



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE PRIORY SCHOOL

**EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE
INTERMEDIATE INSPECTION**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Priory School

Full Name of School	The Priory School		
DfE Number	330/6002		
EYFS Number	EY289773		
Registered Charity Number	518009		
Address	The Priory School Sir Harry's Road Edgbaston Birmingham West Midlands B15 2UR		
Telephone Number	0121 4404103		
Fax Number	0121 4403639		
Email Address	enquiries@prioryschool.net		
Head	Mr Jonathan Cramb		
Chair of Governors	Mr Stephen M Gilmore		
Age Range	6 months to 18 years		
Total Number of Pupils	435		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (278 boys; 157 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	46	5-11: 108
	3-5 (EYFS):	54	11-18: 227
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Anne Cleary		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	15 Oct 2013 to 16 Oct 2013		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule* for intermediate inspections, focusing on the Early Years Foundation Stage. The inspection occurs over a period of two continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2010

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted informal discussions with children and examined samples of work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, deputy chair of governors, and link governor for the EYFS, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Miss Valerie Craven	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Catherine Watts	Team Inspector for Early Years (Deputy Head of Prep School and Head of Foundation School, IAPS)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Priory School is an independent Catholic day school, which welcomes pupils of other denominations and faiths, or of no faith. The school aims to: value every pupil, enabling all to achieve academic success; to develop their individual talents; to use the Catholic ethos to foster spiritual and moral development in all pupils; and to maintain good communications with parents.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1933 by the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus on its present fourteen-acre site in a historic manor house in Edgbaston. The grounds include playing fields and pitches as well as extensive play areas.
- 1.3 When the order withdrew in 1986, the school became a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity with a governing council. The council and a number of committees offer advice and support to the vision and leadership team (VLT). Recent developments at the school include the refurbishment of the East Wing to become the sixth form area, including a common room, study area and tutorial rooms. Additional classrooms have been created on the first and second floor of the main Georgian building. The libraries in both the Prep and Senior Schools have been enhanced with a librarian on duty from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. The pavilion has been refurbished to form an area for outdoor education as well as a facility to receive visiting sports teams.
- 1.4 The school is co-educational throughout. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has forty-six children aged from six months to two years in four classes, and fifty-four children aged between three to five years in three classes. The prep school has 108 pupils, a number of whom move on to maintained selective grammar or independent senior schools. The senior school has 227 pupils including the sixth form, which was opened in September 2012.
- 1.5 The school admits pupils of a wide range of ability. The ability profile of pupils in the prep school is in line with the national average and it is slightly above the average in the senior school. Pupils come from a wide catchment area and varied backgrounds. Within the EYFS, fourteen children have been identified as having special educational needs (SEND), and none are learning English as an additional language.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the EYFS and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Baby Poppets	Nursery (6 to 16 months)
Mini Poppets	Nursery (16 months to 2½ years)
Poppets	Nursery (2½ to 3 years)
Nursery	Nursery (3 to 4 years)
Reception	Reception (4 to 5 years)

2. SUMMARY

(i) Compliance with statutory requirements

- 2.1 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

1. Enhance opportunities for the Reception children to explore their surroundings, to investigate and to use their imagination.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

