

The Priory Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113847
Local Authority	Dorset
Inspection number	311402
Inspection date	15 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Shirley Billington

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hugh Williams
Headteacher	Claire King
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	Wick Lane Christchurch BH23 1HX
Telephone number	01202 484105
Fax number	01202 488702

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how well pupils are achieving in Years 1 and 2, strategies to ensure that pupils achieve as well in mathematics as they do in English and science by the end of Year 6, and arrangements for tracking and assessing pupils' progress to ensure that all achieve equally well. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but were sampled in order to arrive at the judgements given in this report. Evidence was gathered from the school's data on pupils' attainment, observations in lessons, discussions with pupils, meetings with the headteacher, key coordinators and the chair and vice chair of governors, a meeting with the school council and scrutiny of school documentation. The views of parents were gathered from the returns of the Ofsted questionnaire.

Description of the school

This is an average-sized school with one class for each year group. It is popular in the local area and over-subscribed. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has been through a period of uncertainty because it was without a substantive headteacher for almost a year. A new headteacher took up post in October 2007.

The school holds Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. It has been identified as a Lead Learning School by the local authority in order to promote and share aspects of its practice.

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, which has excellent features. Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Every opportunity is taken to boost their confidence and skills as learners and extend their experiences and awareness of the world around them and their place in it. This is achieved through a strong focus on personal, social and health education and an excellent range of curriculum enrichment activities such as themed weeks, residential visits and special events. Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and proud of their achievements, such as successes in sporting competitions and gaining Healthy Schools status. The school council makes an excellent contribution to planning for improvements through, for example, organising a friendship stop in the playground and contributing ideas towards the eco-school initiative.

Strong links with the neighbouring church and other local organisations extend pupils' spiritual, social and cultural experiences. Pupils gain very good enterprise skills as they plan and initiate fundraising events and contribute to future planning for the school, such as improvements to the external environment. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are mature and responsible, taking on a range of responsibilities such as organising the library or acting as 'buddies' for those who need a friend. They are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education and later life. Parents are particularly positive about this, saying, for example, 'I feel that their preparation, both educationally and socially, is excellent.'

Another strength of the school is the level of care for individuals, again a feature which many parents commend. Parents of children with specific needs praise the level of support provided, making comments such as 'her difficulties were picked up very early and she has had a lot of help... the school has worked hard to maintain her self-esteem'. Pupils get helpful information on how well they are doing when their work is marked, usually with an indication of what they need to do to improve. They also have individual targets, although they are not always aware of what these are or quite what to do to achieve them. Pupils' behaviour is good. One commented, 'we hardly ever get bullies' and pupils are clear about what to do if they have any concerns. The school gives high priority to ensuring that pupils know how to keep safe so that, for instance, they are very well aware of potential risks associated with using the internet.

Children in the Reception Year get off to a very good start and make good progress. Whilst this is generally maintained in subsequent years, there is some variation across the school. This resulted in a dip in standards for Year 2 in 2006-7. Progress for this year group was satisfactory from a broadly average base at the start of Year 1, but higher attainers could have achieved more, particularly in writing. The school has picked this up and is strengthening provision for this area, but it is too early to see the impact of what is being done. Overall, pupils achieve well as they go through the school. They make particularly good gains in Years 5 and 6. As a result standards are above, and often significantly above, average by the end of Year 6. Performance in national tests is generally better in English and science than in mathematics. This subject is currently a particular focus for improvement, with work going on throughout the school to strengthen pupils' problem-solving skills. This is beginning to have a positive effect, with indications that the proportion of pupils on course to attain higher levels in the tests is rising.

The work that is going on to strengthen provision for English and mathematics is indicative of strong leadership by the headteacher and other senior staff. All class teachers have been provided with detailed information on aspects of these subjects that need particular attention so that planning can be adjusted where necessary. A 'maths week' has involved all year groups

in a good variety of problem-solving activities and this has been greatly enjoyed by the pupils. There is a strong focus on providing opportunities for writing for a range of purposes across the curriculum. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to research or present findings in a range of subjects. The school is now involved in extending a skills-based approach to planning as part of its work as a Lead Learning School. Links with the local secondary school enhance provision for areas such as ICT, sports and music.

