

INSPECTION REPORT

PRIESTMEAD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Harrow

LEA area: London Borough of Harrow

Unique reference number: 102195

Headteacher: Mr Brian Robertson

Reporting inspector: Mr Michael Raven
3961

Dates of inspection: 14th – 15th January 2002

Inspection number: 194175

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle Deemed Primary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 8 – 12 Years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hartford Avenue
Kenton
Harrow
Middlesex

Postcode: HA3 8SZ

Telephone number: 020 8909 2768

Fax number: 020 8909 1603

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Keith Savage

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
3661	Michael Raven	Registered inspector
14347	Joan Lindsay	Lay inspector
22476	Susan Vale	Team inspector
5565	Bimla Thakur	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

PkR Educational Consultants Ltd
6 Sherman Road
Bromley
Kent
BR1 3JH

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The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Priestmead Middle School caters for 372 boys and girls aged from eight to twelve. There are more boys than girls, although this imbalance is only significant in Year 7. Eighty-one per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, 57 per cent being of Indian origin. Only 19 per cent of pupils are of white United Kingdom heritage. Other minority ethnic groups represented include Black Caribbean and African, Pakistani, Chinese and Bangladeshi. Two hundred and sixty-one pupils have English as an additional language, although only two of these are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The main community language is Gujarati and 20 other languages are represented. Twenty-five per cent of pupils have special educational needs, which is close to the national average for middle schools. Pupils' special educational needs cover a wide range of physical, behavioural and learning difficulties. A small proportion of pupils have statements of special educational needs. Most pupils get off to a good start in the first school, which is situated in the same building, so that they enter the middle school with attainment which is broadly above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school does a very good job and gives very good value for money. An important factor in this is the very good leadership and management provided by the headteacher. By the time they take national tests at the age of 11 and by the time they leave the school a year later, pupils reach standards in English, mathematics and science which are well above the national average. This is because they are well taught and so make good progress in their learning.

What the school does well

- The teaching is good and this promotes very high standards, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership, strongly supported by key staff such as the senior management team and curriculum co-ordinators.
- It promotes very good attitudes and behaviour and the provision for pupils' moral and social development is excellent.
- It offers a rich curriculum with a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, music and drama.
- The school has established a very good partnership with parents, who think highly of the school.

What could be improved

- Pupils have too few opportunities to carry out investigative work in mathematics.
- The school does not comply with the statutory duty set out in the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998 to provide for all pupils to attend a daily act of collective worship, which over a term must be broadly Christian in nature.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1997. It has made very good progress since then. The quality of teaching has improved so that it is now good overall and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. This has resulted in the very high standards in English, mathematics and science. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT), which were below average at the time of the last inspection, are now much higher. In design and technology, where standards were also below average, they are now good. National Curriculum requirements for these subjects are now met in full. There is a good programme for regular checking on the quality of teaching. Plenty of opportunities are now provided for the development of English language in all subjects and this has had a positive impact on the attainment of those many

pupils learning English as an additional language. Although there are many good opportunities for pupils to investigate and find things out for themselves in science, for example as when pupils in Year 6 try out the effects of removing components from an electrical circuit, there are still too few opportunities for investigative work in mathematics.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	C	B	A	A
Mathematics	B	B	A	A
Science	B	B	A	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

By the time pupils take national tests towards the end of Year 6 and when they leave the school at the end of Year 7 standards in English, mathematics and science are very high. The school does very well compared to all schools nationally and also compared to other schools working with a similar pupil population. Over the past four years – since the last inspection – standards in national tests have improved at a rate better than the national trend in improvement. The school sets appropriately challenging targets for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics and in the most recent national tests these targets were surpassed in both subjects. Pupils achieve highly, because they are well taught and have very positive attitudes to school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive. Pupils are enthusiastic, interested and involved in all that the school has to offer.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well in lessons, in assemblies and around the school. There have been no exclusions from school in recent years.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils show very great respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The different racial and ethnic groups get on very well together.
Attendance	Very good. Well above the national average, with no unauthorised absence in the last year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 4 – 7
Quality of teaching	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good, promoting well the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and this enables them to promote effective learning. They plan carefully, giving good attention to what it is they want pupils to learn. Teachers make good use of plenty of high quality whole-class teaching, but a weakness is that too little attention is sometimes given to discussion and consolidation at the end of lessons. This means that pupils do not always understand their own learning as well as they might. Teachers take good care to select tasks so that the needs of all pupils are well met – boys and girls, the different ethnic and language groups, those who find learning more difficult and the most able.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A rich curriculum is provided. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught as required. There are very good opportunities for pupils to take part in an interesting range of activities outside lessons, including sport, music and drama. The school does not, however, meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. These pupils are well supported in lessons and sometimes by withdrawal from lessons for group or individual teaching. Work with these pupils is guided very clearly by their very good individual education plans.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. This work is very well managed and this ensures that their learning needs are very well met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The provision for pupils' moral and social development is outstanding and does much to create the very positive atmosphere in the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. The school looks after its pupils very carefully. There are very good procedures for child protection.

