

Princecroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126259
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	340947
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paula Slow
Headteacher	Carole Godfrey
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Approximately 50% of the time was spent looking at pupils' learning. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and two assemblies, observed break and lunchtime activities and held meetings with governors, staff, pupils and parents. They looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. The provision and planning for pupils who are vulnerable or have special educational needs and/or disabilities was evaluated. In addition, 22 parental questionnaires, six staff questionnaires and 58 pupil questionnaires were analysed.

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

- the school's efforts to raise standards in mathematics and the performance of more able pupils in writing
- the effect of the school's specific aim to develop provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- actions of leaders and managers to sustain effective provision and to bring improvement during a continuing period of instability in staffing.

Information about the school

This is a small school for pupils aged four to 11 years. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Such needs mainly feature emotional and behavioural needs and vary significantly from year to year. An above average number of pupils join the school other than at the normal time of entry and often these pupils have complex needs. Some classes have more than one year group. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Among others, the school holds the Silver Eco Award and Active School and Intermediate level of the International Schools awards. There has been significant instability in staffing, especially over the past five months, including of the senior staff.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Princecroft provides its pupils with a satisfactory education. It is an improving school. By the end of Year 6 attainment is broadly average. This reflects satisfactory achievement from pupils' varying starting points. A period of instability in staffing, which also included senior leadership, disrupted the effectiveness of aspects of provision, especially teaching and learning. It has constrained the ability of leaders and managers to build on previous achievements. The resulting inconsistencies in teaching led to gaps in pupils' learning, particularly in the development of their literacy and language skills through Years 3 to 6. This period of staff absence was a factor noted at the time of the previous inspection. This time, however, under the determined leadership of the headteacher, aided by good support from governors and consistent support of teaching assistants, disruption has been minimised. This has been accomplished by sustaining sound self-evaluation which has accurately identified strengths and weaknesses. Because of this, there has been improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the start of separate morning classes for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and the creation of a 'nurture class' for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. With these improvements and more stability achieved in staffing, these decisive actions are accelerating the pupils' progress and show the school's sound capacity to sustain further improvement.

As developments are relatively new they have not been in place long enough to lift pupils' skills, especially in writing, to the full. For example, teaching is typically satisfactory rather than good through the school as pupils spend too long in large group discussions so a few lose interest, which slows their progress. This also reduces the time available for pupils, including those with more ability, to develop their language skills, or to enjoy writing their own extended stories.

Children make a satisfactory start in Early Years Foundation Stage and satisfactory progress continues through the school. An increasing number of pupils, stimulated by practical, relevant learning activities, are making better progress in mathematics and in using computers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to classmates, but increasingly some make better progress because of the additional support they receive.

Good links with parents, outside agencies and the local community help the school to include all pupils equally in a caring, safe environment. As a consequence, pupils feel safe, behave well and enjoy coming to school, as apparent in their improved attendance. In response to a good range of clubs and community events, pupils show good skills in living healthily and, through their own 'eco-code', in conserving the environment.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievements this year in writing by:
 - ensuring that more emphasis and sufficient time are placed on encouraging pupils to write imaginatively and at length about the things that interest them the most.
 - Raise the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good in the coming year by:
 - ensuring that teachers spend less time in whole class discussions
 - giving pupils greater time to learn independently
 - ensuring activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage are matched closely to the children's differing learning needs and ages.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Observation of lessons shows that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve satisfactorily. Pupils' work shows strengthened progress in Years 3 and 4, and because of an increased emphasis on practical learning activity in all classes, a bridging of previous gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. This improving progress, especially in mathematics, is evident, for example, when pupils use and apply their measuring skills during cookery lessons and when using computers to research moon buggies as part of their stimulating space topic. The number of pupils who underachieve is reducing and more make good progress across the range of subjects. As a result, pupils' attainment in Year 6 is broadly average, but too many pupils, including the more able, still have difficulty producing extended examples of writing. Across the school, pupils show improving skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and in understanding and conserving the environment.

Pupils behave well, with those needing support because of their emotional difficulties responding positively to well-timed, encouraging adult support. One pupil's comment that 'school is a safe place where we help each other' reflected the views of many. The pupils' good adoption of healthy lifestyles is seen in their awareness of healthy eating, their considerate manners and in their enthusiasm for energetic physical activity during sports clubs. Their commitment to healthy lifestyles is also evident in the ideas of the 'Eco Team' and their efforts to make their school a sustainable and safe place. The school council and buddies who support other pupils also make good contributions, but in some lessons, a small number of pupils remain passive and only contribute to learning when reminded to do so by adults. Even so, by the time pupils leave the school, their good relationships and their satisfactory academic achievement prepare them soundly for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Typical teaching strengths include the good relationships developed between staff and pupils and the work of teaching assistants. This is particularly true for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs, supported, for example, in the new 'bumble club-nurture class'. In these lessons pupils learn through practical activity. This was a key feature underpinning the good practical measuring tasks seen during mathematics lessons. The pupils really enjoy this way of learning and say the teachers' marking also helps them to improve. Although some good teaching was seen, for example, in Years 1 and 2, pupils' learning is less effective when teachers talk for extended periods to the whole class. This causes some pupils to lose interest and limits the time available for them to work individually or in small groups to develop their writing for example. In other activities, teaching is not always matched closely enough to the breadth of pupils' differing needs and does not engage pupils' interests so that they learn quickly. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and it gives helpful pointers for them to improve. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs and community events. These include, for example, the Eco team, gardening and sports clubs and a Carnival Fun Day. All of these make positive contributions to the pupils' enjoyment of school, their good adoption of healthy living and understanding of the local and wider community. There is an improving focus on raising the pupils' interest through topics that link subjects together, such as the current popular space and aliens topic. Additionally, the increasing

