

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Jacqueline Laver  
Headteacher  
Priory School  
Orchard Avenue  
Slough  
Berkshire  
SL1 6HE

Dear Mrs Laver

### **Short inspection of Priory School**

Following my visit to the school on 12 March 2019 with Christopher Crouch, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in February 2015.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You lead the school with drive and energy. You are ably supported by other leaders and, together, you form an effective team. Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and where further improvements are needed. You are wisely refining the school's improvement plans so that these are more succinct and give suitable emphasis to the school's key priorities. You have managed the many changes at the school well, including the significant rise in the number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in the school's resource base. The school invests considerably in training to enable staff to grow and flourish professionally. This has ensured that the quality of teaching and leadership has continued to improve. You are supported well by governors who keep suitable oversight of the school's work, including safeguarding and finance.

Pupils enjoy school and enthuse about the many interesting curriculum-enrichment activities offered. In class and around the school, most pupils behave sensibly and settle to their work quickly. Throughout the school, relationships are warm and supportive. Classrooms are purposeful and there is a positive climate for learning. Pupils who have challenging social, emotional or mental health needs are supported well. Since the beginning of this academic year, exclusions have reduced significantly. However, you recognise that the number of exclusions remains too high and are taking appropriate steps to reduce these further. We also agreed that leaders' strategic oversight of behaviour is not as strong as it could be. The school is inclusive and welcoming and helps pupils to develop a strong understanding of important values, such as tolerance. Diversity is valued and promoted. Parents

appreciate the school's values and are complimentary about the care and support their children receive at Priory School. As one parent commented, 'The school takes such good care with pupils' well-being.'

You continue to keep a sharp focus on improving outcomes for pupils. In 2018, pupils' attainment in the combined subjects of reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was just above the national average. Your good work and focus on writing led to a significant rise in pupils' attainment in this subject in 2018. However, in 2018, there was a dip in key stage 1 standards and disadvantaged pupils' lower-than-expected attainment was a key factor in this decline. You have correctly identified this as one of the school's priorities and are taking effective action to improve standards. Current pupils are making good progress. Children in the early years continue to achieve well and make strong progress from low starting points.

You have taken effective action to address the areas for improvement highlighted by inspectors in the last inspection. The quality of teaching has continued to improve and there is now more outstanding teaching. During our visits to classrooms we could see how effectively teachers were challenging pupils, including the most able. Teachers' careful questioning, clear explanations and modelling are helping pupils to learn well. Pupils with SEND, including those in the resource base, are making good progress. Current disadvantaged pupils are also making good progress. However, you acknowledge that these pupils do not attain as well as other pupils. You are also redoubling your efforts to reduce absence and rates of persistent absence, as they remain too high.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Safeguarding is rightly a high priority at the school. Regular training ensures that staff are knowledgeable and confident in recognising and reporting any concerns. Staff know pupils and their families very well and have a clear understanding of potential risks and the vulnerabilities of some pupils. When necessary, concerns are reported swiftly to relevant outside agencies. Leaders keep in regular contact with these agencies to make sure that pupils and their families receive the help they need. Leaders are swift to challenge the local authority if they are not satisfied with the response to safeguarding concerns.

Record-keeping is systematic and of good quality. The school has a raft of early help and support strategies for pupils and their families. This includes guidance from specialist staff who have received enhanced training, for example, in mental health. You also call upon external staff from the local authority's safeguarding hub to strengthen support for families. Pupils feel safe and know that they can speak to adults in school if they ever feel worried about something. Pupils are also knowledgeable about how to keep safe, for instance when using the internet.

