

Old Priory Junior Academy

Ridgeway, Plympton, Plymouth, Devon PL7 1QN

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Younger pupils have been adversely affected by weak teaching in the past and have not achieved the standards expected.
- Some leaders and teachers are new to their roles and have not yet developed focused targets for improvement to reduce variability in teaching and sustain pupils' good achievement.
- Teaching is improving but assessment does not always help the most able, and those that need to catch up, to achieve well enough.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special needs and/or disabilities is improving their achievement.
- Absence, especially persistent absence, has been a concern for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders' hard work is now leading to improved attendance.
- Targets in lessons and feedback to pupils are not consistent in focus and clarity. This means pupils are not always sure precisely what they need to do to make better progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Leaders and governors have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and are working diligently to achieve this. They are well supported by leaders in St Christopher's multi-academy trust.
- The majority of parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's work and comment favourably on the noticeable improvements.
- Rigorous checks on teaching and learning are improving pupils' progress. Staff are committed to helping the school achieve its aims.
- Pastoral care is effective in helping pupils to overcome difficulties.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy school. They are well mannered, polite and keen to learn.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders support teachers to further develop their skills and eliminate inconsistencies in teaching
 - new leaders are supported to be more precise when they check their work so that targets for improvement are sharply focused
 - leaders continue to increase attendance for pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make the progress of which they are capable by:
 - using assessment information to plan targeted interventions for pupils who need to catch up so that their progress is accelerated and their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics improved
 - helping pupils know exactly how to improve their work so that more pupils, especially the most able, achieve greater depth in their learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Wider leadership is continuing to evolve and is not yet fully established. Senior leaders are supporting new leaders to undertake robust tracking of groups from different starting points. This is helping them to accurately identify how well pupils achieve compared with pupils of the same age nationally. Where weaknesses are identified, leaders are developing appropriate strategies to help pupils make more rapid progress.
- Senior leaders have developed some well-targeted action plans that help to model expectations for new leaders. However, the action plans of new leaders are not as focused as they need to be. This limits how effectively they can be evaluated to support teachers in ensuring that pupils make good enough progress.
- Senior leaders check the work of the school regularly and thoroughly, using a wide range of evidence. Leaders of English and mathematics are also developing their roles and are quickly identifying where further support is needed. However, some evaluations of the work of the school, while aspirational, are either overgenerous or imprecise. Leaders' checks on work are not precise enough to ensure that they accurately identify what the school needs to do to improve achievement.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving and pupils are making better progress. Leaders are committed to making sure that pupils make good progress from their starting points but recognise that interventions are not evaluated thoroughly enough. More precise analysis of pupils' progress is needed to assist teachers to adapt targets when teaching is not improving progress quickly enough. Leaders are aware of the need to improve the consistency with which teachers and teaching assistants take responsibility for checking pupils' learning so that skills gained during interventions are used and applied in other contexts.
- Senior leaders and governors have a clear idea of the key priorities for the school and they are dedicated to raising standards. External support from the multi-academy trust, notably St Michael's Church of England Primary Academy, Torre Academy and Tidcombe Primary School, provides individualised support, guidance and training, and groups of schools work together to share good practice.
- Leaders work closely as a team and staff are very appreciative of the support they are receiving to help steer improvement. All responses to the staff questionnaire were very positive and, along with informal discussions with staff, reveal that they are proud to be part of this improving school.
- A sustained approach to reversing the effects of previous weak teaching, particularly for younger pupils, means that leaders are now supporting staff to make the required improvements. This is improving pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, variability in teaching does not ensure that pupils securely fill the gaps in their knowledge and skills.
- The school provides an interesting curriculum with a focus on improving reading, writing and mathematics. Linking learning to topics such as 'chocolate' inspires pupils

to learn and culminates in 'finale' events to which parents are invited.

