

Priory Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103831
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	323907
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	565
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	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Cresswell
Headteacher	M.W.T. Millman
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Limes Road Priory Estate Dudley DY1 4AQ
Telephone number	01384 816845
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Priory Primary School is a larger than average, full service extended school with a wide range of before- and after-school clubs forming part of its extended provision. A children's centre managed by the governing body opened in October 2006 and provides day care facilities for children from birth to four years old, along with other services all year round. The centre also offers 81 part-time nursery places for children and six enhanced places for children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low. Over a third of the pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is above the national average. More pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities than in most primary schools. When children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their levels of skills and knowledge are low, especially in terms of their personal, social and emotional development and speech.

The school gained the Financial Management Standard in Schools in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Priory Primary provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The school's recent record of accomplishment shows it has sound capacity to make any necessary changes. Standards have improved since the last inspection, albeit from a very low base, and the proportion of pupils reaching the average levels for their age across the school has also increased. However, the improvement in English has been weaker than in mathematics and science because letter sounds (phonics) and writing are not taught well enough across the school, and particularly in Key Stage 1. Importantly, teachers do not always provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length, and have not had enough specialised training to teach the pupils the skills in writing to enable them to reach the higher levels. Consequently, standards are lower in English than in other subjects, particularly in Year 1, where a number of pupils make inadequate progress in reading and writing. By the end of Year 6, pupils attain broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory achievement in relation to their starting points on entry to the Nursery.

The main reason why pupils make satisfactory progress rather than good progress is that there is too much variability in the quality of teaching. Much is mundane, and does not challenge pupils to achieve to their full capability. Additionally, assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress are not always used well enough to adapt the current lesson or to plan subsequent lessons. As a result, a minority of lessons do not take sufficient account of pupils' different levels of knowledge and understanding.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are beginning to attend more regularly. They respect each other and the adults who work with them and relationships are good. Pupils report that they feel safe and know how to keep healthy. The response to inspection questionnaires shows that most parents are supportive and appreciate the school's work, reporting that the school provides pupils with a caring and friendly setting in which to learn.

Pupils' sound spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means they behave well, have positive attitudes to school and are keen to learn. Relationships are good and this leads to classrooms being calm and friendly places in which to learn. Pupils are polite and considerate and respect each other's feelings.

Senior leaders across all settings generally have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate action to address the areas for improvement. Some leaders, however – particularly middle leaders – merely describe what has been done or is planned, without analysing clearly the expected or actual outcomes of their actions. Consequently, they are not making best use of the information gathered about the quality of teaching, policies and procedures, and pupils' progress through the school's monitoring and evaluation activities to plan strategically for improvements and to set challenging targets.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The partnership with parents is given a high priority in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but good in the children's centre. Staff are always available to talk with parents, who appreciate the warm welcome. They are encouraged to help, if they can, in the centre and to visit the Nursery. Key workers also liaise closely with Reception teachers to share essential information on individual children and their families.

Strong emphasis is rightly placed on developing children's language and communication and social skills in the Nursery and Reception classes, as these are very much lower than expected levels for their age on entry to school. This emphasis is successful and children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although their skills and abilities are still well below those levels usually found when they start in Year 1.

The teachers in the Nursery and Reception classes are making better use of assessment to identify the needs of individuals and to plan more effectively for their next steps in learning. However, in general, although there have been some recent improvements, children's progress is not tracked carefully enough. For example, planning, particularly daily planning in Reception, does not take full account of children's differing abilities. This leads to a lack of challenge for more able children, especially in tasks they choose to do for themselves.

Since the time of its previous early years and day care inspection, the children's centre has maintained its quality and has improved access to the outdoor area for children aged under two, who now have access to this important part of the early years curriculum. The day care in the centre and in the before- and after-school clubs meets the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the requirements of the Child Care Act 2006.

What the school should do to improve further

- Rigorously analyse data on the progress of individuals and groups of pupils in all year groups, and use the outcomes to improve teaching by ensuring that planned work is consistently well matched to pupils' individual needs.
- Raise standards in English by providing more training opportunities so that staff can more effectively plan and teach the key concepts and skills which underpin effective writing and phonics, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Improve strategic planning and self-evaluation, ensuring all members of the senior team follow up rigorously the findings from monitoring activities.

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

Standards across the school have crept up from a low point over the last three years, particularly from 2008 when they were exceptionally low in Year 2 and well below average in Year 6.

Pupils generally enter Key Stage 2 one year behind the expected level for their age. The current Year 6 pupils have made satisfactory progress since Year 2, but they are still two terms behind similar pupils nationally. Girls generally achieve more strongly than boys. Although test results have improved since the last inspection some pupils still find it difficult to apply their knowledge, particularly boys in writing. Many achieve well when oral responses are required but do not write to the same standard, a weakness that affects several subjects. This, coupled with insufficient opportunities for pupils – particularly the more able – to develop good independent learning skills, means that they are insufficiently prepared for future further study or for later employment.

The school anticipates that its extensive use of booster classes, revision sessions, mentoring and other forms of intervention will continue to yield even better results in 2009, but its internal assessments do not yet show this conclusively.

