

Priory School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	921/6041
Unique Reference Number	118225
Inspection number	333830
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended.

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

Priory School is a small independent day school situated in Shanklin on the Isle of Wight. The school provides for girls and boys aged from three to 16 years. There are currently 90 pupils on roll; of these, five children are in the Early Years Foundation Stage with three attending a mixed Nursery and Reception class and two children being placed in a Year 1 class. In March 2009 the school was taken over by a new proprietor. The aim of the new proprietor for Priory School *'is to offer a first-class education at an affordable cost in a well-structured and clearly-run environment in order to become the school of choice for parents and pupils on the Isle of Wight'*. Whilst the school's ethos is broadly Christian, pupils of all faiths are welcome.

Evaluation of the school

Priory School provides a satisfactory quality of education. The curriculum and teaching are satisfactory and as a result, pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and their behaviour is good. Although staff show real care for the pupils at school, provision for their welfare, health and safety overall is inadequate. Similarly, although staff are caring of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, its overall effectiveness is inadequate. The school had not addressed the regulations that were not met at the time of its last inspection in 2006 and there are now many more regulations that are not met. The new proprietor is aware of the school's shortcomings and has begun to introduce a range of positive developments, for example, in recruiting supply staff to fill vacant positions. This is appreciated by both parents and pupils.

Quality of education

The curriculum is satisfactory. All pupils follow subjects from the National Curriculum and they have the opportunity to learn French from Year 1 onwards. Commercially produced schemes of work are mainly used to aid planning in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 although there is inconsistency in what is available for all subjects, particularly in the Junior School. In addition, the implementation of the schemes of work is not consistent in quality. This is of particular concern where there has been disruption caused by teachers leaving and joining the school at different times prior to the new proprietor's ownership. The Key Stage 4 curriculum reflects the syllabus of the external examination boards.

In Years 10 and 11, pupils have the opportunity to study a wide range of optional subjects at GCSE level. Opportunities for work experience and effective careers advice have not been available and this was an issue reported at the time of the last inspection. However, the new proprietor has taken firm action in this respect and the school now has plans for the development of careers guidance to help pupils make the right choices for their further education or the work place. Pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is not planned specifically, although provision is under development in Years 10 and 11. In other year groups, various aspects of PSHE are covered across a range of subjects such as history and religious education but the school does not have a clear picture of what is covered. Opportunities to support pupils' physical education have very recently been introduced through a weekly sports activity afternoon. This includes new activities such as martial arts and cricket, plus weekly swimming sessions at the leisure centre which add to the health and well-being of pupils. The curriculum is enriched with an appropriate range of extra curricular activities in, for example, science, drama and fencing. Pupils also have the chance in Years 5, 6 and 7, to go on a residential visit once every three years.

Provision for pupils who have special needs and learning difficulties is reliant on the individual teacher's knowledge of the pupils in their class. In the main they are catered for appropriately because classes are small and staff know the pupils well. This is exemplified in the individual staff support for a pupil with a statement of special educational need (SEN). However, there is no formal approach to the provision of through individual education plans that identify focussed and specific support for pupils' particular needs or to ensure that the requirements of a pupil's statement are met. The new proprietor has acted quickly to make contact with parents of those pupils who have learning difficulties or particular medical needs. Similarly, he has established links with consultants with specific expertise to provide support where specialist help is required. It is his intention to rectify the current situation within school by the appointment of a member of staff to lead and manage this area of the schools' work.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory overall. Although good teaching is evident in school, good teaching is not a consistent feature throughout school. Lessons are often planned so that pupils of differing abilities do the same task; the more able do extension tasks if they finish early, whilst pupils who have particular learning needs are helped to complete the task. In some cases teachers are hindered by the lack of resources available to them; this has an adverse impact on teaching and learning. Where teaching is good or better, teachers plan well to meet pupils' needs. For example, a pupil used information and communication technology (ICT) to successfully extend and consolidate his learning in an English lesson. Pupils say that they are helped to understand how to improve their work by having good discussions with their teachers and sometimes through the marking of their work. However, marking is inconsistent in quality and regularity and the quality of presentation of pupils' work in some books is unsatisfactory.

In Key Stage 3 and 4, assessments are carried out through the completion of end of unit tests or by testing pupils against GCSE requirements.

Regular assessments carried out by all teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 have not been in place. The new head of junior school, who will join the staff later this term, has already introduced clear expectations in this respect. As a result, teachers in the junior school are now completing spelling and reading assessments. More is planned by the heads of the senior and junior schools to enable teachers to assess pupils' work more thoroughly so that the results can be compared with national averages in different subjects. Similarly there are plans for the assessments to be recorded in a robust and systematic way to enable the school to show the progress that pupils make over time; this is currently not in place. It is the intention of the heads of school that this action will inform teachers' planning more effectively than assessment does at the moment. Pupils' work indicates that pupils make satisfactory progress over time and in some cases progress is good. By the time pupils leave school most have achieved GCSE qualifications in line with their capabilities and the school's expectations.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