- A wide range of cross- and extra-curricular opportunities is provided and is effective in promoting pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. A sensory garden in the school grounds provides a space to read and draw, and a market garden has been created allowing the gardening club to grow and cook fresh produce. Links with parents are promoted through social activities such as the 'feed and weed evening', when parents help with gardening in return for food. The school also keeps guinea pigs to support pupils to learn how to care for and feed animals.
- Pupils are encouraged to try different sports, such as netball, athletics, cricket and cross-country running. They speak enthusiastically about the planned residential trip to Skern Lodge, which will allow them to try abseiling, climbing and shelter building. Pupils enjoy trying different musical instruments and during the inspection a rousing music lesson was observed, during which a large group of Year 4 pupils played recorders, djembe drums and ukuleles. Pupils immersed themselves wholeheartedly in the lesson and it was evident that they were thoroughly enjoying themselves.
- Leaders use additional sports funding appropriately to provide additional training for teachers and play leaders to raise their confidence and improve consistency in teaching. Funding also helps to promote greater participation in clubs. The school has gained the Gold Standard school games mark and there is an increase in the number of pupils participating in competitive games.
- Historically, pupil premium funding has not consistently ensured that disadvantaged pupils have made enough progress. Leaders are now targeting this funding effectively to drive improvements. A detailed strategy shows how exactly how this funding will be spent and is reviewed three times a year to check how much difference it is making. Disadvantaged pupils have the support of the pastoral leader, nurture groups, social and emotional support and the help of additional teaching assistants for targeted small group work. All this additional provision is helping disadvantaged pupils to make better progress than in the past.
- In the past few years, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been low. Some of these have been linked to complex issues. Leaders are working to address this problem and, as a result, attendance is improving. However, this improvement is recent and has not been sustained for long enough to help pupils make better progress.
- The school's website has been well developed and provides a rich source of information to help parents find out about the school's work. All forms of communication with parents have improved and an overwhelming majority of parents speak highly of the way that the school has been turned around. They are very appreciative of the valuable communication from leaders and teachers. Parents especially like the school's use of the 'Class Dojo' mobile application, which allows teachers to share photos of their children's work.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved substantially with the development of an interim executive board of governors chaired by the director of the multi-academy trust. The board is

helping to support leaders and secure improvements.

- Governors have a range of relevant skills and expertise, which they put to good use when they make visits to the school. They ask incisive questions to enable them to find out more about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Governors are fully committed to improving pupils' education and this is supported by their improving awareness of the key priorities for improvement.
- Governors recognise that they now need to develop further and offer even more challenge so that the school can continue to improve. They are proactive in aiming towards a position where the interim executive board of governors can be replaced with a local governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's care and support for pupils are a strength and there is a clear safeguarding culture. All staff take their responsibilities seriously and are particularly effective in identifying and supporting the needs of some of their most vulnerable pupils.
- The school has an effective referral and record-keeping system, which is well known by all staff. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of their responsibilities and can consistently articulate how they would respond in the event of a safeguarding concern.
- A wide range of appropriate training is provided for all staff, including about recognising the signs of radicalisation or extremism.
- The single central record of checks on staff shows that all checks are carried out and correctly referenced so that statutory obligations are fulfilled.
- Clear risk assessment procedures, pastoral and medical support and a firm focus on health and safety ensure that all pupils are kept safe at this school.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They have a good awareness of a range of forms of bullying, including online bullying, and can clearly describe how to stay safe on the internet.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Historically, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching resulted in some groups of pupils not making the progress they should. Recruitment of new teachers has helped leaders to begin to deal with weaknesses in teaching, particularly for younger pupils. However, over half of the teachers in the school, including the deputy headteacher, have only been in post since September 2016. This has not given them sufficient time to sustain good attainment and progress, especially for pupils who have previously fallen behind in their learning.
- Teaching is improving but the degree to which it ensures pupils make good progress from their starting points is not yet consistent. The school is developing more rigorous

assessment procedures so that teachers can quickly identify when pupils are not making good enough progress, but these are not yet fully implemented.

