

Priory Park Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110687
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	310390
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Suki Hinton
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Rugg
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2003
School address	Almond Road St Neots Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE19 1DZ
Telephone number	01480 398010
Fax number	01480 398011

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school serving a mixed area of privately owned and social housing in St Neots and some outlying villages. The number entitled to claim free school meals is below average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and a tiny minority have a first language other than English. The number of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or a disability or a statement of special educational need is below average. Attainment on entry is broadly in line with that expected for children of this age.

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 providing good value for money. Children make good progress to achieve high standards both academically and personally. Improvements have continued to be made since the previous inspection due to the determination of leaders, supported by governors and a hardworking staff team who share an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Provision in the Foundation Stage is also good.

On stepping inside the building, it is clear that everyone is committed to ensuring that children are happy and receive good care and guidance. Consequently, their personal development is good and sometimes better. Children behave well and their enjoyment of school is in no doubt. This is reflected in their good attendance and punctuality. Pupils are considerate, polite and proud to take on extra responsibilities. They say they would like to do even more to help in school and in their community! It is no surprise that most parents are supportive of the school. The comment of one summed up the views of many when they said 'Our daughter is achieving and progressing well at school. She is genuinely excited each morning about going to school...We are very happy parents.'

Achievement and standards are good. The positive attitudes that children bring from home are successfully built upon in the Reception classes where children achieve the standards expected of them by the time they enter Year 1 and many exceed them. Children continue to achieve well throughout Years 1 and 2 and attain above average standards by the time they leave the school. Opportunities are occasionally missed to use assessment information in planning to ensure that the more able are challenged to do even better. However, good teaching, based on extremely positive relationships and a good, enriched curriculum, ensure that pupils are keen to learn, work hard and do well.

Good leadership and management has ensured that high standards and good personal development have been maintained over time and that Priory Park has continued to provide a positive and stimulating environment in which children thrive. The school is poised to embark on the next stage of its development with a new senior leadership team about to take up their posts. This is an opportunity to introduce a strong long term vision and strategic direction for the school, ensuring that all leaders, including governors, play their full part within it in order to quicken further the pace of school improvement. However, the school's past success, coupled with a determination to do even better, demonstrates that there is good potential for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children settle quickly into the stimulating and caring environment of the Reception classes. Adults plan purposeful and enjoyable activities which engage children and encourage them to work hard. Activities follow themes which give children lots of opportunities to try out their ideas and practice what they have learnt in different ways. Good use is made of the pleasant outside areas to extend learning in all areas. Good teaching and assessment ensure good academic progress but are particularly effective in encouraging children to co-operate, collaborate and talk about their learning. Leaders recognise that more rigour needs to be brought to systems for the collection and use of information gathered about children from entry to school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Create a strong long term strategic vision and direction for the school, ensuring all leaders are clear about their roles and involved in systematic monitoring, evaluation and planning for improvements in order to further quicken the pace of school improvement.
- Ensure class teachers consistently use assessment information to plan work which challenges all pupils, particularly the most able.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Reception classes and enter Year 1 having achieved the standards expected for their age and many exceed them. Standards at the end of Year 2 have mostly been maintained at above average over recent years. There was a slight dip in 2006 and the school took prompt action to address this, ensuring that standards returned to above average again in 2007. This represents good progress for pupils in Years 1 and 2. Evidence in school confirms that standards continue to be high in reading, writing and mathematics and that most children are currently making good progress and achieving increasingly challenging targets. Leaders are aware that the number of children achieving the higher grade is not always as high as it could be and they are beginning to address this. Children with a learning difficulty and/or a disability or a statement of special educational need make good progress, as do those in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. This includes learners recently arrived from Eastern Europe who are being supported effectively in learning the English language and are included successfully in all that the school has to offer.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Spiritual, moral and social development is good, due to high staff expectations. The school's Golden Rules provide clear guidance, backed up by those negotiated with children in classes. Good quality assemblies enable children to contemplate, sing beautifully and respond to stories. Children have an exceptionally strong understanding of balanced diets and the need for exercise. They attend school regularly and punctually because they enjoy coming to school and are positive about most lessons. They feel safe in school because staff take great interest in their welfare, act on their concerns and provide good quality but unobtrusive supervision both in the school building and without. While satisfactory, children's cultural development requires improvement in order to prepare them more fully for life in a multi-cultural society. However, highly developed basic and personal skills prepare children well for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers promote excellent relationships with children. Through their consistent and positive approach, they ensure good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning, helping children to do well. An increasing number of practical activities engage all children, and impact well on boys' progress. A good focus on collaborative working encourages children's personal development well. Able teaching assistants work with teachers to ensure that all do well whatever their special need or talent, though opportunities are occasionally lost to make the best use of

