



Priory Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115000
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290101
Inspection date 8 March 2007
Reporting inspector Ruth Frith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Bicknacre Road
School category	Community		Bicknacre, Chelmsford
Age range of pupils	4-11		Essex CM3 4ES
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01245 225450
Number on roll (school)	173	Fax number	01245 227873
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Brian Larkman
		Headteacher	Miss Rachael Plunkett
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector in one day.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size primary school situated in the village of Bicknacre. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Most live in privately owned homes and the percentage receiving free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is also below average. Children usually start school with skills and standards which are typical for children of their age but in some years they are higher and in others they are lower. Most pupils come from White British backgrounds and a few speak English as an additional language. The headteacher joined the school last September at the beginning of this academic year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where staff are successful in creating a friendly and supportive environment in which pupils enjoy their learning and do well. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection and the enthusiasm and commitment of staff, together with the effective leadership of the headteacher, indicate that the school has good capacity for further improvement. Parents are pleased with what the school offers, as can be seen from the following comment. 'I feel very fortunate to have such a caring and supportive school in the village.'

Pupils make good progress and achieve well so that by the time they leave school, standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. They make a good start in Reception because the activities are interesting and teaching is good. Their progress slows a little as they move into Key Stage 1 but staff are beginning to address this by reviewing the curriculum and teaching. By the end of Year 2 standards are average. Pupils' progress picks up in Key Stage 2 and the standards achieved prepare them well for the next stage of their education. Teaching and learning are good overall but lessons range from satisfactory to outstanding.

The good curriculum provides pupils with a range of interesting activities and experiences and is also designed to help them to understand how to live safe and healthy lives. Because they enjoy learning, pupils behave well and develop good attitudes to school. Nearly all attend regularly and arrive at school on time. Pupils' personal development is good and helps them to develop good relationships with staff and make friends with other pupils. They show respect for pupils who have beliefs and ways of life different from their own. Pupils' care, support and guidance are also good. Pupils develop into confident learners because they feel able to ask for help when they need it. They know they will be listened to and their concerns taken seriously.

Leadership and management are good and result in the school providing good value for money. The newly appointed headteacher has quickly gained the confidence of staff, parents and governors and her enthusiasm and commitment have helped staff to share her vision for the school. Accurate and insightful self-evaluation helps staff and governors to gain a good picture of how well the school is doing and what needs to be done next. Priorities for development are appropriate and focussed on improving the quality of provision and raising standards. For example, staff realise that better use of the data gained from tracking pupils' progress will help them to focus more sharply on meeting the needs of different groups within the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Through effective monitoring and evaluation, make sure that teaching in all lessons is good or better.
- Develop the use of data on pupils' progress to widen understanding of the varying needs of different groups of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils generally make good progress and achieve well. This prepares them well for their future economic well-being. In Reception, children become keen and active learners so that by the time they enter Year 1 the vast majority reach the standards expected for their age and some achieve beyond these. Progress then slows a little so that in the 2006 Year 2 national assessments standards were average in reading, writing and mathematics. Over the last five years, results in the national assessments for Year 6 pupils show an improving trend leading to results in the 2006 national tests that were above average in English, mathematics and science. This indicates good progress across Key Stage 2. The school exceeded its realistic targets for English and mathematics. A check of pupils' work shows that progress is beginning to improve in Key Stage 1 and good progress is being maintained throughout the rest of the school. Different groups of pupils frequently make similar progress but better tracking and use of this information is needed to ensure that all, for example those that are gifted and talented and those that find learning difficult, continue to do as well as they can.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is supported well through lessons and assemblies and the good role models set by staff. Pupils are expected to behave well and respect others and as a result they are polite and sensible. Behaviour is good. They are also expected to consider others, as was seen when several pupils encouraged a new pupil to join in their games at playtime. Pupils gradually learn to take on greater responsibility as they get older so, for example, play leaders help other children during playtimes and Year 6 'buddies' help those in Reception to settle. Two years ago the school was recognised for its work by the award of 'Healthy Schools' status and pupils continue to have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Many are keen to take part in a good range of physical activity to raise their fitness levels and all are aware of the importance of eating a well-balanced diet. Some parents support this by providing healthy packed lunches and the school provides healthy meals which the pupils say they enjoy. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community through the school council where they give their views and help to develop areas of the school. They also take part in conservation work in the local community and get involved in recycling.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because lessons build systematically on previous learning and pupils respond well to the tasks set. There are good points in most lessons