- Pupils' work in books and lessons reflect the fact that there are inconsistencies in assessment and teachers' planning is not always well focused on pupils' needs. Teachers sometimes fail to check pupils' learning, and mistakes are not picked up, so that opportunities to correct errors are missed and progress falters. This limits the degree to which work enables pupils to secure the skills necessary to make more rapid progress.
- The school's marking policy is well understood by pupils and teachers are now applying this more consistently. Often guidance to pupils is sharply focused and pupils know exactly what to do to improve their learning. At other times, feedback is unclear or indicates that pupils have met their targets, even when this is not the case. These inconsistencies mean that pupils are getting mixed messages, which hinder opportunities for them to achieve well.
- When pupils have clear examples of how to complete tasks, they develop their skills better. For instance, when teachers and teaching assistants demonstrated how to partition numbers before carrying out the grid method of multiplication, pupils calculated accurately.
- In literacy lessons pupils are supported to develop their comprehension skills and justify vocabulary choices with reference to texts such as 'The Highwayman'. In other lessons, pupils improve their writing skills by adding additional information and description to simple sentences.
- Good relationships between pupils and adults, and pupils' willingness to become involved, helps to create a positive climate for learning. Pupils are well supported by additional adults who are helping them to make better progress.
- Well-targeted support, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is helping pupils attend more regularly, access appropriate learning opportunities and make quicker progress.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed within classes and provide well-focused support linked to pupils' individual needs. The 'learning dens' between classrooms provide a quiet space in which all groups of pupils can receive individualised, targeted work to accelerate progress. This is improving pupils' involvement and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy reading and demonstrate fluency, expression and confidence when reading aloud. A large well-stocked library, supported by pupil librarians, provides opportunities for pupils to borrow a range of books. Additional reading interventions have been developed to address gaps in pupils' reading skills so that they can make better progress and these are having a positive impact on achievement.
- Homework is helping pupils to practise and reinforce skills learned in school, although pupils comment that it sometimes involves repetition of skills already secured and they would prefer homework to challenge them more.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders and staff create a positive culture for learning through high expectations and care for others. Pupils are proud to be part of the school and many demonstrate self-assurance, resilience and confidence. They are willing to 'have a go' and enjoy learning. One pupil commented, 'My teacher inspires me.'
- Pupils' conduct in lessons is positive and is helping them to make better progress. The school encourages pupils to work as a team and pupils comment that they find it helpful to work with others to find things out.
- The school has a clear vision and ethos promoted through its community code, 'be safe, be true, be you'. This code is well understood by pupils and links well to their personal development and preparation for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils understand how to treat others, stay safe and take ownership of their learning. They have opportunities to reflect on their feelings and religious beliefs and those of others.
- Pupils have a range of opportunities to become 'leaders', such as school councillors, digital leaders, buddies and 'snack shack' leaders. These opportunities help pupils to take positions of responsibility and prepare them well for the next stage in their learning.
- Senior leaders and the pastoral leader work hard to support all pupils, especially those who may be vulnerable, have specific needs or whose attendance is poor. The pastoral work of the school extends beyond the school gates and communication with parents is well developed.
- Social and emotional support groups help pupils who struggle with anxiety, self-esteem or anger issues. 'The Retreat' and the 'Study Zone' provide a calm, safe environment for pupils to share concerns and manage their emotions. As a result, they are supported to approach their learning more positively and without anxiety.
- Attendance has been close to and above national averages over time. However, attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has been lower. This is now improving due to the rigour of tracking and a wide range of support strategies, along with close liaison with parents.
- Pupils enjoy school and understand the values of the school. Pupils feel safe and have a clearly developed sense of how to stay safe, including when using computers. They understand what online bullying is and that they must not give out personal information when using technology.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils come into school purposefully and happily, eager and ready to learn. Pupils say that behaviour is mostly good in school and when it is not, adults deal with it quickly. Staff and most parents agree that behaviour is good.

