

The Priory Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131212
Local Authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	328566
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Walsh

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)	244
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	Andrew Farrington
Headteacher	Trevor Hancock
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Dorsett Road Friar Park Wednesbury WS10 0JG
Telephone number	01215 561383
Fax number	01215 560520

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is of a similar size to most primary schools. The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals is very high. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and varies greatly between year groups. There are a small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The school is housed within the Priory Family Centre, which has been open for just over a year. The centre provides a range of services including health, adult education and wrap around care. There is an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) unit which houses part-time Nursery classes and the Reception class. The school has a National Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils make excellent progress in their academic studies and in their personal development. The majority of parents are absolutely delighted with the way the school has developed and improved in recent years. A typical parent comment, 'This is a brilliant school, the teachers are always there to help,' neatly sums up this school. Pupils are very proud of their new accommodation and take great care of it. They have a terrific time at school and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour and improving attendance. Despite the school's best efforts, a small minority of pupils still do not attend regularly and this affects their progress. The active school council, and highly-valued groups such as the playground friends, demonstrate the pupils' outstanding contribution to the school community. A very good programme of personal, social and health education is ensuring that pupils know a great deal about how to keep healthy and safe.

Many children have very low levels of skills in literacy, numeracy and social development when they join the Nursery class. By the time pupils leave in Year 6, their academic standards are below, but very close to the national average, and pupils' achievement is outstanding. The school has focused very effectively on dismantling barriers to achievement. As a result, all groups of pupils make excellent progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. These pupils are exceptionally well supported, for example, through the school's very effective partnership with external agencies such as Sure Start, and the dedication of support staff, all of whom make a significant contribution to their learning and well-being. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Procedures for safeguarding meet government requirements. The school caters for some very needy children, but ensures they are carefully nurtured so that they gradually start to overcome their difficulties and begin to blossom.

The headteacher's tremendous dedication and determination underpins the outstanding leadership and management in the school. This and the hard work and enthusiasm of the whole staff make a huge contribution to the very positive ethos in school. Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers are not afraid to try new ideas. As a result, lessons are exciting and innovative and capture pupils' interests very well. An exceptionally well planned curriculum, which is kept under constant review, meets the needs of the pupils really well. Extremely rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the school's work, including the checking of teaching and learning and rigorous analysis of data, have allowed the school to pinpoint exactly where it needs to improve, and how. The school's commitment to, and pupils' involvement in, the local community is of the highest quality. Pupils gain a good understanding of different faiths and cultures in Britain through their work in subjects such as religious education, geography and history. However, they have few opportunities to learn about them through first-hand experience. Relatively speaking, this aspect of personal development is less well developed than other aspects. Nevertheless, the relentless focus on improvement, combined with very effective day to day management, has ensured that standards have continued to rise and achievement improved even when the school was at risk of being distracted by the management of the new build. This demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Pupils get off to a flying start in the EYFS unit. Many children have very underdeveloped literacy, numeracy and personal skills when they start Nursery. The very successful partnerships with other agencies, including Sure Start and the Time to Talk Project, ensure that children's additional needs are quickly identified and they receive good quality support. Children make outstanding progress throughout the EYFS because they have access to exciting activities that are very carefully planned to meet their interests and needs. They quickly learn to play on their own and with others. Adults provide excellent support for children. They model behaviour and language very well. Their exceptional questioning skills help to develop children's thinking.

Relationships within the unit are excellent and contribute well to children's outstanding personal, social and emotional development. Although the outdoor provision is very new, it is already being used effectively for highly enjoyable experiences such as dancing, making music and jumping in puddles. During these activities, staff take every opportunity to extend pupils' vocabulary and to ensure they have a fantastic time. The new programme that helps pupils to link sounds and letters is boosting children's achievement in communication, language and literacy. Outstanding leadership and management have ensured that all the welfare requirements of the EYFS are fully met. Links with parents are extremely good. Staff work hard to encourage parents to help their children learn through play.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve pupils' understanding of the range and diversity of cultures in the United Kingdom, giving them more first-hand opportunities to learn about them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Although children have made outstanding progress in the EYFS, their skills are still well below national expectations when they join Year 1, particularly in reading and writing. They continue to make outstanding progress in Key Stage 1 because of excellent teaching and a curriculum that is carefully designed to meet their needs. Although standards are still significantly below average at the end of Year 2 overall and in reading, year on year, they are improving faster than nationally. The school's focus on sounds and letters is now boosting progress in reading and writing in both the EYFS and Key Stage 1.