which ensure pupils make good progress overall but sometimes progress slows a little after leaving the reception class because expectations and challenge are not as high as they should be and the pace of learning is left too much for pupils to decide rather than the teacher. Currently, staff are improving pupils' transition from the Foundation Stage to Year 1. The relationships between staff and pupils are particularly good and help to create a supportive atmosphere where pupils are confident to try out new things and put forward their views. Teachers' questioning is particularly good and develops pupils' thinking well, for example, by asking them to explain how they worked out an answer in mathematics. Teachers are becoming more confident in the use of interactive whiteboards and pupils say this makes learning more interesting. The skills of learning support assistants are used well by teachers, particularly to help those pupils who find learning difficult.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is well planned and meets the needs and interests of pupils. Staff are always keen to improve their practice and are currently developing what they teach in response to new national guidance. They are continuing to strive for a more creative curriculum and, where appropriate, are developing the planning so that skills are taught across subject areas through a topic. Pupils are responding well to this approach and enjoy what they do because activities become more interesting. The personal, social, health education and citizenship programme is effective in developing pupils' relationships with staff and each other and encouraging them to stay safe and healthy. A good range of popular clubs and additional activities further pupils' skills. Visits to local places of interest, residential visits for older pupils and visitors to the school add an extra dimension to pupils' learning by providing more practical experiences and developing their spiritual, social and cultural awareness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and happy in school because staff offer good care, support and guidance. As one pupil said, 'Teachers are helpful, they listen to your ideas.' Parents are pleased with the care provided and mention the way their children quickly settle in the reception class. Those who find learning difficult are well cared for in lessons and develop confidence in learning. Most pupils have a clear understanding of their targets and the importance of achieving them. However, some are confused about how their work in lessons refers to these and teachers' marking does not always help them. School procedures covering health and safety and child protection issues are consistently and effectively implemented by all relevant staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are clearly focussed on improving provision. This results in good care, personal development and teaching, a stimulating curriculum and above average standards. The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school and has been successful in sharing this with other staff who, in turn, support her well. Good teamwork is evident and staff morale is high. Middle managers effectively take on their responsibilities and are keen to improve their practice. There are good procedures for identifying what needs to be done next, for example, to make better use of the information gained from monitoring teaching and learning. Governors do a good job and support the school well through visits to classes and talking with staff, and through their work in committees.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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 quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	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	2

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	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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?	2
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.

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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 March 2007

Dear Children

Priory Primary School, Bicknacre Road, Bicknacre, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 4ES

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you and finding out about what you do. I think you go to a good school and have written below some of the things I liked best.

- You work hard and, by the time you leave school in Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are good.
- You like school and behave well because you are interested in what you are doing.
- Nearly all of you arrive at school regularly and on time. Well done!
- You work and play together nicely and take care of each other well.
- All the staff work very well together as a team. They enjoy teaching you and the teaching is good.
- The activities you do and the things you study are interesting, which helps to make learning fun.
- Staff look after you well and you feel safe in school. I was pleased to hear that you would talk to a member of staff if you had problems.

Miss Plunkett leads and manages the school well and staff and governors give her lots of help. They all want to make the school even better. We agreed that staff should continue to try to improve their teaching and use the information they have about how well you are doing to help you make even better progress.

I left your school confident that it will continue to improve and wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith Lead inspector