The school works very closely with parents. They are kept very well informed about what goes on in school and how their children are getting on and they have a very positive view of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides a strong sense of direction and purpose which has resulted in the very considerable improvement since the last inspection. He is well supported by the senior management team and other key members of staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. They keep in touch with what is happening and this gives them a good understanding of the many strengths of the school. However, their role in shaping the educational development of the school is limited.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The headteacher and other senior staff keep a close check on the quality of teaching. The results of statutory and other tests are carefully analysed and compared with those of other schools.
The strategic use of resources	Good. In particular, funds allocated to promote the learning of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who have special educational needs are carefully managed.

The school takes appropriate care to secure value for money in obtaining goods and services.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Behaviour is good. • Teaching is good. • The school is well led and managed. • The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • The range of activities outside lessons.

Inspection evidence strongly supports all parents' positive views about the school. The inspection does not support their views about homework, which is about right for the age of the pupils. It finds that there is in fact a very good range of activities outside lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The teaching is good and this promotes very high standards, particularly in English, mathematics and science.

1. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, so that it is now good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. The good teaching pupils receive means that they make good progress in their learning. They enter the school with attainment which is generally above average and by the time they take national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 attainment is even better. The inspection confirms the picture painted by the most recent national tests for 11 year olds: standards in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average and well above those achieved by pupils in similar schools. Standards are also well above average when they go on to high school at the end of Year 7. Standards in ICT are now high, thanks to good teaching and the provision of a very well equipped ICT suite. At the time of the last inspection they were below average.
2. Teachers' good grasp of their subjects promotes good learning. They are able to explain and demonstrate things clearly so that pupils easily understand. This was seen, for example, in a Year 6 geography lesson on mountains. The teacher used a model very effectively to demonstrate how the geography of a mountain changes the higher it gets, pointing out the tree line and where human habitation is best situated. Good subject knowledge and understanding were also evident in ICT lessons, where the subject co-ordinator led a lesson with great clarity, making good use of the large screen to demonstrate skills to the whole class. In science, teachers' good subject knowledge is reflected, for example, in the clear demonstrations and explanations given as pupils in Year 6 investigate electrical circuits, finding out for themselves what happens if you remove a component such as a bulb from a circuit wired in series.
3. There are some good opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 use an index in geography to find the main mountain ranges of the world; they use co-ordinates to locate mountain ranges on a map of the world and in ICT they calculate the cost of a meal using spreadsheets.
4. Teachers plan lessons well. They give careful thought to what it is pupils will do and what they are intended to learn. Teachers' planning is carefully checked by the headteacher and subject co-ordinators and this helps maintain its high quality. A strong feature of the teaching is the way teachers explain to pupils at the start of the lesson what they are expected to do and learn.
5. Teachers make good use of whole class teaching and this promotes pupils' learning well. Having carefully explained and discussed the purposes of the lesson, teachers go on to teach the main lesson content to the whole class. They are good at using questions to check for understanding and to make pupils think for themselves. Group or individual tasks typically follow whole class work and these are suitably matched to pupils' abilities, ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met: the most able, those learning English as an additional language and those who find learning more difficult.
6. Too often, teachers leave too little time at the end of lessons for discussion and consolidation of what has been learned. This was seen in mathematics, in science

and in ICT. It means that opportunities are missed to help pupils understand their own learning and remember what has been learned.

The headteacher provides very good leadership, strongly supported by key staff such as the senior management team and curriculum co-ordinators.

