

Princethorpe Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103245
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323781
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Bogusia Matusiak-Varley

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	182
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louis Delwiche
Headteacher	Sarah Hodgkinson
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Princethorpe Road Weoley Castle Birmingham B29 5QB
Telephone number	01214 752874
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils in this school are from White British families, with a very small number from various minority ethnic groups. More than half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. A third of the pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the majority of whom have speech, language and communication barriers to learning. The present headteacher has only been in post for six months prior to the inspection. The school has Quality Mark National Healthy School status and an Activemark.

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 where pupils are happy and thrive in their learning. At the heart of the school's success are the outstanding relationships between parents, staff and children and a committed staff, well led by an energetic and enthusiastic headteacher. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. 'Our children love their school and their teachers' and 'The new headteacher has created one big family where we all feel valued' are typical comments from parents. Pupils are well cared for and effectively guided and supported in all that they do. They feel safe, enjoy their learning and grow into confident youngsters who care about their environment and the community. The end result is that pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are good ambassadors for their school and the school's aim of pupils being part of a caring community is fully met. Their knowledge of healthy lifestyles is outstanding. They make healthy choices at lunchtime and know about the importance of exercise. Pupils have good knowledge of personal safety and use all equipment carefully. Pupils are well behaved and they have good attitudes to learning. Attendance is satisfactory, an improvement on previous years, but punctuality is still an issue for a minority of pupils.

There have been good advances in provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage since the last inspection. Children are now learning well through play but there is still room for improvement in teaching children basic skills of letter sounds and letter formation, and developing the outdoor environment to ensure that all opportunities for learning, especially writing, are maximised. Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of secure planning and good teaching.

Pupils' good achievement continues throughout Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics to reach broadly average standards. In writing, standards are not as high as in reading and mathematics and progress is satisfactory because teachers do not always use information from assessment to plan the next steps of learning, especially for more capable pupils. The opportunities provided for writing in other subjects are dominated by the overuse of worksheets which require little from the pupils. The small percentage of pupils learning English as an additional language achieve well, as do pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, because of well-targeted support and good leadership from the special educational needs coordinator. Pupils' achievements in speaking and listening are outstanding because of a strong emphasis placed upon this aspect in all lessons.

A well-structured curriculum, enhanced by a good range of extra-curricular activities, contributes to pupils' enjoyment and good achievement. Teaching is good, with outstanding features in Year 2, which ensures pupils' good progress. Pupils are encouraged. 'Come on, I know you can do it,' said one teacher in a writing lesson. 'Just see the word and then write it down.' Classroom walls and displays are purposeful and motivate pupils to learn. They take a pride in their displayed work but written work in their books is untidy. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and offer positive guidance for improvement. They set short-term targets for pupils which are regularly reviewed, and this contributes to pupils' success.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides clear educational direction and good skills of school evaluation. She has won the hearts and minds of the community she serves. Governance is satisfactory. All statutory requirements are met but governors, because of their work commitments, do not come into school often enough. This limits the school's

opportunities to capitalise on their expertise. Over the past three years, standards have been gradually rising and the school is well placed to continue to make good improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

From their very low starting points, children make good progress, in both the Nursery and Reception classes, across all areas of learning other than in writing, where progress is satisfactory. Children do not attain the expected standards in communication, language and literacy but in all other areas of learning they reach the level expected. Lively teaching and good attention to children's welfare give them a good start to school life so that they develop outstanding relationships. All children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development because of the ample opportunities to learn how to play, share with others and develop self-confidence. Interesting learning opportunities, such as making bookmarks for Book Week and reading Anna's Amazing Glasses, fuel children's desire to learn, read and write. The outdoor learning environment is well resourced but, as yet, it is not fully utilised to develop learning opportunities. The curriculum is well structured but the teaching of phonics and reading and writing is not consistently applied across the Nursery and Reception classes. As a result, children do not make consistent progress in their writing. The sensitive care for all children is indicative of the staff's strong commitment to their pupils. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Teaching and learning have been monitored and accurate areas for development have been identified.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing by:
 - o implementing a rigorous phonics scheme.
 - o limiting the use of worksheets and providing more opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects.
 - o ensuring information from assessment is regularly used to plan next steps in learning so that pupils who find learning easy are given greater challenge.
- Improve the outdoor learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that more opportunities for learning, particularly those to develop children's early writing skills, are provided.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well in both the Nursery and Reception classes and most attain the levels expected in all areas of learning other than writing and linking letters to sounds, where standards are below those expected of their age. Throughout the school, pupils continue to achieve well but standards in mathematics and speaking and listening are higher than those in writing. This is because pupils have not acquired the skills of correct letter formation in the Early Years Foundation Stage and teachers are having to play 'catch up' in Years 1 and 2. All groups generally make good progress but, at times, more capable pupils are not sufficiently challenged because work set for them is too easy as teachers have not paid sufficient attention to information from assessment in order to plan activities that are more challenging.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils love their school. During World Book Day, virtually all of them dressed up as book characters and entered into spontaneous role play in the classrooms. 'This is the best school