- Adults set high expectations of behaviour both in and out of class and pupils know what is expected of them. As a result of these expectations, transitions in and out of lessons are smooth. Breaktimes and lunchtimes are well supervised and are sociable events. Pupils enjoy spending time chatting to their friends and playing.
- Pupils are extremely polite and well mannered. They routinely hold doors open, say 'good morning' and ask adults how they are. Relationships between pupils and adults are good and there is a tangible sense of mutual respect. This sets the foundations for learning and fosters positive attitudes.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Performance information for 2015 revealed that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics combined was significantly below those nationally. Progress had declined from 2014 and pupils were not well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- School leaders have since made a concerted effort to tackle the specific issues linked to pupils' achievement. In the new tests in 2016, the proportion of Year 6 pupils meeting or exceeding expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics was close to pupils nationally. Progress scores for all pupils were above the standards set by the government. However, progress for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities were lower than other pupils in the school.
- The large majority of current pupils in all year groups are on track to make expected progress in all subjects, although less than half are making better than expected progress. Improved progress is not yet reflected in attainment, with approximately one third of pupils in all year groups still not on track to meet expected standards at the end of the year.
- At the beginning of the academic year, the starting points of current pupils in Year 4 were lower than they should have been as a result of weak teaching in the past. School leaders know these pupils need more support to accelerate progress and are tackling these issues robustly. School information shows that these pupils are now making faster progress.
- The most able pupils are making expected progress but less than half are making better than expected progress. School information indicates that the proportion of the most able pupils working at greater depth in Years 4 and 6 is below national averages.
- As a result of more effective and focused support, approximately three quarters of disadvantaged pupils are on now track to make expected progress.
- Targeted intervention for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is helping them to make better progress. Approximately two thirds of these pupils are now on track to make expected progress.
- Pupils' books and lesson observations reflect this mixed picture of achievement across the school, with targets often well developed and clear. At other times they are imprecise and do not specifically focus on helping pupils to make the progress they should.

School details

Unique reference number	137876
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10019928

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	266
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Sean Sweeney
Headteacher	Emma Hermon-Wright
Telephone number	01752 338 199
Website	www.oldpriory.com
Email address	Admin@OldPrioryStCMAT.org
Date of previous inspection	16–17 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Old Priory Junior Academy converted to academy status in February 2012. Its predecessor school was judged to be good overall. The school is similar in size to the average primary school and is part of St Christopher’s multi-academy trust, which comprises 15 schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below the national average.
- Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds or do not have English as a first language.
- The proportion of pupils who receive special needs support has increased since 2015 and is higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils being supported by a

statement or education, health and care plan is broadly similar to the national average.

- The school met the government's floor standards in 2014 and 2015. Following introduction of the new tests in 2016, the school met the new floor standards.
- When the school was inspected in October 2014, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on four occasions. At the previous monitoring inspection, leaders and managers were judged to be taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.
- During its time in special measures, there have been significant staff changes, including at leadership level.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors conducted lesson observations and learning walks to observe teaching and learning in all classes. Joint observations were undertaken with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher and a learning walk was carried out with the coordinator for special educational needs.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' work, both during lessons and through focused work scrutiny. They listened to pupils read and talked to pupils informally in lessons and during a formal meeting.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's assessment information of pupils' attainment and progress and discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, the director and chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust and governors.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including school improvement plans, the school's evaluation of its work, the headteacher's report to governors and minutes of governors' meetings. The school's safeguarding information and records of attendance, exclusion and behaviour were also considered.
- Inspectors reviewed 63 responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View, along with 41 additional comments. Inspectors also talked with parents as they brought their children to, or collected them from, school.
- The views of 17 members of staff and 21 pupils who responded to the online questionnaires were also considered.

Inspection team

Catherine Beeks, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sally Olford

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

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