

Old Priory Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113320
Local Authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	311208
Inspection date	12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Blake-Lobb
Headteacher	Rob Pippen
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	The Ridgeway Plympton Plymouth PL7 1QN
Telephone number	01752 338199
Fax number	01752 348788

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. He evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress of current pupils and the impact of new systems to monitor it, the quality of pupils' personal development and well-being, and the impact of recent changes in management structure. Evidence was gathered by observing lessons, scrutinising documents and pupils' work, and from discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not evaluated in detail but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This junior school of average size serves a suburb of Plymouth of mainly private housing. All pupils are currently of White British ethnicity. Almost all pupils previously attended one nearby infant school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

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 in which pupils achieve well. It has outstanding features, particularly pupils' excellent personal development and well-being, the exceptional range of opportunities offered within the curriculum and the care, guidance and support that pupils receive. A parent's comment that this is, 'A well-run school with a calm, friendly atmosphere that allows children to express themselves confidently', sums up the views of many.

Pupils start in Year 3 having attained standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 that are a little above average. They make good progress throughout the school, and by the end of Year 6 attain above average standards in English, mathematics and science. In all classes, pupils' written work shows good progress in the development of skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). Because of the excellent breadth of the curriculum, pupils make good progress in subjects such as art, modern foreign languages, drama and physical education. The school has identified a reduction in the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in national tests and has taken effective action to correct this.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent and they report that there is little bullying, any that occurs being dealt with effectively. They really enjoy school, especially the wide range of the activities on offer. Pupils' attendance is above average. Staff go out of their way to make provision for pupils' individual needs. Examples include opportunities for non-competitive exercise, for instance through dance, in addition to the usual competitive sports. A wildlife club allows pupils with low self-esteem to work in small groups with intensive adult support. Anger management training improves the behaviour of the few who have difficulties with this.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. They are aware, for instance, of the possible risks they may encounter through unrestricted use of the Internet. The school council is a major influence on school life and has been instrumental in improving the provision of meals and obtaining a cover for the swimming pool. Other pupils make an excellent contribution to the community as 'buddies' to new pupils, by collecting for charity and through performances, for instance, by the school choir. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They have a very good understanding of the way people of other cultures live through, for example, links with schools in Jamaica, India and Germany, and by a residential experience in London undertaken by Year 6.

Pupils' good progress is as a result of good teaching. Teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and plan work that meets their individual needs. They use ICT well to make lessons interesting, and use questioning very well in ways that involve the whole class. Marking is detailed and shows pupils how to improve their work. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own progress and this gives them a better understanding of how to improve, pupils are also set challenging targets, although these are not always fully understood by all pupils. Pupils work well together and show good application, but occasionally the pace of work slows because the teacher does not adequately monitor each group's progress. Teaching assistants are used well to support all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who make good progress as a result.

The excellent curriculum offers pupils a very wide range of opportunities. They speak with excitement about the clubs and activities they are offered. The subjects of the curriculum are used very well to develop pupils' skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. In modern foreign

languages, both French and German are taught and leaders and managers are keen to modify the good support from the local language college, now that staff are confident in teaching these subjects.

Senior staff give good leadership. This is a calm, well-ordered school in which pupils are cared for very well. All requirements for child protection are in place and there is good attention to health and safety. Pupils willingly follow set routines because the reasons for these have been explained well. Recent widening of the senior leadership team has strengthened subject leadership and enhanced the effectiveness of the curriculum by extending opportunities for the development of basic skills. Leaders and managers have a good, accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school sets itself challenging targets which are generally met and, when this is not the case, action is taken to put things right. New systems are effective in monitoring pupils' progress and in analysing possible barriers to learning. The governing body is effective in supporting the school and in holding it to account, but there is a large unallocated budget reserve which is not being used to enhance the progress of the pupils for whom this resource was intended. A small minority of parents have concerns about some aspects of the school's communications, but the inspection found no evidence to support this view. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection and is well placed for this to continue.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enhance pupils' understanding of the use of targets, in order to improve their progress.
- Plan to ensure that the school's resources are fully utilised to enhance the progress of current pupils.

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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 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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

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

28 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Old Priory Junior School, Plympton, PL7 1QN

I very much enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work when I visited your school recently. I especially enjoyed talking to members of the school council as I found you confident, friendly and able to express your views very clearly.

I agree with you and your parents that yours is a good school. These are some of the most important things about it.

- You make good progress and pupils in Year 6 get above average results in tests and assessments in English, mathematics and science.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are interesting and fun. You find the way teachers mark your work very helpful.
- You have an excellent understanding of right and wrong and of how to keep safe.
- Your behaviour is excellent.
- You enjoy school a lot, especially all the different activities on offer. There are lots of clubs for sport and exercise, and many other activities such as the wildlife and art clubs.
- You get many opportunities to help people, as 'buddies', school council members, and by collecting for charity.
- You learn a lot about people from different places, through learning French and German, and through your links with schools in other countries.
- You get excellent care, and help from staff to improve your work, although some of you do not understand how to use your targets.
- The headteacher, other staff and governors lead the school well.
- The school has good links with other schools and with your parents.

I have asked the school to improve two things. I have asked that you are helped to understand your targets better so that you can use them to improve your work. You can help by politely telling the teacher if you do not understand. I have asked the governors to make sure that they use some spare money to improve your education even further.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler Lead inspector

Annex B

28 March 2008

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Paul Sadler
Lead inspector