

# Priory Lower School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109436
<b>Local Authority</b>	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	309983
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Joanne Harvey

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	144
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev Roger Stokes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Anita Hemsley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Greyfriars Bedford Bedfordshire MK40 1JD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 261768
<b>Fax number</b>	01234 351415

---

<b>Age group</b>	3–9
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 October 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	309983

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average size school in the centre of Bedford. A very large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, most with a first language other than English. The majority, though not all, are from Bangladeshi families. The number entitled to claim free school meals is well above that found in most schools as is the number of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability, including those with a statement of special educational need. Indicators suggest that this is an area of social and economic disadvantage. Many pupils enter and leave the school other than at the usual times. The school has a Basic Skills Award and a Healthy Schools Award.

## 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 and improving school providing good value for money. While it has some areas for development it also has outstanding features. The school's success since the last inspection is due to the strong vision and direction of the headteacher, supported by able senior teachers and a hardworking staff team who work together with governors, pupils, families and community partners to achieve their mission of 'Priory pride - learning together'.

Most pupils start school with exceptionally low standards in all areas of their learning. They settle very quickly into the happy and stimulating environment of the Nursery and Reception classes and make good progress. While standards are still below average when they enter Year 1, pupils have begun to develop vital skills to help them get ready to learn. They continue to make good progress throughout Years 1 to 4. This good achievement is not yet fully reflected in the results of tests and assessments at the end of Years 2 and 4 which show that standards in English, mathematics and science have been below those of most pupils nationally. These results cannot demonstrate the school's success, particularly in overcoming the pupils' considerable barriers to learning. These include for example, the extremely high numbers who are at the very early stages of learning English, the high number of pupils who arrive and leave throughout the year and the high proportion who have a learning difficulty or a disability. These pupils are supported effectively by teachers and teaching assistants to do well. Improvement measures taken by the leadership team and staff have ensured that the rate at which pupils make progress has quickened and pupils are now on target to achieve the standards expected of them.

Good teaching, based on extremely positive relationships and a good curriculum, helps to ensure that pupils are extremely happy, interested and make good progress. Pupils leave visitors in no doubt about how much they really do enjoy being at school. Staff have a good knowledge of their pupils and how well they are progressing. However, occasionally, planning for lessons does not always result in clear learning objectives or an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils, particularly the more able. Good care and support are provided for pupils. Pastoral care is a strength of the school because everyone in the school really does go the extra mile to make sure each child feels valued, secure, confident and ready to learn. Consequently, pupils make remarkable progress in their personal development which, by the time they leave the school, is good.

Leadership and management is good. Senior leaders have ensured that everyone is now clear about how well the school is doing and what needs to be done to continue to improve. Curriculum leaders are new and are not yet playing their full part in driving school improvement forward. However, past successes, along with a determination to do even better demonstrates that there is good capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Children settle quickly into the happy and stimulating environment provided in Nursery and Reception classes. This is because highly effective arrangements help families to make the smooth transition to school. Good support from knowledgeable staff ensures children and their families feel highly valued, secure and confident. Children enter with skills which are well below what is expected but make good progress. Though they do not reach the standards expected

