

Priory Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109316
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	337273
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Andrew Harrett HMI

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

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Leece
Headteacher	Neville Coles
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2006
School address	Queensway Weston-super-Mare BS22 6BP
Telephone number	01934 511411
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Age group	11–16
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**Number of children on roll in the registered
childcare provision****Date of last inspection of registered
childcare provision**

Not previously inspected

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed 34 lessons taught by 30 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, groups of students and governors. Inspectors looked at documentation including school development plans, the monitoring of teaching and learning, assessment information and information regarding the safeguarding of students. Inspectors considered responses to questionnaires from staff, students and 266 parents and carers. At the time of the inspection Year 11 students were not in school because of GCSE examinations and Year 10 students were on work experience. On the first day of the inspection, Year 6 pupils who are starting at the school in September 2010 were welcomed for a day of activities. On the second day, students in Years 7, 8 and 9 worked together on a variety of tasks linked to the Football World Cup and the countries participating in it.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- achievement of all students in all year groups, particularly girls, and whether weaknesses in mathematics and variations between subjects have been addressed
- the accuracy of the school's judgements on teaching and assessment and whether there is variation in their quality between subjects
- whether the curriculum is planned to ensure that basic skills are promoted well and how well it is designed to motivate different groups of students such as girls.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average secondary school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is slightly lower than average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is much lower than average. Slightly more than an average proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Priory Pre-School provides registered childcare on the school site and is run by the governing body. The provision was inspected at the same time as the main school inspection and forms part of this report. The school has specialist status in technology. It became a Trust school in April 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Staff, students and parents and carers all play their part in maintaining and improving the quality of education in this good school. In discussions and responses to questionnaires, all sections of the school community showed that they were proud to work and learn together at the school. One parent typically stated that in the school 'children blossom in confidence and academic achievement'.

The school has some outstanding features, showing clear improvement since the last inspection. Care, guidance and support are excellent, ensuring that students are exceptionally well supported and valued throughout their school career. They are welcomed on arrival, supported well in their learning and personal development and well prepared for the future. There are excellent relationships between adults and students. Consequently, students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. In this supportive environment, they feel extremely safe and secure; they make an excellent contribution to improving the school and make good progress in their learning and personal development.

Determined leaders and managers have driven changes that have consolidated and improved on existing good practice. Rigorous self-evaluation, regular monitoring and consequent adaptation of good strategic planning have ensured that the school has responded to the needs of the students well. The resulting improvements show that the capacity for further improvement is good.

The school works well with other providers and the local community to ensure that the broad and flexible curriculum provides a good range of courses for all groups of students. The specialism in technology has been particularly helpful in this respect and in forging strong links with other educational establishments and local businesses.

The great majority of teaching in the school is at least good, with some that is outstanding. Consequently, students make good or better progress in many subjects, with a few, such as science, having improved significantly since the last inspection. Although some variation persists in the achievement of some groups, such as the slower progress made by girls, the gaps are narrowing. Improvements have been achieved more slowly in some other areas, notably in design and technology and in mathematics. Consequently, the school has not met all the challenging targets set for its specialist status. However, rigorous analysis of the progress of individual students and carefully targeted support have led to recent improvements in these areas; the school's own analysis and results already achieved in public examinations show that standards and progress are now better in Year 11. Nevertheless, in mathematics there is not yet a sufficient proportion of good teaching to ensure that students make good progress

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throughout their school career. Although the leadership and management of teaching and learning are good overall, having led to significant strides in some subjects, the relative slowness of improving achievement in mathematics, and of ensuring a good rate of progress in the subject in all year groups, makes this an urgent priority.

