

Prior Weston Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	100434
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	376396
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2012
Lead inspector	Anthony Byrne

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Riddell
Headteacher	Virginia Fraher
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 November 2008
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	25–26 January 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Anthony Byrne

Additional Inspector

Monica Raphael

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Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 20 lessons, observed 16 different teachers and held meetings with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. They evaluated students' attainment over three years and considered progress in lessons, in students' books, as recorded by the school's assessment system and as perceived by pupils, parents and carers. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, as well as considering 265 responses to the questionnaire sent to parents and carers. The school's self-evaluation documentation, including records of lesson observations and the improvement plan were taken into account. Documentation relating to safeguarding pupils was checked.

Information about the school

Prior Weston is a larger than average-sized primary school. It shares a site with the children's centre run by the school and a separately led special school. The school meets the current floor standard. About half of the pupils are White British; the others, a well above average proportion, are from many minority ethnic groups. A fifth of pupils speak English as an additional language, which is an above average proportion. A third of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is also above average. Although the proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average, the school has a higher than average proportion of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils who join or leave at other than normal times has reduced since the time of the previous inspection and is average. The school has been led by an interim headteacher since July 2010 and a recruitment process to make a permanent appointment has started.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, but pupils do better in mathematics than in English. Some groups of pupils have made slower progress than others in the past, but that is now changing as a result of recent initiatives in teaching and the curriculum.
- Teaching, though strongly improving since the move to single-age group classes in September 2011, has not had time to impact fully on the learning and progress of all pupils. Nevertheless, much is good and this is helping to accelerate pupils' progress in all parts of the school. In some lessons too much time is spent giving instructions or modelling answers when pupils, particularly those of higher ability, could get on independently.
- There are rigorous systems for tracking pupils' progress. Pupils at risk of underachieving are quickly identified and carefully planned interventions are put in place to support them and help them to overcome difficulties.
- Marking is systematic, but does not always give pupils specific guidance on how to improve.
- The curriculum is also improving, particularly the provision for developing pupils' knowledge of sounds and letters and their early reading skills.
- The school provides a safe environment. Parents and carers are very confident about how well cared for their children are. Pupils are equally confident that any type of bullying would be promptly dealt with, but say that nothing seriously troubles them. Behaviour is good in lessons and out of class.
- Strong leadership is bringing about changes that are rapidly improving the quality of provision and pupils' progress, especially those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable.
- An exceptional range of partnerships ensure that the school takes full advantage of being at the heart of a very diverse community, offering a wide variety of experiences that support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in English so that by the end of Year 6 attainment consistently rises to match that in mathematics.
- Before the end of this academic year, secure good progress through consistently good teaching and assessment by:
 - making sure that pupils are clear about exactly what they need to do to improve their work
 - ensuring that pupils who are ready to get on with independent work, particularly those who are more able, are not held back by listening to unnecessary extended explanations.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils enter the school with skills broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in English to reach average standards by Year 6, including in reading. Pupils achieve well in mathematics and reach above average standards. Over the last three years, most groups of pupils have made progress in line with similar groups nationally. In 2011, lower ability boys, some pupils with special educational needs and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals made less progress than other groups in Key Stage 2. This situation is strongly improving as a result of recent changes and these pupils are now catching up with their peers.

The school has introduced systematic teaching of phonics to help younger pupils recognise and sound out letters to support their reading from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. Pupils are routinely grouped according to ability for sessions led by teachers or assistants, accurately targeting their needs. As a result, fluency in blending sounds and reading with confidence are developing well and attainment in reading is broadly average by Year 2. Progress in mathematics continues to be good because in lessons pupils are encouraged to think through interesting problems and present their solutions to others, using graphs and charts to illustrate their thinking.

The change to single age group classes is benefiting pupils' progress, particularly in writing. Older pupils said it is better working with, 'just the one teacher who can help you catch up'. Pupils show interest in the topics and are being taught techniques to enrich their writing, as well as maintain accuracy. One pupil managed to sustain a metaphor comparing stormy weather to a wild horse with vivid imagery. Pupils enjoy books from the library as well as ones they read in groups in class.

The impact of intervention sessions for pupils who face possible barriers to learning

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can be clearly seen in their books, for example in writing that has progressed from barely legible attempts at words to clear sentences.

Most parents and carers are satisfied with their children's progress. One captured accurately the momentum of improvement that has been established: 'the school has made many improvements in the past year which we... feel will run through to improved results. I can see my child progressing and learning more week by week.'

Quality of teaching

The recent changes to teaching that have been implemented are extensive and are strongly improving pupils' progress. They are welcomed by an overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to questionnaires, although the impact of improvements is still developing rather than completely established. A parent commented, 'the separation of year groups has made a big difference and my son has thrived in Year 3 after a tricky time.' In the Early Years Foundation Stage, careful analysis of children's progress has been given greater prominence and this feeds more directly into planning specific activities to meet children's needs and accelerate their progress. To balance this, children have ample opportunities to explore, make decisions and learn through play. As a result, young children are able to talk explicitly about what they are learning, and about language and numbers. Well-attended workshops for parents about how to support different aspects of learning, are instrumental in helping them to reinforce what children have learned in school. A smooth transition to Key Stage 1 builds on pupils' previous experience, informed by good records of children's learning.