Teaching is good overall but there is inconsistency in the quality across the school that leads to variation in the rate of progress in different year groups. There are aspects of outstanding practice from staff who have excellent skills in specific areas and are identified as lead teachers by the local authority. This expertise is being shared in a variety of ways in order to ensure that where teaching is satisfactory, it becomes consistently good or better. Good systems have been put in place to support and develop teaching skills. Planning is shared and teachers are given opportunities to teach together and to observe their colleagues teaching. Lessons are formally observed by senior staff and individual teachers given helpful feedback on areas for improvement.

The school has good systems in place to track the progress of individual pupils and the information is being used well to target extra support where appropriate. There is a large amount of data on pupils' attainment in different areas. This is obviously useful to class teachers who can use it to group pupils according to need and to plan for the next step in their learning. However, the information is not summarised so that it can be easily analysed by school leaders. This means that it is difficult to check on rates of progress in each year group, to make sure that different groups of pupils are doing equally well or to compare performance in different subjects. The school has identified the need to revise the way that this information is collected in order to further strengthen the ways that assessment information can be used.

The new headteacher has a clear sense of purpose and has accurately identified key areas for improvement. She enjoys the support and confidence of staff, governors and parents, many of whom commented that, after a period of uncertainty, the school is moving forward at a good rate.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Reception Year make good progress and achieve well. The vast majority are working in line with or above expected levels by the end of the year. They do particularly well in mathematics, with almost all attaining above expected levels and a significant number working in the early stages of the National Curriculum by the start of Year 1. They enjoy school and are active and keen learners, with many showing very good concentration when they work in small groups or individually. There are outstanding features to the teaching and children benefit from well focused, purposeful activities which are based on a thorough understanding of their learning needs. There is a good balance between tasks that are teacher directed and those that they can select independently. The curriculum is imaginatively planned to engage their interest so that, for example, they can represent their ideas and extend their understanding in role-play or using ICT. Careful track is kept of individual children's progress so that their learning needs are met. Information on their attainment in different areas of learning is analysed so that the curriculum can be adjusted to boost particular areas where necessary. This has led, for example, to a particular focus this year on improving children's knowledge of sounds and letters to further boost their literacy skills. However, as in the rest of the school, there is a need to strengthen

the way that data is used to check whether all groups of children are achieving equally well in all areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the good progress seen in the Reception Year is reflected in results at the end of Year 2 to raise standards, particularly in writing
- Organise assessment systems so that the school has a clear overview of how well pupils are doing in each subject and can check that all groups are achieving equally well.

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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?	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	1

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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Priory CE Primary School, Christchurch, BH23 1HX

You may remember that I visited recently to see how you are getting on. Thanks to all those children who talked to me about what they were doing in lessons, what happens in the playground and the jobs that they do around the school. Special thanks to the school council members who met me at lunchtime. I thought you would be interested in what I am saying in my report. Yours is a good school and you are right to be proud of all the things that go on there.

One of the very best things about the school is you yourselves. As you go through the school, you become mature and responsible and you are well prepared for secondary school and later life. I was particularly impressed with how much you know about how to stay healthy and keep safe. The school takes good care of you and gives you lots of opportunities to take part in extra activities. You told me how much you enjoy all the sports and clubs such as drama and dance and special events such as 'maths week' and 'world week'. I know that those of you in Year 6 are really looking forward to the visit to the Isle of Wight!

You are taught well and this means that you make good progress in your learning. By the end of Year 6, you reach standards that are higher than are usually expected. The people in charge of the school have good ideas about how to make it even better and so are doing a lot of work to make sure that you do just as well in maths as you do in English and science.

I have suggested two things that the school needs to do now.

- Make sure that the very good start that children get in the Reception Year is built on so that skills keep developing at a good rate, particularly in writing.
- Organise all the test and assessment information (there is lots of it!) so that checks can be made on whether everyone is doing equally well in all subjects and all year groups.

Thank you again for all your help.

Best wishes

Shirley Billington Lead Inspector

18 January 2008



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Shirley Billington
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