The quality of provision for pupils' moral social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Most pupils are really positive about the relationships they have with the staff and with each other; younger pupils say that the school is like a big family. Pupils are supportive of each other and positive about the recent changes made in school. As a result they say they enjoy their education much more. This is reflected in their behaviour and attendance, which are good. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community by acting as unofficial mentors. However, until recently, few specific responsibilities were given to senior pupils and none have been given to those in the junior school. The new proprietor has introduced the system of Head Girl, Head Boy and prefects and although there is no school council, pupils are pleased with the increasing opportunities for the 'student voice' to be heard. The school provides good opportunities to promote community involvement through fund raising. Examples of the pupils' charitable work include a talent show, when money was raised for a local hospice and for the homeless, plus fund raising for Red Nose Day and for Children in Need. Pupils' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory overall. Although there is no formal guidance in place to aid pupils' next steps when they leave school, the staff work hard to provide support and guidance on a personal level. The school's planned provision for pupils' understanding of cultural diversity and to promote religious tolerance is appropriately covered through religious education and history. Provision for citizenship is in the early stages of development and currently pupils do not have sufficient knowledge of public institutions and services in England.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Provision for students' welfare, health and safety is inadequate. This is because the implementation of essential staff recruitment policies have lacked rigour. In addition many staff have not yet attended child protection training. This particular issue was identified at the time of the last inspection.

The proprietor has responded to this issue and child protection training has been booked to take place during the summer term 2009. Policies relating to health and safety procedures for educational visits, behaviour, sanctions and anti-bullying are in place. Pupils confirm that they understand the behaviour expected of them and that guidelines are now much clearer and the sanctions are implemented fairly. Pupils say that they know the procedures for reporting bullying and that the small community means that any issues are promptly and effectively dealt with. The school provides good levels of supervision for pupils. Staff provide high levels of attention to individuals and are sensitive to pupils' needs. Pupils say that they feel safe and can readily approach members of staff for help. The school has a qualified first aider. However, the first aid policy is not specific on procedures for dealing with hospital visits and bodily fluid spillage. Medicines are stored safely (although some distance from the designated sick room) and incidents and accidents are properly recorded. There are regular and thorough fire risk assessments carried out by external consultants and there are no outstanding issues from the latest report. Pupils are beginning to develop an awareness of healthy lifestyles, for example, they say that issues such as smoking are covered in science; however, this is not developed as part of a planned programme of work.

The school fulfils its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school's procedures for recruitment do not reflect the latest guidance. Prior to the confirmation of the appointment of staff, the school had not completed all the checks required to be carried out. In addition, an enhanced criminal record check, or List 99 check, had not been made for a significant minority of staff who work at the school. Whilst a single central record is in place, it does not accurately reflect all requirements. However, the proprietor has begun to take the action required to address these issues.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is located in a large detached building that covers four floors, three of which are used by the pupils. It comprises two small halls for whole school use, an art room and a room for science. The school has plans to relocate the junior school and the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in September 2009. However, currently, although there are a sufficient number of classrooms to meet the pupils' needs, some are too small for the number of pupils who use them and the floor covering in the mixed Nursery and Reception classroom is in poor condition. There are a suitable number of toilet facilities to cater for staff and pupils. However, there are insufficient washbasins available for both the boys and girls and the water in their washrooms is currently not at the appropriate temperature. The school has a medical room although its location is some distance away from the nearest pupils' toilet facilities.

The outside play area is large and there is plenty of grassed area available. There is a swimming pool on site which is fenced off and is not available for use.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school provides a range of useful information for parents. A school prospectus is supplemented by the school's website and newsletters that provide up to date information on the work of the school. Through the website and prospectus, parents are made aware of the availability, upon request, of the school's policies and other information. However, they are not made aware that the policies available also include those relating to child protection and health and safety. Where a pupil has a statement of SEN, the school had not provided the appropriate information to the local authority so that the required annual review could be carried out. Parental questionnaires received by inspectors reflected more positive than negative views of the school and its work; parents were forthcoming in their approval of recent developments.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school's procedures meet all the regulations.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Parents of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage say they are pleased with their children's education. Staff care about their children's needs and good relationships are forged with the children in their care; it is evident that children enjoy their time at school. However, whilst the opportunities planned for the children's learning and development and their assessment are satisfactory overall and enable them to make satisfactory progress, the children do not have enough opportunities to make independent choices during the day. This is hindered by the constraints of the very small classroom where the Nursery and Reception class is based. This compromises provision for children's personal development and well-being which is satisfactory. As a result, even though children's behaviour is good overall, they sometimes find it hard to share and to be independent in their learning and play. Space is not a restriction for the Reception aged children placed in the Year 1 class and it is the school's intention for all Reception aged children to be with the Year 1 children from September 2009. From that date the school will admit children only from Reception age and upwards.

Although the proprietor has clear plans for the future leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage, its leadership and management have been inadequate and remain so at the time of the inspection. As a result, teachers have not received any direction to ensure that the latest statutory guidance and requirements are in place and are met. Also, in both classes where there are Early Years Foundation Stage children, the curriculum planning does not adequately cover opportunities for their independent learning and for their learning outdoors.