for their age, they are prepared very well for learning by the time they enter Year 1. Individualised learning programmes, based on careful assessment are taught well by class teachers and teaching assistants. A wide range of exciting activities with a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated opportunities is offered in both classrooms and to an equally high standard in the pleasant outdoor areas. Leaders are working to ensure progression and seamless consistency in curriculum provision across the Foundation Stage and onwards in to Year 1.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring learning objectives are always focussed and everyone is challenged, particularly more able pupils.
- Ensure the full involvement of all curriculum leaders in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and in driving forward school improvement.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good. Children enter the Nursery with very low levels of achievement in all areas. In their personal development, their understanding of number and their communication skills are exceptionally low. They make good progress in Nursery and Reception, but have so much catching up to do that standards are still below those expected at the end of the Foundation Stage. Children continue to progress well in Years 1 and 2. Assessments at the end of Year 2 show that though standards are below average, they have been steadily rising over recent years and are now close to what is expected. Progress is also quickening in Years 3 and 4, particularly in writing and mathematics. Pupils are on course to achieve the standards expected for their age and for some to do even better. Various factors disguise the true picture of progress. These include the high numbers who start and leave the school other than at the normal times, the extremely high number who begin school unable to speak English or who have a learning difficulty and/or a disability and the extraordinary amount of work the school has to do to simply to get pupils ready to learn well. Those who remain in the school over time and attend well make particularly good progress. The very high numbers of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language are supported effectively to achieve well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development and well-being, including social, moral spiritual and cultural development are good, representing remarkable progress from mostly very low starting points. The behaviour of all but a very few pupils is exemplary. Enjoyment is extremely high and attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils are good at keeping safe and making healthy lifestyle choices. They enjoy nutritious school dinners and lots of physical activity. The school's work to improve attendance has been a real success and from a very low starting point this is now satisfactory. Leaders are not complacent and continue to work in partnership with parents and other agencies to improve this further. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school, either through the school council, as classroom helpers, or fundraising for a range of charities. Good personal skills and improving basic skills prepare pupils satisfactorily for the future.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Good and enthusiastic teaching results in pupils developing positive attitudes to learning. Teachers make lessons interesting, ensuring excellent behaviour, very positive relationships and, importantly, that pupils gain increasing self-confidence and self-belief. Learning is often lively with activities that are increasingly tailored to appeal to pupils' different learning styles. Teachers' emphasis on improving speaking and listening skills is beginning to pay off. The new system of marking celebrates success and helps pupils to improve. Teachers plan conscientiously. Occasionally however, this does not result in focussed learning objectives and sufficient challenge for all pupils, particularly the most able. The school has a good number of skilled teaching assistants who work closely with class teachers and outside agencies to ensure those who need extra help, either individually or in groups do well.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is successful because it provides for the specific needs and interests of the multicultural community at Priory, making it unique and one reason why pupils enjoy school so much. It is enriched well by a range of theme days and visiting artists and musicians or by exploring the local community and environment. Pupils produce art work of high quality and their work in information and communication technology (ICT) is improving. Older pupils learn German. A good number of extra activities, including after-school clubs and trips out appeal to a range of interests, ensure horizons are broadened and lasting memories are made. The programme of personal, social and health education ensures pupils make safe and healthy choices. The school agrees that whilst it knows a great deal about how well pupils are doing in the main subjects, work is required to improve how it checks on the progression of skills across all subjects and phases of the school.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pastoral care is a strength of the school. This is because of the high level of commitment of senior leaders and all staff who know just how much work there is to be done to support the pupils and their families at Priory in order that barriers to learning are reduced. As a result pupils progress remarkably well in their personal development. Pupils report that they feel valued and safe. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are firmly in place and arrangements for child protection are rigorous. Pupils arriving at different times in the year settle quickly because of the effective systems in place to make their entry to the school a positive experience. The school's monitoring systems quickly identify where pupils are vulnerable or are finding learning more difficult and enable staff to put measures in place to care for them or to help them improve, often working effectively in partnerships with other agencies. The system of target setting for individuals is being fine tuned to ensure that all pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve and the impact of this is yet to be seen over time.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's highly effective leadership, with strong support from senior leaders and governors ensures clear vision, strategic direction and focus on improvement. This has been despite the challenges of significant staff changes, working within the confines of inadequate accommodation and managing building improvements. Leaders have created a strong community and are committed to inclusion, effective partnerships and extended services as a way to successfully drive forward school improvement. It is no surprise that parents are highly supportive of the school's work. Staff know the school well because self-evaluation is accurate and increasingly detailed. The headteacher is rightly determined to share leadership. New curriculum leaders have been in place for only a short time and their impact on school improvement has yet to be felt. The governing body provides a good degree of challenge and supports the school well.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

### 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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	3

### 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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Priory Lower School, Greyfriars, Bedford MK40 1JD

I was pleased to meet you and all the staff and very much enjoyed the time I spent with you. Thank you for making me feel so welcome, talking to me, and helping me to find out so much about you and your school.

You go to a good school. The headteacher, teachers and all the other grown-ups at Priory Lower School do their best for you. They look after you and care for you well. Your teachers make learning interesting and enjoyable and they work hard to help you make good progress in lessons. Your excellent behaviour in class, around school and in the playground really helps you to learn well. It is clear that you are really happy at school. Your teachers and your friends help you to feel important and safe there.

The school is keen to find ways to help you do as well as you possibly can. Though you already make good progress, I think you could do even better. I have asked that your teachers always make it clear to you exactly what they want you to learn and how you will know if you have achieved it. I have asked that they also make sure that you always have work to do which challenges you, especially those of you who find your work a little easy. I have asked that leaders check how well you are doing in all subjects as well as they already do in mathematics, English, science and ICT and play a full part in trying to make that even better.

I am sure that Mrs Hemsley and all the other adults will continue to do all they can to help you. You can play your part by continuing to work hard, behaving well and by coming to school every day.

I would like to wish you the very best for the future.

Joanne Harvey

Lead inspector