

Preston Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 118401 |
| Local Authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 312922 |
| Inspection date | 20 May 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | George Logan |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 126 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Vacant Position |
| Headteacher | Penelope Day |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4 May 2004 |
| School address | Mill Lane Preston Canterbury CT3 1HB |
| Telephone number | 01227 722235 |
| Fax number | 01227 720055 |

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|--------------------------|-------------|
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves the village of Preston and the surrounding rural area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much lower than in most schools. There is a higher level of pupils moving in and out of the school than in many other schools, and most of this movement takes place in Years 3 to 6.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Preston Primary is satisfactory. It provides a satisfactory education with several good features. Parents are very positive about the ethos of the school and its commitment to inclusion. One said, 'The moral and ethical standards of Preston shine through the conduct of the children and set them apart from the others.' School leaders have created a positive climate for learning. Pupils enjoy school and are well looked after. As a consequence, their personal development, relationships and behaviour are good. Attendance is broadly average.

Achievement is satisfactory, with some variation in the rate of progress. Children make a satisfactory start in Reception, where few attain above the expected level. They maintain steady progress in Years 1 and 2, so that standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2. Teaching is never less than satisfactory in these first three years, but expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Progress is relatively stronger in Years 3 to 6, where there is much robust teaching, with thorough, rigorously recorded work. As a result, standards at Year 6 have been above average over the last five years. However, the school's data indicates that this year's Year 6 has not performed quite as well. Generally speaking, pupils who have been at the school from Reception onwards achieve well, and better than those who have joined more recently. This disparity in progress is small in some year groups, but is more marked in the current group of Year 6 pupils, where some pupils have joined the school relatively recently. In addition, the school has focused its attention this year much more on improving English, and writing in particular, than it has on mathematics. As a result, standards in writing have risen at Year 2 where they are now above average. However, standards in mathematics have fallen, with few reaching the higher levels at Year 2 and Year 6. This drop in mathematics has contributed to an overall dip in standards in the current Year 6 to a broadly average level. Across the school, pupils are not always given a clear idea through marking of what they need to do to improve their work and so move their learning on at a brisker pace. The school is currently working to improve the consistency and rigour of marking.

The good curriculum is a strength. Whilst it certainly does focus on developing the key skills in literacy and numeracy, there is much else to engage pupils' interest. Geography and physical education are particularly well developed, whilst pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are above expectations. There is a high level of involvement from pupils in the impressive range of extra clubs and activities. Those pupils learning to speak English as an additional language receive good support and achieve well across the curriculum.

Staff have a shared commitment to improvement and leadership is satisfactory. However, although their key priorities are broadly accurate, school leaders are not rigorous enough in evaluating how well the school is doing. They do not always monitor their work and its impact closely enough, particularly the school's academic performance, through the analysis of test and assessment data. For this reason, the school holds a more positive view of its effectiveness than this inspection has found.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter Reception with broadly average skills. They are taught alongside younger Year 1 pupils. Good induction procedures ensure that children settle in quickly. They are cared for

well and good relationships in this group support children's social and emotional development well. There are regular opportunities for children to choose and initiate activities and this develops good levels of independence. Satisfactory teaching promotes secure early literacy and mathematical skills, ensuring that children make steady progress. As a result, standards are average by the time they join Year 1. However, other than in reading, few children are working at a higher level. Staff undertake regular observations, although assessment procedures could be more focused on identifying areas for improvement so that children's learning can be moved on faster.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils achieve more rapidly in mathematics in order to raise standards, particularly at the higher level.
- Make sure pupils are always given a clear idea of what they need to do to improve their work and move their learning on at a brisker pace.
- Ensure that school leaders take a more systematic and thorough approach to monitoring and evaluating its work and performance, particularly in the rigour of the analysis of test and assessment data.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement across the school as a whole is satisfactory, with some variations in progress. The school has made writing a priority for improvement this school year and its work has improved standards in this aspect of English. Writing standards in the current Year 2, for example, are above average. However, the same high level of attention has not been given to mathematics. Standards in mathematics are lower than they were in previous years at Year 2 and Year 6, particularly at the higher level. Standards overall in both groups are broadly average this year and, on the evidence provided, the school may not meet its targets for mathematics at Year 6.