Satisfactory provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small but increasing numbers who speak English as an additional language enables them to make the same progress as other pupils except in science, where progress is slower.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are welcoming and friendly, and willingly share their experiences and thoughts about their school. Strong links with the local police force enable pupils to understand well what it means to be a good citizen and the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are familiar with the festivals and customs of other faiths and cultures and this supports their understanding of racism and discrimination and helps them show appropriate levels of tolerance for other cultures. The responsibility of being a member of the school council and/or a peer mentor gives pupils an understanding of how a community should work together and how they can influence what happens. Pupils usually work and play together harmoniously and there is a friendly atmosphere throughout the school. Most pupils report that they feel safe because they know that the rare occasions when children behave unkindly towards them will be effectively dealt with.

Attendance has improved since the last inspection; nonetheless, it is still below average with a number of pupils still going on family holidays in term-time despite the school's best efforts to dissuade them.

Pupils and the children in the children's centre know about the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and make good use of the after-school clubs, many of which involve physical exercise. Older pupils understand about the misuse of drugs and the potential dangers of the internet.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is inconsistent across the school, resulting in variable rates of progress in classes and year groups. A small amount of good teaching was observed along with one outstanding French lesson. Staff have consistent expectations of behaviour and this means that classrooms are calm. Strong relationships between adults and pupils contribute to a positive climate for learning. Lessons are appropriately organised and pupils generally make broadly satisfactory gains in their learning. Teachers gather information on each pupil's progress at frequent intervals. However, they do not always make the best use of the information gained to adapt work to match pupils' different abilities and provide the right level of challenge. The quality of marking is satisfactory but varies between subjects and classes, and it does not always offer guidance on how pupils can improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school ensures that pupils get a broad and balanced learning experience, including an enhanced range of well-attended activities. Year 6 pupils talk glowingly about their residential stay at Astley Burf. This enables them to experience a range of outdoor activities as well as developing independence, confidence and self-esteem. All year groups take part in school trips which enhance the work they do in school. The personal, health and social curriculum responds

satisfactorily to the needs of the pupils. Consequently, they are aware of dangers of the misuse of technology as well as drugs. The school has made a good start to developing French, and pupils are enjoying their initial experiences of learning a foreign language. The key weakness in the curriculum is the lack of opportunities provided for pupils to write extended pieces, across a range of genres, and this is a contributing factor to the low standards in English.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes good care of all pupils, including those in the children's centre, providing an attractive and safe environment. The key and family support workers lead a range of successful courses to develop parenting skills. The safety and well-being of pupils are given a high priority and safeguarding arrangements in both settings are rigorous and meet current government requirements. For example, child protection procedures are comprehensive and all staff are aware of the action to take if they have concerns about the well-being of a pupil. Vulnerable pupils and those at risk of exclusion benefit from the provision in the rainbow room, where they receive effective additional support from trained learning mentors. Those children and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, particularly those with the protection of a statement and those who are at the school action plus stage. Their needs are identified clearly and the provision to meet them is regularly reviewed. Secure links with outside agencies, such as the educational psychologist and speech and language therapists, ensure that extra help for individual pupils is available as required. However, the help for pupils at school action stage is variable across classes and year groups.

The school's system for setting challenging targets is in its infancy and as yet targets are not being used effectively in all classes to enable pupils to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders at all levels in the main school and in the children's centre promote community cohesion well within the school and the local community. This stems from the strong relationships between staff, pupils, parents and governors, and a willingness to be outward looking in a shared ethos of promoting a sense of belonging by all communities. The children's centre provides a range of additional services that are valued and used well by members of the community. The key workers know the local families well. The local police officers make regular visits and have built up very positive and constructive relationships with families and children. Liaison between staff from the many services provided in the centre and the Nursery is managed effectively.

Pupils' understanding of international and global issues is addressed adequately through the curriculum and through emerging links with other schools in more diverse localities. Inclusion and equal opportunity are generally promoted well but are not yet fully effective, because some pupils are not always given learning tasks which match their abilities.

The school has improved its tracking and monitoring procedures. However, the senior and middle leaders do not make the most of all the data the school collects on its pupils, especially to determine the progress of particular groups. This in turn has prevented the school from setting itself challenging targets. The systems for monitoring teaching and learning and pupils' progress are not sufficiently rigorous.

Governors provide satisfactory support to the school management, and a number of them are taking up extensive training opportunities.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	3

Achievement and standards

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	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Priory Primary School, Dudley DY1 4AQ

Thank you for being so friendly when we visited your school. We enjoyed having lunch with you and talking to you. You have really helped us. We think your school is a satisfactory school and these are the main things that we thought you might like to know about.

- Adults really care for you and help you if you are worried or upset.
- They work well with your mums and dads and this helps you to learn.
- You enjoy school and behave well.
- You are kind and helpful to each other and share your toys and books.
- You are good at helping around the school and do what adults ask you to do.
- You know how to stay safe and keep healthy.

The school is working hard to make things even better for you. We have asked the adults in charge to do three particular things.

- Make sure that the teachers always give you work that makes you think hard, especially those of you who find work easy, to help you make faster progress and reach higher standards.
- Make sure all teachers are involved fully in checking how well you are doing and that everyone is following the school policies.
- Help your teachers to get even better at teaching writing and letter sounds (phonics).

We hope that you will all continue to enjoy coming to school and trying your hardest so that you are successful in the future.

Thank you again. We wish you continuing success.

Yours faithfully

Jacqueline Wordsworth

Her Majesty's Inspector