7. The quality of leadership and management was good at the time of the last inspection. It is even better now. The headteacher has a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the priorities for school improvement. His strong leadership and clear sense of educational direction have ensured that the school has made very good progress since the last inspection, especially in the quality of teaching and the standards achieved. A very clear school development plan sets out a manageable number of appropriate targets for school improvement. The headteacher is very strongly supported by the deputy headteacher and assistant head. Since the last inspection the way in which subjects are managed has been improved, so that each subject now has its own co-ordinator.
8. There is a very good programme for checking on and improving teaching. This has made a significant contribution to raising the quality of teaching since the last inspection. All teachers are seen teaching at least once each half term and good, clear feedback is given on what works well and what could be improved. Not only the headteacher but also senior staff and subject co-ordinators are involved in this programme. Teachers spoken to during the inspection value the feedback and advice they receive and confirm that it helps them do a better job. The headteacher and senior staff also check teachers' planning regularly and this helps ensure that it is of consistently good quality.
9. National and other test results are carefully analysed by the headteacher to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning and check that all the different groups of pupils at the school are doing as well as they should: boys and girls, the most able, those who find learning more difficult and the many different minority ethnic groups. Action is taken as necessary to improve the attainment of any groups who are falling behind and this makes an important contribution to the high standards which pupils achieve. For example, a decision was taken to concentrate on non-narrative writing and this has been of considerable benefit, particularly in raising the attainment of boys.

The school promotes very good attitudes and behaviour and the provision for pupils' moral and social development is excellent.

10. Parents told inspectors before the inspection that they were very impressed by the attitudes and values which the school promotes. Those at the pre-inspection parents' meeting were unanimous that pupils show a very high level of respect for one another, that they have positive attitudes to work and are very keen to come to school and learn. Of those responding to the parents' questionnaire, 98 per cent said that behaviour at the school is good and 97 per cent felt that the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. The inspection fully supports these views. The attitudes and behaviour seen in lessons were never less than satisfactory. In many lessons they were good. In almost four lessons in ten they were very good or excellent.
11. The school makes good use of circle time, when pupils have a chance to talk about feelings and things that are important to them and personal, social and health education lessons, to underscore the importance of good attitudes to learning and life. Teachers use praise, house points and certificates effectively to encourage and reward good behaviour. There are golden rules for behaviour, agreed by the school and couched

positively in terms of “do” rather than “don’t” and codes of conduct or class contracts agreed by pupils.

12. There is a school council made up of two elected representatives from each class. Hustings and elections give pupils important insights into elements of citizenship and an opportunity to make choices and exercise responsibility. Representatives stand for one year. They take responsibility for setting their own agenda for meetings, taking minutes which they later share with their class and adding information about the workings of the school council to the school’s own web site. A chair, vice chair and secretary are elected by members from within the council. The school council takes responsibility for fundraising, choosing different charities to support each year. Members are rightly proud of their achievements, for example raising a substantial sum for *Children In Need* last year. At a school council meeting attended by a member of the inspection team, at which no other adult was present, business was conducted in a very mature and responsible fashion. As they discussed the inspection with the inspector, pupils were very polite and their behaviour was excellent. There was no calling out and they waited patiently with their hands up to ask questions or make a point.
13. The school has a good system for supporting any pupils who may need help or support outside lessons, for example those who may be isolated or unhappy at playtime. Year 7 pupils are appointed as Buddies. They wear a prominent red sash and look out for pupils who may need their help, telling staff if they are concerned about anyone. This not only offers an important safety net for pupils who may be vulnerable but also provides the oldest pupils with a very good opportunity to take responsibility and use their own initiative in helping others.

The school offers a rich curriculum with a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, music and drama.

14. At the time of the last inspection there were weaknesses in the curriculum. National Curriculum requirements were not met fully for ICT and design and technology. These weaknesses have been overcome and standards in ICT and design and technology have risen as a result. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are now taught in full, as required and French is added to the curriculum in Year 6, ahead of the statutory requirement to teach a modern foreign language in Year 7. Literacy and numeracy appropriately get the lion’s share of curriculum time, in line with national priorities.
15. The taught curriculum is substantially enriched by extra-curricular activities including sport, music and drama. Mixed teams of boys and girls play against other schools in football, cricket and netball competitions. Many pupils learn to play musical instruments and there are regular musical and dramatic performances for the whole school and parents. A music therapy group has been established for some of the pupils with special educational needs. There are many visits out of school in connection with various subjects and aspects of the curriculum. For example, at the time of the inspection Year 7 pupils had recently visited the Royal Institution for Science for the annual Christmas lectures, in connection with the National Year of Science. They had also been to Canterbury, where visits to the Cathedral and work on Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales made a valuable contribution to their studies in English, religious education and history.

