future. The school makes satisfactory use of external data to inform its decision making. It has a well-established system to record pupils' progress over time. However, the assessments are not frequent enough or interrogated with sufficient rigour to identify underlying patterns of performance. Consequently, dips in performance are not always picked up as early as possible. The school makes best use

of accommodation that includes some small teaching rooms. The governors have considerable expertise and hold the school to account well. This is a happy staff that works well as a team and morale is high. In view of the high staff illness, however, the governors have fully supported the setting up of a 'well-being' survey.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for your help and cooperation when we inspected your school. You told us that you very much enjoy coming to school, that you feel safe there and that it is a very welcoming, friendly place. You like the buddy system and say there is little or no bullying. Some of your school councillors told us that their views are valued. They told us that they had asked the governors to improve the toilets and this had been done.

Our main finding is that we agree with you and your parents - Priestmead Middle is a good school. These are the things that we are particularly impressed by:

- you have a wealth of experiences including sporting and musical ones
- you like your teachers and say that they make lessons fun and interesting
- you attain high standards in your work
- you all get on with one another very well and respect different beliefs and cultures
- this is a very caring school
- your headteacher is an excellent leader.

There are three ways in which we have asked the school to improve things even further:

- ensure that you do as well in mathematics as you do in English and science
- the school should check more frequently that you are doing as well as you should
- arrange with your First School to make sure that the transfer from one to another is as smooth as possible.

We wish you continuing success.

Yours sincerely

Barry Jones

Lead Inspector