Leaders and managers have created a cohesive community which has good links with the local area. Although there are some successful initiatives for improving the students' knowledge and understanding of the diversity of national and global communities, planning for this has not been as sharply focused and so the promotion of community cohesion is no more than satisfactory overall.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make improving the quality of teaching in mathematics a top priority so that teaching is good across the subject and students in all year groups make good progress by July 2011 by:
 - finding opportunities to share good practice from within the department and other subjects across the school
 - drawing up a timetable of planned support for teachers with clear targets for improvement
 - regularly and rigorously monitoring the impact of planned support and adjusting plans accordingly
 - ensuring that the impact of teaching is frequently monitored in all year groups and classes.
- Make sure that planning for promoting community cohesion is based on making improvements locally, nationally and globally, and that the timescale for monitoring and evaluating the plans is clear.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Standards on entry are a little below average. Attainment has been steadily rising since the last inspection and, though attainment remains broadly average overall, the improvements demonstrate that students make good progress from their starting points. Students enjoy their learning and make good or better progress in the great majority of subjects. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make at least as good progress as other students. In the best practice, students are given ample opportunity to get involved in activities and are adept at working productively on their own, in pairs and in groups. In an excellent Year 7 science lesson, for example, students were enthusiastically planning a dinosaur theme park. Skilful questioning by the teacher ensured that all were involved in the discussions about why it would not be appropriate to place some animals in close proximity to each other. This was managed in such a way that students confidently put forward tentative suggestions, enabling them to reach conclusions for themselves. In another science lesson, students responded eagerly to carefully timed tasks to design a drink container for use at the

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Wimbledon tennis tournament, simultaneously learning about exothermic and endothermic reactions. This careful planning to involve students in activities was typical of the best practice in the school. In less satisfactory lessons, such as some mathematics lessons, students were unclear about the purpose of their work and precisely what they were supposed to be doing. Because they were not properly prepared for the tasks they lacked confidence in their ability, were not engaged with their learning and so made slower progress.

Attendance is above average and improving, reflecting the school's excellent work with families and the students' enjoyment of school. The breakfast club has been effective in giving students a good start to the day, and improving attendance, punctuality and concentration. Students participate enthusiastically in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and are given ample opportunity to develop skills important for later life. These were clearly on display in the activities during the World Cup theme day, where students collaborated purposefully in mixed-age groups. The activities were facilitated by teachers but students rose well to the challenge of getting on with tasks by themselves. They make a good contribution to many aspects of school life through the school council and the help that they give school leaders in evaluating and suggesting improvements to the school environment and to the curriculum and its delivery. Students' moral and social development is good. Spiritual and cultural development is promoted well through some subjects and activities, but is not so well integrated into the general life of the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In the best practice, lessons are characterised by high levels of students' engagement and motivation because activities are carefully designed to involve them in an appropriate range of tasks. Consequently, students work well independently, in pairs and in groups. A shared understanding of what constitutes good practice and how this should feature in lesson planning ensures that lessons are interesting and purposeful with clear learning outcomes. Common systems for rewarding good work and behaviour and modifying that which does not meet expectations make a significant contribution to establishing good order and a settled working environment. In the best practice, questioning techniques probe students' understanding and encourage them to explore alternative solutions to problems well. However, in less effective lessons questioning demands little more than identifying correct answers and does not provide sufficient challenge. Procedures for promoting self-assessment and for students to assess one another's work are well established. Although work is marked regularly by teachers and there are examples of good practice, comments are sometimes too brief to give precise information about what has been achieved and how work could be improved.

The wide range of courses available for students at Key Stage 4 provides a personalised curriculum which motivates the students and promotes achievement well. New BTEC courses and diplomas are having a positive impact on achievement in general and on the achievement of girls. Well-established links with other local institutions provide access to a wide range of courses. As observed during the inspection, carefully planned enrichment days make a significant contribution to the development of a wide range of skills. Basic skills are embedded across the curriculum, but more successfully in literacy and information and communication technology than in numeracy, where opportunities are sometimes missed. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 meets requirements and promotes the achievement of all groups of students well.