The school has established a very good partnership with parents, who think highly of the school

16. Parents attending the pre-inspection meeting and those responding to the questionnaire expressed very positive views about the school. There was little dissent, although a small proportion of parents were unhappy about the amount of homework set and the range of activities offered outside lessons. They were split on whether there was too much homework or too little. A few parents felt that there were too few activities offered outside lessons. The inspection supports the parents' positive views of the school. It finds that the amount of homework is about right for the age of pupils and that there is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Parents are kept well informed about how their children are getting on. There are appropriate opportunities for parents and pupils together to meet with teachers and discuss attainment and progress. Annual reports are good and give clear advice about what pupils need to do to improve. They include helpful comments on personal and social development as well as academic progress. Informative newsletters are sent home at the rate of about two a month. They give helpful information and advice, for example on how to notify the school about absence and about school uniform. Newsletters reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of the school's population sensitively, for example wishing Hindu parents Happy Diwali and seeking information from Muslim parents on whether children are fasting during Ramadan or need to pray during the school day.
17. Parents appreciate the fact that staff are approachable and they feel confident that they could easily raise any questions or concerns and be listened to and taken seriously. They are pleased that the headteacher is at the school gate each morning, greeting parents and pupils.
18. Parents are given good opportunities to be involved in the work of the school. For example, they were involved in the recent *Healthy Schools* initiative. Their views are canvassed and taken into account, for instance about the introduction of a new open evening system.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Pupils have too few opportunities to carry out investigative work in mathematics

19. At the time of the last inspection the school did not provide enough opportunities for investigation, experiment and decision making, particularly in mathematics and science. Since that time there have been good developments in science and there is clear evidence that pupils have many appropriate opportunities to experiment and find things out for themselves. Good examples of this sort of work were seen during the inspection, for example in Year 6. However, there are still not enough opportunities for investigation in mathematics. The school has put a lot of time since the last inspection into implementing the National Numeracy Strategy. It has done this very successfully and it has had a significant impact on standards, which are very high. A careful examination of pupils' work in all years confirms the very high standards achieved in national tests last year but there is too little evidence still of independent investigation and decision taking. The school has recognised this shortcoming itself and it is featured as a target in the current school development plan.

The school does not comply with the statutory duty set out in the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998, to provide for all pupils to attend a daily act of collective worship, which over a term must be broadly Christian in nature

20. Although the school meets together daily in an assembly, when important messages are imaginatively given about social and moral issues, there is no act of worship. Worship is generally understood to imply the recognition of a supreme being. The words used should recognise the existence of a deity. This is not the case with assemblies at Priestmead and what the school provides is not in keeping with the spirit of the law.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- (1) Ensure that opportunities exist for investigative work in all year groups and that the subject co-ordinator checks on the outcomes, as stated in the school development plan (paragraph 19).
- (2) See that a daily act of collective worship is provided for all pupils, in accordance with statutory requirements (paragraph 20).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	2	11	5	0	0	0
Percentage	5	11	58	26	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y4 – 7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	372
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	15

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	92

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	261

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	19

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	6.3
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National comparative data	0.4
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	55	38	93

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	49	47	55
	Girls	35	31	34
	Total	84	78	89
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (89)	84 (83)	96 (91)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	46	46	46
	Girls	33	31	31
	Total	79	77	77
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (89)	83 (85)	83 (87)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	16
Black – African heritage	7
Black – other	3
Indian	211
Pakistani	13
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	8
White	69
Any other minority ethnic group	38

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y4 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.4
Average class size	31

Education support staff: Y4 – Y7

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	149

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions of pupils of compulsory school age, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Financial information

Financial year	2000
	£
Total income	820899
Total expenditure	804204
Expenditure per pupil	2168
Balance brought forward from previous year	38585
Balance carried forward to next year	55280

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	372
Number of questionnaires returned	202

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	28	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	49	48	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	45	1	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	47	12	2	0
The teaching is good.	58	40	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	50	40	4	2	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	62	35	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	60	36	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	57	35	6	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	65	33	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	47	1	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	43	37	12	3	4