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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use of computers in the new information and communication technology suite and the provision of more practical learning activities, such as cooking, are raising pupils' achievements, particularly in mathematics. The school is seeking to improve the planning of literacy, but currently too much of the writing opportunities presented to the pupils are adult-led and not enough is planned so pupils can write their own stories independently.

The good care, guidance and support provided by the staff are clearly reflected in the pupils' good behaviour, the high quality assistance given to pupils with complex emotional needs and in the pupils' universally expressed view that they feel safe at school. Despite the staffing constraints mentioned earlier, which have slowed some initiatives, the school has been particularly successful in improving attendance and in tackling pupils' behavioural needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher promotes the school's caring ethos well to sustain equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination for all pupils. She shows determination to pull the school forward after a period of staffing instability, although initiatives have not yet had time to take full effect. Senior staff and governors ensure that priorities, identified by a sound process of self-evaluation, are tackled with increasing rigour to bring about improvement. The continuity of support provided by the governors in meeting statutory obligations, supporting staff and in challenging and monitoring provision highlights their good support.

Leaders and managers promote good links with parents, the community and outside agencies to safeguard pupils' welfare effectively. They are very thorough in their approach and ensure that vetting procedures for staff are very robust. Staff are working with increasing success to address the emotional and behavioural needs of pupils and are seeking to target the needs of more able pupils to similarly good effect. Senior managers and teachers have established continuity in providing practical learning activities in mathematics, but improvements in the teaching of writing have been slower to take effect. The school promotes community cohesion well. The school and local communities are developed strongly through events, such as the Edwardian Summer Fayre and the work of the school council. The school promotes international and national aspects of community cohesion effectively through citizenship and International

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Weeks, visits from local people of other cultural backgrounds and charitable efforts which led to its International Schools Award.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The children's skills on entry to the Reception are mostly below those levels normally expected of children of this age, especially in communication, language and literacy. Children's progress is satisfactory as teaching promotes children's basic skills securely. Staff are improving their use of assessments to help children learn by collecting photographs and notes within learning journals. Staff establish good links with parents to enable a smooth start to school and to help in identifying children's individual needs. Good quality, caring adult support helps the children to develop self-confidence and to extend their knowledge and understanding of the world well. Progress is similar across other areas of learning. This is because sound leadership ensures that the curriculum includes a good balance of adult-led and child-chosen practical learning activities. For example, children now enjoy and benefit from role play activities indoors in the home corner and rocket ship or outdoors in spiderman's tent. On a few occasions during large group sessions, activities are not always matched closely enough to the children's differing learning needs in this mixed year-group class. At times, this constrains the development of the children's language skills. By the time children enter Year 1, standards are broadly average. However, some children still have below average writing skills and this is an aspect currently targeted by the staff.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of the parents are happy and have full confidence in the school. One parent wrote, typically reflecting the views of most, 'My child is extremely happy at Princecroft 'We feel that he has been nurtured by very caring staff.' There were a few parental criticisms, mainly about how the school manages unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors examined these concerns, but conclude that the staff have strengthened the way they support pupils with emotional behavioural needs. The school manages pupils' behaviour effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Princecroft Primary 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 22 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 98 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	36	12	55	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	64	7	32	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	10	45	9	41	2	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	36	10	45	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	9	41	11	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	45	9	41	1	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	68	5	23	0	0	0	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)	8	36	8	36	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	50	10	45	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	27	8	36	4	18	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	55	8	36	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	11	50	9	41	0	0	1	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	41	11	50	1	5	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



28 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Princecroft Primary School, Warminster, BA12 8NT

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed our visit and would like to thank you for talking to us, particularly those on the school council and the eco team. We were very interested to hear what you had to say and were impressed by your good manners and behaviour. We agree with your headteacher that Princecroft Primary is a satisfactory and improving school.

These are the other main things we found.

- The standards that you reach by Year 6 are broadly average. They show that your progress and achievement are satisfactory. An increasing number of you are making good progress in mathematics and in using computers.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is an increasing amount of good teaching and practical learning activity, especially in mathematics and for the youngest children, and these are helping you to make better progress.
- The headteacher and senior staff are strengthening how they work together and are helping you to make better progress than you made previously.
- Staff provide good care for you. They work well with your parents and other people, especially in helping those of you who find learning difficult.

To help the school to improve further, we have asked the headteacher, governors and teachers to do two things.

- Help you to improve your writing by giving you the time and encouragement to write your own stories.
- Improve the quality of teaching and your learning by making sure that you can work for longer periods of time, either individually or in small groups.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection. You can help the school get better by making sure that you listen carefully and always give of your best in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter

Lead inspector

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