## Inspection findings

- During this inspection, we agreed to focus on specific aspects of the school's work: how well leaders are using additional funding to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils; the impact of support for pupils with SEND; pupils' behaviour; leaders' work to improve attendance; and curriculum enrichment.
- You have ensured that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils has a suitably high profile. Due to recent staff changes, you are overseeing this aspect of the school's work. Individual plans and targets are now in place for all disadvantaged pupils. Funding is used to provide a wide range of support, particularly to meet pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs. Breakfast and after-school clubs, extra tuition and support for home learning provide help for pupils beyond the school day.
- Effective guidance from additional adults ensures that pupils are supported well in class. Along with governors and other leaders, you regularly review and adjust this provision to make sure that it is effective. Current disadvantaged pupils are making good progress. However, these pupils attain less well than their peers. You are also sensibly strengthening the school's plans so that these are more precise and include sharper success criteria.
- The resource base for pupils with SEND is well equipped, attractive and stimulating. Staff are effectively deployed, including the school's specialist staff and therapists. Support is carefully tailored to meet pupils' individual needs. Relationships are warm and staff provide a high level of care for pupils. Effective communication with pupils, including through signing, is a strength. The school's comprehensive array of assessment tools enables staff to check pupils' progress and precisely identify their next learning steps. Transition arrangements between the main school and the resource base, and those for pupils' next stages of education, are effective. As a result, pupils with SEND, including those in the resource base, are making good progress.
- The school is an orderly community. Classrooms are purposeful environments for learning and most pupils behave well. Relationships are positive and pupils are courteous to each other and their teachers. Kindness and respect are fostered and modelled by staff. Leaders' work to improve behaviour around the school has been effective. Clear routines and expectations are well established. Pupils' movement around the school is sensible and calm.
- The school has a number of pupils with significant social, emotional and mental health needs. These pupils are supported well. Plans are in place for those pupils who need additional help, including the involvement of external agencies. The school keeps detailed records of all behaviour incidents, including the actions taken to manage them. Leaders take an extremely firm approach to the rare incidents of discriminatory behaviour. Incident logs show that bullying is very occasional and when it happens leaders take appropriate action.
- In the previous two years, there was a significant and concerning rise in the number of fixed-term exclusions. It is reassuring that these have reduced notably since September 2018. However, exclusions remain too high. Leaders do not yet

analyse or evaluate behaviour incidents with enough precision. We agreed that this aspect of the school's work needs to be strengthened.

- Leaders have implemented a wide range of strategies to improve pupils' attendance. Since September, their work has increased in pace and they have appointed an additional member of staff to strengthen their work with families. It is too soon to see the impact of this work and overall attendance has not yet improved. Rates of persistent absence also remain too high, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- The curriculum is well planned and includes clear sequences of the skills and knowledge that pupils will acquire as they progress through the school. Curriculum enrichment is a strong element of the school's curriculum offer. Specialist teaching in sport and music contributes very well to pupils' learning, enjoyment and engagement. There are numerous out-of-school clubs and many opportunities for pupils to participate in competitive events. Leaders check participation rates and adapt their offer to increase pupils' uptake, including for under-represented groups such as girls. As well as contributing to pupils' learning, these extra activities support the development of pupils' personal and social skills and behaviour. Visits to places of interest, visiting groups and special curriculum days are woven effectively into pupils' learning experiences in the wider curriculum.

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they strengthen the strategic oversight of behaviour and reduce the number of exclusions
- they improve pupils' attendance and reduce persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND
- disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress so that the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils continues to diminish.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Slough. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sue Cox  
**Ofsted Inspector**

## **Information about the inspection**

During this inspection, my colleague and I met with you and senior leaders. I held a meeting with two members of the governing body and met with a representative of the local authority. Together with you, we planned the key lines of enquiry for the inspection. We visited classes in all year groups, including all classes in the resource base. During our visits to classes, we observed pupils' learning, spoke with pupils about their progress and looked at their books. We also observed their behaviour around the school, including during lunchtime. Observations were conducted jointly with you or a senior leader. My colleague met with a group of 12 pupils from Years 1 to 6. We considered the 97 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including parents' free-text comments, and a letter from one parent. My colleague also met parents at the start of the school day.

We considered the responses from 96 members of staff who completed the Ofsted confidential staff survey and the 22 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. We reviewed safeguarding documents, including the school's pre-employment checks on the suitability of adults to work with children. We also reviewed a wide range of other documentation, including: pupils' behaviour records; policies; minutes of meetings; and the school's plans for improvement.