Pupils' progress accelerates even faster in Key Stage 2 and is excellent here, too. Standards are now only just below average and the school frequently exceeds its challenging targets. It was rightly concerned about standards and achievement in mathematics in 2007. Good teaching, leadership and management have successfully boosted pupils' achievement in this subject. The school is aware that pupils make better progress in reading than in writing in Years 3 to 6 and it has worked hard to improve writing. Consequently, more able pupils in Year 6 are now able to write lively and engaging pieces with good use of interesting words and phrases, although their spelling is sometimes still inaccurate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

From the Nursery class onwards, there is a strong emphasis on developing good behaviour and manners. Pupils respond exceptionally well to this, and their behaviour is outstanding. They want to please their teachers, for whom they have great respect. Any injustice is quickly challenged, instilling in the pupils a strong sense of right and wrong. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school and emphatically state that there is very little bullying. Understandably, they are very proud of their school and fully embrace the shared values of the school community, including the emphasis on keeping fit and healthy. Pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' moral and social development is excellent, and they have good opportunities to learn about faiths and cultures other than their own in different subjects. However, they have few first-hand experiences of different cultures and this somewhat limits the depth of their understanding of them. Pupils make an important and highly valued contribution to school life. Their excellent commitment to the local community is demonstrated through their involvement in local music and arts festivals and caring for the local environment. Outstanding academic progress combined with positive attitudes means that pupils are well placed for future success, except for a small minority, whose learning is held back by their irregular attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are consistently good and often outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations of behaviour and pupils' progress, to which pupils respond well. Lessons are very well prepared and teachers constantly take the needs of individual pupils into account. Consequently, work is very well matched to pupils' different abilities. The most able are challenged and the least able very well supported, enabling all to make outstanding progress. The well-briefed teaching assistants are very skilled and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and well-being. The use of information communication technology (ICT) to support learning is fully exploited, and teachers use interactive whiteboards and other audio visual aids extremely well to make learning interesting and fun for the pupils. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers are not afraid to take risks. As a result, lessons are exciting and very enjoyable for pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is very carefully planned to ensure that it captures pupils' interests, develops their aspirations and effectively builds on their previous learning. As a result, it very successfully promotes both outstanding enjoyment and achievement. There is very good provision for literacy and numeracy, and the strong emphasis on investigation in science is helping to raise standards. Provision for ICT has significantly improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Other subjects are taught through topics and themes, making lessons more relevant and enjoyable for the pupils. However, the school is constantly reflecting on its provision and has plans in place to make these lessons even more interesting. Links with the local secondary school help to extend pupils' opportunities for sport. There is an excellent programme of visits,

including residential experiences, which pupils say make learning fun. Pupils also appreciate the wide range of clubs available to them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

High quality care, guidance and support make a very important contribution to securing pupils' outstanding achievement and personal development. Staff know the pupils extremely well. Pupils' academic progress is very carefully checked and those in danger of slowing are quickly offered very effective support. Pupils say they 'really like' their teachers and are confident to talk to them about any problems. Parents also say that all staff are 'approachable and friendly'. Pupils who find learning difficult for whatever reason, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are exceptionally well supported. The sensory room is used very effectively as a nurturing experience that helps to improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour. The school has very successfully raised pupils' attendance from inadequate to satisfactory by consistently pursuing all absences and only a small minority of pupils now cause attendance to be only satisfactory. The school has recently focused on improving marking. In many classes, a productive dialogue is developing between pupils and teachers and is helping pupils to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher has developed an outstanding team of senior leaders and middle managers who all fully contribute to the school's success and continuous improvement. The school's focus on improving teaching and learning has been extremely successful. Well focused professional development has enhanced teachers' skills and contributed to pupils' excellent progress. The process of setting targets is used extremely well to secure improvements year on year. Occasionally, the school's evaluation of its own work is too conservative, reflecting its very high expectations and relentless quest for perfection. The school is extremely committed to serving its local community and to promoting equality of opportunity for all. It promotes community cohesion well through this, and by teaching pupils about cultural diversity in subjects such as history, geography and religious education. However, it does not provide pupils with enough opportunities to meet members of more diverse communities. It has been difficult to recruit governors, but this problem is easing. Governors are very committed and are becoming increasingly able to provide effective challenge. The school is very active in the local network of schools. It is willing to learn from others and very willing to share its own exceptional practice.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
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	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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 learners' needs?	1
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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

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

5 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Priory Primary School Wednesbury WS10 0JG

It was a delight and a privilege to visit your school. We really enjoyed talking to you all and listened very carefully to what you had to say

It was good to hear that you know lots about keeping healthy and safe. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour. You have very good manners and make visitors very welcome indeed. You told us that your teachers look after you well and that they always try to help you, especially if you are worried or upset. The children in the EYFS have a wonderful time and it was great to see them splashing in the puddles! We think that your school council and playgrounds friends are doing a very good job. It was also good to see all the positive comments written on the board in the main foyer.

Your teachers work very hard indeed to make sure your school just gets better and better. Your lessons are interesting and lots of fun, but your teachers also make sure you work hard, too. That is why the quality of teaching is outstanding and you make excellent progress. By Year 6, the standards you reach are similar to those in other schools. We really enjoyed looking at your work, and especially reading some of your lively writing. We have asked teachers to help you to develop a better understanding of the different cultures in today's United Kingdom, and to help you understand more about the wider world.

Those who lead and manage your school are doing a very good job indeed. Everybody, including yourselves, has made a fantastic contribution to your school and this has made it one of the very best. In fact, it is outstanding!

Well done to you all and thank you again for being such good company. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Walsh Lead inspector