Excellent care, guidance and support lie at the heart of the school's success in raising achievement and improving personal development. The Praising Stars system provides excellent data on students' attendance, achievement and behaviour, carefully analysed to provide effective support for individuals and groups of students. As observed during the inspection, procedures for receiving students into the school are well established and effective. The school works well with other agencies to help vulnerable students and those at risk. Students and their families have confidence in the school's systems for caring for students and promoting their well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The good leadership of the principal, ably supported by his senior team, has created a supportive environment in which students flourish. Flexible and innovative approaches to curriculum design and close attention to the personal development of the students have created a cohesive community which provides a firm foundation for improving their achievement. There is a shared understanding of how to plan teaching to promote learning which has led to improvements in many areas. The inspection established that the monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and accurate. Actions taken to improve teaching have been effective in many areas, although the quality of mathematics teaching remains too variable to sustain more than satisfactory progress in this subject throughout the school.

The work of the governing body has improved since the last inspection. It has a thorough understanding of the issues facing the school and provides effective support and challenge. Safeguarding procedures at the time of the inspection complied with requirements and were good. The school communicates well with parents and carers, including the families of vulnerable students, and they are positive about the school and their involvement in their children's education. The promotion of community cohesion has elements of good practice but planning is not sufficiently focused to warrant a higher grade than satisfactory. The school provides good value for money and resources are managed excellently by the senior leadership team.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Childcare and early education provision meet the requirements for registration. Integrated approaches to planning provision for children of all age groups ensure that they make good progress in their learning and personal development. Children settle quickly into the welcoming environment. Relationships with parents and carers are good, based on well-established routines that build on the positive and open communication that is a feature of relationships when parents and carers bring in and collect their children. Activities are planned collaboratively and effectively by key workers who provide good personal programmes for individual children, promoting personal development and learning well. Children talk easily with adults, develop well as individuals and show care and respect for each other. Activities are carefully designed to provide the children with rich experiences of the world around them and to ensure that the development of language and number skills is well integrated. Leadership and management are good. Maintenance of records is meticulous with systematic routines for checking security and the balance of provision within the curriculum. Staff share responsibilities well, showing commitment and expertise in providing for the needs of individual children. Although the development of individuals is monitored well, leading to better provision and outcomes for them, there is no analysis of trends over time to establish whether particular aspects of provision are generally stronger than others.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire expressed satisfaction with all aspects of the school. There was no particular pattern in the comments of the few who disagreed. The inspection team judged that the confidence and satisfaction expressed by most parents and carers were well placed.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Priory Community School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 266 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,190 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	108	41	136	51	8	3	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	116	44	137	52	1	0	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	144	54	106	40	4	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	127	48	122	46	4	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	106	40	139	52	5	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	92	35	145	55	15	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	76	29	158	59	13	5	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	114	43	131	49	4	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	103	39	138	52	9	3	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	89	33	143	54	8	3	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	89	33	142	53	7	3	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	133	50	117	44	2	1	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	146	55	103	39	3	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



2 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Priory Community School, Weston-Super-Mare, BS22 6BP

Thank you for the help that you gave us when we recently inspected your school. We agree with you that yours is a good school. Your behaviour is excellent and you make good progress in your learning. We were very impressed with the ways in which you help to run the school, making clear suggestions about improvements to the site and to the subjects that you are taught. You attend school regularly and say that you enjoy the many activities in which you participate.

The school cares for you outstandingly well and makes sure that you are given good information and excellent guidance throughout your school career. You are well taught and confidently take part in lessons. Those who lead and manage the school have enabled it to improve since the last inspection and we think that the school's capacity to make things even better is good.

There are two areas where we have asked the school to make some improvements. You do not make such good progress in mathematics as in other subjects and so we have asked the school to concentrate on making sure that the quality of teaching is more consistent in this subject. We have also asked the school to plan carefully to improve your knowledge of the diversity of the communities in the United Kingdom and across the world, and to regularly check how well these plans are working.

You can help by continuing to make an excellent contribution to the school through the school council and all the other ways in which you help the school to check the quality of its work.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Harrett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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