This lack of guidance has also resulted in significant welfare, health and safety requirements not being met. Consequently, even though staff demonstrate effective pastoral care for the children, the overall welfare, health and safety provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate. For example, the school does not have any policies and procedures in place that inform parents and staff about the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage; staff who work with the children do not have the appropriate qualifications to do so; not all staff have undertaken child protection training and essential staff recruitment checks have not been made. In addition, whilst some of the required risk assessments are in place, others such as that for the outside area that is occasionally used have not been completed. Given the seriousness of these issues, the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended ("the Regulations"), with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the curriculum (standard 1) and must:

- ensure that schemes of work are in place to show how pupils' understanding and skills will be developed in all subjects throughout the school (paragraph 1(2))
- where pupils have a statement of special educational need, ensure that teachers are familiar with the requirements of the statement and ensure that these are delivered effectively (paragraph 1(2)(e))
- ensure that a planned programme for personal, social and health education is in place for all pupils (paragraph 1(2)(f))
- develop an effective approach to the provision of appropriate careers guidance for secondary age pupils (paragraph 1(2)(g))
- ensure that there are sufficient classroom resources of an adequate quality, quantity and range to aid effective teaching and learning in all lessons (paragraph 1(3)(f))
- ensure that there is a framework in place to assess and record pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and that the information from such assessment is consistently utilised to plan teaching to aid pupils' progress (paragraph 1(3)(g)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (standard 2) and must:

- provide pupils with opportunities to develop a broad and general knowledge of public institutions and services in England (paragraph 2(d)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- ensure that the designated child protection officer and all members of staff have completed child protection training (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- ensure that the school's first aid policy provides guidance on procedures regarding spillage of bodily fluids and incidents which may require a hospital visit (paragraph 3(6)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff ensure that all the required checks have been carried out (paragraph 4(2)(a))
- ensure that all members of staff have had a current check by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) (paragraph 4(2)(b))
- ensure that members of staff whose CRB check has still to be confirmed do not work with the pupils unless they are supervised by someone who does have a CRB check or until their list 99 check is in place (paragraph 4(2)(d))
- ensure that all supply staff used have a current CRB check (paragraph 4A (1 – 8))
- confirm that the proprietor's CRB check is in place (paragraph 4B)
- provide a single central register that contains all the information required (paragraph 4C(2–8)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the premises and accommodation (standard 5) and must:

- ensure that all classrooms used are of an appropriate size to allow effective teaching and learning (paragraph 5(j))
- provide a sufficient number of wash hand basins in both the boys and the girls' toilet facilities and ensure that the water is at an appropriate temperature (paragraph 5(k))
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, in accordance with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 (paragraph 5 (l))
- ensure that the floor covering is in good condition in the Early Years Foundation Stage classroom (paragraph 5(s)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information for parents, carers and others (standard 6) and must:

- ensure that parents are made aware that they can request policies relating to child protection and health and safety (paragraph 6(2)(h))

- ensure that information is provided to the local authority where a statement of educational need is in place, to aid the annual review of the statement (paragraph 6(8)).

In order to comply with the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:

- ensure that planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage reflects the latest guidance for children's learning and development
- ensure that planned learning opportunities include regular access to activities outdoors and more opportunities to learn through self-initiated play.

In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:

- ensure that Early Years Foundation Stage policies and procedures are in place either as stand alone documents or reflected within whole school policies
- implement an effective children's safeguarding policy
- ensure that all staff working with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have completed child protection training
- ensure that requirements are met in terms of staff qualifications for working with Early Years Foundation Stage children
- ensure that a CRB disclosure is in place for all staff working with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- ensure that a risk assessment is completed for the outdoor area to which children have supervised access
- ensure that a risk assessment for the classroom takes note of all potential risks and that the classroom is of a suitable size to cater effectively for children's needs.

Inspection Judgement Recording Form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education			√	
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils			√	
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			√	
How well pupils make progress in their learning			√	

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development			√	
The behaviour of pupils		√		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils				√
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?			√	
How well do children achieve in the Early Years Foundation Stage relative to their starting points and capabilities?			√	
How good are the personal development and well-being of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?			√	
What is the quality of welfare, health and safety of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?				√
How effectively is the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?				√
What is the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage including, where relevant, the quality of childcare?				√

School details

Name of school	Priory School		
DCSF number	921/6041		
Unique reference number	118225		
Type of school	Co-educational day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1993		
Age range of pupils	3-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 47	Girls: 43	Total: 90
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 1	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2775 - £4800		
Address of school	Alverstone Manor 32 Luccombe Road Shanklin Isle of Wight PO37 6RR		
Telephone number	01983 861222		
Fax number	01983 861222		
Email address	mail@prioryschool.org.uk		
Headteacher	Mr E Matyjaszek		
Proprietor	Mr E Matyjaszek		
Reporting inspector	Elisabeth Linley HMI		
Dates of inspection	13–14 May 2009		