The few pupils learning to speak English for the first time make good progress, while those with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. Progress is strongest in Years 3 to 6, where good teaching is most consistent. This is particularly beneficial, given that more pupils are new to the school during this time. In some year groups, pupils new to the school make similar progress to those who are long established, but this is not the case in the current Year 6, where more pupils than usual have joined over the course of the last two years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel secure in school and say that bullying is rare. Parents recognise a 'lovely, friendly, community spirit'. Pupils are articulate and confident. They behave well and conduct themselves safely. They have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. Close community links and involvement in village events support social development well, whilst the strong partnership with the church promotes good spiritual development. However, whilst pupils learn about other countries through geography, they have limited awareness of ethnic and cultural diversity in contemporary Britain. Although pupils clearly enjoy school, attendance only just reaches the

national average. Pupils contribute well to the school community through the active school council and the various posts of responsibility, such as older pupils acting as 'buddies' to Reception-aged children. The Eco council promotes social responsibility well and this, together with pupils' good personal qualities, fund-raising initiatives and their secure basic skills, contributes positively to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst teaching is satisfactory overall, there are some underlying and important strengths, particularly in Years 3 to 6. For example, pupils' behaviour is managed well, relationships are good and the environment for learning is well organised. Planning is consistent and expectations of the quantity and quality of work in Years 3 to 6 are often high. Teaching assistants give good support to individuals who need additional help, including those with learning difficulties. However, expectations of the younger children are not always high enough and the pace of learning could be brisker. Older recently-arrived pupils do not always make the same progress as pupils already in the school. Marking frequently encourages pupils by praising their efforts, but does not yet provide clear guidance for improvement in order to promote consistently good progress across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Whilst the Foundation Stage curriculum covers the areas of learning well, activities are not always sufficiently matched to individual needs. The school has recently reviewed the main school curriculum to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and engages their interest. The vibrant learning environment suggests that the school is close to getting the balance right. Writing skills are being effectively developed through planned projects in history, geography and religious education. Geography is taught thoroughly and contributes well to pupils' cultural development. ICT is resourced well and effectively extends pupils' learning, while physical education is significantly enhanced by good out-of-school opportunities. Specialist teaching in music and French ensures that these subjects are well established. Provision for pupils who need additional support is effectively targeted on what they most need to learn. Academically gifted pupils are generally well provided for in literacy through access to specialist activities, such as an able writers course promoted by the local small schools, while science is supported through business links and other enrichment programmes. The many extra-curricular activities represent particularly good provision, especially given the relatively small size of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is a significant strength, underpinned by the close partnership with parents. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust. Staff have a close knowledge of individual pupils and ensure that their welfare needs are met effectively and the school has good links with external agencies. Academic guidance, though still only satisfactory, is increasingly effective and group targets have been introduced in literacy and numeracy. Pupils record their progress towards a particular goal and discuss their targets confidently. However, teachers' marking only occasionally makes explicit reference to these targets, or pupils' progress towards them,

in order to give them further guidance on how to move forward. The school recognises that group targets need to be more fine-tuned to meet the needs of individuals.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and staff form a cohesive team with a shared vision for the school. They ensure that the school runs smoothly and have the confidence of most parents. Monitoring by senior leaders is generally effective in ensuring a fair consistency of teaching quality, while subject leadership makes good use of individual expertise. The school accurately recognises, in broad terms, the key areas for development and the success of recent improvements to writing, for example, demonstrates satisfactory capacity for improvement. However, the school holds a more generous view of its overall effectiveness than inspection evidence found and this is because its self-evaluation process is not pursued with sufficient rigour. For example, there is insufficient focus on the accurate analysis of test and assessment information in order to evaluate outcomes in pupils' learning. Consequently, the school does not always have the information to enable it to tackle weaknesses in advance and before performance slips. Whilst governors are very committed and keen to improve, they are not yet confident in evaluating the school's performance and, in consequence, do not yet provide enough critical challenge for its leadership.

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.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 |

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 | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| 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? | 3 |
| 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

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 3 |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 3 |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 |
| 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 Preston Primary School, Canterbury CT3 1HB

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and could see that you are very proud of your school and its place in the village community. You look after each other well. We found that Preston Primary is a satisfactory school, with some aspects that work well.

- The main things that we found are these:
- You behave well in lessons and have a mature approach to your work.
- Teaching is never less than satisfactory, with some that is good, and you are making steady progress across the school.
- The school makes sure that you are cared for well, and you have a good understand of how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise.
- The curriculum is good, with an exciting range of out-of-school activities.
- Those in charge of the school make sure it runs smoothly.

We are asking the school to make these changes so that you do even better:

- Help everyone to make faster progress in mathematics so that standards rise.
- Make sure that teachers' marking is closely linked to your targets so that you know how you can improve your work.
- Ensure that school leaders look at lots of evidence when they are deciding how well the school is doing and what it needs to do next to become even better.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

- George Logan
- Lead Inspector

21 May 2008

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