in the world,' said one member of the school council. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall but their spiritual development is not as strong as other aspects. This is due to a lack of opportunities for reflection. Pupils feel secure at school because of well-established routines and zero tolerance of racism, bad behaviour or bullying. Pupils behave well because they have been taught at a very early age about the impact of their actions on others. Recently-trained play leaders engage pupils in well thought out games at lunchtimes and this has a very good impact on their social skills. Good progress in basic skills, the positive links with local businesses and the good work of the school council help prepare pupils for the future. Pupils are good ambassadors for their school and help raise the profile of the community in the local area. Pupils are fully involved in the life of the school community and contribute fully to various projects relating to improving the environment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

'Our teachers are the best,' said one very enthusiastic learner. Teaching in this school is characterised by the outstanding relationships that teachers have with their pupils and the headteacher's conviction that there is nothing that these pupils cannot do. Lessons are fun, with teachers joking with the pupils but, at the same time, encouraging them to 'reach for the stars'. Support staff play a vital role in pupils' learning and contribute to the pupils' good progress. Marking is regular and thorough and tells pupils how to improve their work. Teachers use questions skilfully to probe pupils' understanding and to ensure that all concepts have been understood. There are some areas for improvement. Teachers' planning does not fully build on pupils' prior learning and this results in more capable pupils sometimes marking time. Sometimes teachers accept work from pupils which is clearly not their best and this results in untidy presentation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad, balanced and stimulating. Information and communication technology is used well to support learning and teachers use children's own interests to develop learning such as developing play in the role play area. The curriculum is clearly focused on developing enjoyment of learning and building skills needed for life. Personal, social and health education enables pupils to identify their emotions and respond in appropriate ways. Staff plan meaningful activities which link subjects together but sometimes miss opportunities to develop writing. Good planning is in place for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those few learning English as an additional language. This ensures that they all make good progress. A good range of clubs, activities, visits and visitors contribute to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Good links with a local car factory encourage pupils' designing skills and contribute to their good skills of achieving economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff know each and every child very well. All safeguarding procedures are in place and the outcomes of pupils' good personal development are seen in their high levels of confidence. Academic guidance is generally good in lessons. It is better in marking than in planning where,

too often, information from assessment does not underpin learning objectives for more capable pupils. Pupils work in a safe environment with high levels of security, regular undertaking of risk assessments and very tight procedures for safeguarding. Parents speak highly of staff: 'We know they love our kids and take the best care of them' is a typical response of parents in this school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

In the six months of the headteacher's leadership, staff have taken on board many changes and are working collaboratively with her to improve on previous best performance. Senior leaders are knowledgeable and supportive and execute their duties well and ensure that the school's equality of opportunity policy is effectively put into practice. Self-evaluation procedures are rigorous and mean that the school has an accurate view of itself. School improvement planning is focused and all the correct areas for development have been recognised. The school works well with other agencies, such as speech and language therapists, and is developing a reputation as being instrumental in uniting the community. The school recognises the customs of all faiths' and creeds' found in the local community but the school is just starting at developing international links. The governing body are knowledgeable and fulfil their statutory duties but do not visit the school often enough to get a more personal view of all aspects of school life. This limits their ability to fully evaluate the impact of their spending decisions and school effectiveness.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

6 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Princethorpe Infant School, Birmingham B29 5QB

Thank you for making us feel so welcome. You looked fantastic in your World Book Day costumes. It was lovely to meet you and your parents; please thank them for the high level of returned questionnaires. You attend a good school and your headteacher has some very interesting and exciting plans for your future learning. Here are some of the things you do well:

- You make good progress in learning to reach standards that are similar to most children of your age, but you need to get better at writing.
- You are happy, confident and sensible children. You are a true asset to your parents and to your school. Well done.
- You have fantastic relationships with each other and your teachers, and your behaviour is good.
- Attendance is improving but just a few of you come late to school.
- Your skills of understanding the need for healthy eating are exceptionally good.
- Teaching and learning in your school are good, as are your learning opportunities. It is lovely to see so many of you take part in the good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Everyone looks after you very well and you feel safe and secure.
- Your headteacher leads the school well.
- We would like you to help make your school even better:
- We have asked your teachers to provide more opportunities for writing and to help you learn about letters and sounds. You can take more care of your writing by forming your letters correctly.
- For those of you in the Early Years Foundation Stage, we have asked your teachers to develop the outdoors as a learning classroom and help you form your letters correctly.

With all best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Bogusia Matusiak-Varley Lead inspector