Teaching has a number of strengths and there are no endemic weaknesses in particular year groups or key stages. Similarly the growing proportion of good and outstanding teaching is spread fairly evenly across the school. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and deepen pupils' thinking through effective questioning. Assessment information is often used well to group pupils and plan work that meets their individual needs but this is not a consistent feature across all classes. In some satisfactory lessons, for example, work is not sufficiently challenging for the more-able pupils. While the pace of learning in most lessons is brisk and well supported by the use of teaching assistants, in some of the lessons observed by inspectors it was too slow for the most able pupils as a result of overly detailed instruction from the teacher which prevented them from getting started on independent learning. An outstanding Year 6 lesson on algebra exemplified some of the best features seen. Learning intentions were clearly set out and the teacher reminded the class of some errors in previous work to be avoided. Pupils discussed an example with a partner and one was challenged to give a crisp explanation of how he had arrived at a correct answer. Then most moved swiftly on to work very well in groups on different challenges, while the teacher kept a few back for further instruction.

The impact of marking is also variable. While teachers mark pupils work on a regular basis, , some do not always make clear to pupils what exactly they need to

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do to improve. Teaching and the curriculum strongly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example the one-to-one attention they get from helpers from local businesses and a university develops their self-esteem as learners. At all stages pupils take pleasure in their learning and that, alongside clubs and trips, contributes strongly to their personal development.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are typically considerate, respectful and courteous to staff and each other. This makes a positive contribution to a well-ordered school. All pupils, including those with identified behavioural difficulties, respond very well to the school's strategies for managing and improving behaviour which are applied consistently. Records show that disruptive incidents seldom occur. Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of what constitutes unsafe situations and how to keep themselves safe. The tolerance promoted by the school ensures that those who join part-way through a year or key stage are quickly welcomed and included.

Pupils gain in maturity and responsibility which underpins their consistently good behaviour, both in lessons and around the school. Although a few parents and carers had concerns about bullying, most have positive views of behaviour and safety in the school. Pupils said that they are untroubled by any type of serious bullying and that any minor disputes are quickly resolved between themselves, or with adult help. Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying and take active steps to prevent it. The school swiftly addresses any incidents that occur, thus gaining the full confidence of pupils and parents.

Leadership and management

The school has undergone a period of significant change since its last inspection which initially slowed the pace of improvement. More recently, the strong and expert leadership of the interim headteacher, fully supported by the governing body, has driven progress more rapidly in addressing the issues raised by the last inspection. This has been supported by a programme of extensive professional development for staff who have looked at good practice in other schools and adapted it effectively to support their own teaching and leadership skills and the implementation of the school improvement plan. The school's good marking system is now attracting interest from other schools. Detailed progress tracking, borne out by work seen in lessons and in books, shows rapidly improving progress, particularly by pupils who have underachieved in the past. This is helping to promote equality more strongly as gaps between different groups are narrowing. The school's capacity to sustain improvement is clearly demonstrated by the improvements in teaching which are rapidly improving standards and key skills.

The curriculum is also strongly improving, for example the links between the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 and the development of consistent strategies for teaching early reading skills. Other initiatives in English have strengthened reading and writing across the school. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral social

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and cultural development well. The school is building change on firm foundations of strong community links and with the benefit of extremely good links with other schools, the on-site children's centre and external agencies. Many pupils and families are known almost from birth. This greatly adds to the sense of belonging and security that pupils express. Close links with the special school on-site give both groups of pupils good opportunities to socialise and help pupils to respect each other's differences.

The school's safeguarding procedures thoroughly meet requirements. The school has had risk assessments conducted by external experts and is vigilant in taking all reasonable precautions to ensure pupils' safety. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to questionnaires support the school's leadership and the changes they have brought about, particularly the way they impact on teaching and their children's progress.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



30 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Prior Weston Primary School, London EC1 8JA

Thank you for welcoming us to your school, for showing us your work and for talking to us in a friendly and open way. We think that Prior Weston is a satisfactory school. Because you are responding so well to the many changes that have been introduced, such as one age group working with one teacher, we think your achievement is rapidly improving. You had been attaining higher in mathematics than in English, but now you learn sounds and letters well in your phonics sessions to help your reading and writing. The writing we saw in older pupils' books is clearly improving too and English is catching up.

Your work is carefully marked by teachers so they know a lot about how well you are doing, but you told us that sometimes they could make it clearer what next step you personally should take to hit your targets. Though most lessons are lively, sometimes teachers could let some of you get on with independent work more quickly.

Like your parents and carers you are very proud of the family atmosphere in the school. You are friendly towards each other, to your neighbours in Richard Cloudsley School and to very young children in the centre. You feel safe from any type of bullying. You are given great opportunities to work with interesting adult partners from businesses, universities and arts centres in the city.

To carry on the improvement that is clearly happening, we have asked your headteacher, staff and governors to ensure that:

- results in English keep up with those in mathematics
- you are allowed to get on independently in lessons as soon as you are ready
- you know exactly what to do next to improve your work.

You can help by continuing to be as willing always to make the most of the opportunities that changes have brought for everyone.

Yours sincerely
Tony Byrne
Lead Inspector

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