their time. Particularly impressive, is teachers' reflective approach and their enthusiasm for improvement. Planning is detailed and conscientiously done by teachers who work together well in teams. Occasionally, the planning focuses more on the activity rather than what children need to learn from it. As a consequence, opportunities are lost to extend more able children and ensure that they all do as well as they can. Sometimes children are not clear enough about what it is they are expected to learn, or how to check on their own success.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good focus on developing children's basic skills. It is well enriched by an impressive range of extra-curricular activities and by studies that use the local community. It is being improved with an increasing amount of active and practical learning which the children say they enjoy. A good quality personal and social education programme ensures that pupils make safe and healthy lifestyle choices and that their social, moral and spiritual development is good. Opportunities to promote their understanding of life in a multicultural society are satisfactory. Provision for information and communication technology has improved considerably since the last inspection, though the school recognises that more equipment is needed in order for the children to fully develop their skills. Teachers enthusiastically introduce topic themes which allow children to develop their skills well across a range of subjects. However, there is not a sufficiently consistent school approach to teaching the curriculum in this way, though more theme days and activity weeks are planned for the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Adults are consistent in their approach and commitment to ensuring the highest levels of pastoral care, enjoyment and achievement so children are confident that they are in a happy and safe place where learning is fun. Children receive good support from teaching assistants who help to ensure good progress, often in partnership with a range of other agencies. School leaders collect a range of information to check on how well children are doing. They have recognised that more rigour needs to be brought to the use of this information to ensure that, for example, teachers' planning and marking always results in activities and targets which ensure all children are doing as well as they can and that children become skilled in checking on their own success.

Procedures to ensure health, safety and welfare meet government requirements and Child Protection and safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers have been effective in maintaining high standards over time, ensuring pupils' good progress and personal development and a strong commitment to inclusion and equal opportunities. There is a hardworking team who are committed to securing further school improvement. The school is undergoing a time of considerable change to its senior leadership and leadership structure. It is ready to take the next step in its development by renewing and strengthening its vision and developing a longer-term strategic view and direction, including the clarification of everyone's role within this. Leaders and governors have a good understanding

of the school's strengths and weaknesses but leaders and managers at all levels have yet to be fully involved in systematically monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, planning for the future and consequently in quickening the pace of school improvement. Positive partnerships are enjoyed. For example, the large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire are highly supportive of the school's work. Leaders need to address the perception of a small minority that their individual concerns are not always listened to.

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Annex A

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
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 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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.

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 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

5 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Priory Park Infant School, Almond Road, St Neots, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE19 1DZ.

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

You go to a good school where all the grown-ups do their very best for you. They look after you and care for you well. Your teachers and teaching assistants make learning interesting and enjoyable and they work hard to help you make good progress in lessons. The very good behaviour of most of you in class, around school and in the playground, really helps you to learn well too. It is clear that you are happy at school. Your teachers and your friends help you to feel important and safe there. By the time you leave the school, most of you do better than children in most other schools.

The school is very keen to find ways to help you do as well as you possibly can. Although you already make good progress, we think you could do even better. We would like to see those who lead the school planning further in to the future and everyone playing their full part in making plans for improvements happen as quickly as they can. We would also like to see class teachers always giving you work which makes you think and work hard all the time, especially those of you who find your work easy.

We know that you will soon be saying goodbye to Mrs Rugg, your headteacher and that she is very proud of you all. We are sure that your new headteacher and all the other staff will continue to do everything they can to help you. You can play your part by continuing to behave very well, working really hard and making sure you attend every school day.

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

Joanne Harvey

Lead Inspector