3.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 3.1 The setting makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of pupils who attend. The excellent educational programmes are wide ranging, covering all of the areas of learning and enabling all children, including the under-threes to reach their full potential and exceed the expected levels of development, preparing them well for the next stages in their education. This strong provision enables children who have been identified as having SEND to make appropriate progress.
- 3.2 Very caring and supportive staff have successfully created a homely environment where children can achieve well, in line with the school's values and ethos, and thus develop their skills effectively. Accurate assessment identifies children's needs, enabling staff to plan work appropriate to the needs of each child. Assessment checks for two-year-olds are completed and shared with parents and carers as required.
- 3.3 Staff plan a variety of timetabled, structured activities, including phonics and literacy, and provide some exploration and investigation experiences, particularly during outdoor education visits. The well-resourced outdoor play areas, including the sensory garden, enable the younger children in the Nursery to extend their learning. There are limited opportunities for the Reception children to explore, investigate and to use their imagination. Older Nursery children have suitable opportunities to develop their language skills during practical activities, for example, when forming letters in a tray containing salt. Staff make learning very enjoyable, as observed in a Reception class during a literacy focused lesson, where children were experimenting with painting letters and using phonics cubes to blend words. All children respond very well to the staff's high expectations and, as a result, they are very enthusiastic and motivated learners.
- 3.4 Staff have established excellent partnerships with children's parents and carers, as seen in the overall positive responses to the pre-inspection parent questionnaire. Parents were particularly positive about the school's nurturing environment; in particular they said how communication has recently improved, that the phonics meetings for parents are very beneficial, and that they appreciate the school's open door policy.
- 3.5 A small number of criticisms about the level of support received for very able pupils was not supported by inspection evidence. Staff are available to discuss achievements and progress on a daily basis as well as giving guidance within progress reports.

3.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

- 3.6 The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being is outstanding. Members of staff are very caring and supportive, particularly of the youngest children, and as a result, children form secure emotional attachments with adults. Key people work closely with all parents and carers to ensure that smooth transitions take place, for example from the Nursery and from Reception into Year 1. Parents comment about how staff have supported and reassured them during this time. At all levels, staff, including those in Year 1, work closely together to share detailed records about each child, enabling staff to be aware of children's individual needs and starting points. Key people have established excellent relationships with children, which have a positive impact on meeting their educational and welfare needs. Children feel very secure and display a high level of confidence. They are encouraged to celebrate a variety of festivals, such as the Chinese New Year and Diwali. The children's awareness of the need for a healthy diet and physical exercise are enhanced by visitors to the school, such as the dentist and doctor. The encouragement to eat fresh fruit during snack times helps to raise children's awareness of healthy eating, and the use of school's gym and spacious outdoor areas foster children's physical development and well being. Children of all ages understand the importance of washing their hands after going to the toilet, after messy activities, after stroking the animals, and before meals.

3.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

- 3.7 Leadership and management are outstanding. Aspirations are very high and the clear vision is communicated well by the EYFS leadership, enabling staff to share outstanding practice within the school. Very effective teamwork contributes greatly to the progress and development of all children.
- 3.8 Governors are involved effectively in the work of the EYFS; one takes a particular interest as the EYFS link governor. This has had an excellent impact on the overall provision, particularly in the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures. Policies and procedures help to promote a positive and inclusive atmosphere in which children thrive, feel safe and are stimulated. The children's well-being and safeguarding are central to all that the school does and are enhanced through comprehensive risk assessments and a genuine concern for children's welfare and personal development. Senior staff evaluate and monitor the educational programmes and other provision thoroughly. Accurate self-evaluation provides a secure basis for planning the school's development, for example in the development plan, which sets out key objectives for the next three years for the under-fives at the school.
- 3.9 Since the previous inspection, the setting has responded well to the recommendations. These include ensuring that work is matched to individual needs and that next steps are recorded, to adopt a consistent approach to facilitating independence in all aspects of learning, and also to improve liaison between age groups to promote consistency of the implementation of the EYFS.
- 3.10 Excellent partnerships have been established with parents and external agencies, which all contribute significantly to improving outcomes for the children. Suitable staff appraisals and one-to-one supervisions are completed on a regular basis, focusing on key strengths and areas for development; they are used very effectively to identify professional training needs. The school actively encourages the

development of staff's knowledge and understanding, for example, through staff working towards higher qualifications, including specific qualifications linked to outdoor education.

3.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 3.11 The overall quality and standards of the early years provision are outstanding. The children's achievements and progress exceed age-related expectations in all areas of learning in relation to their various starting points. Physical development is promoted well for the under-threes, such as through outdoor play activities when skilfully manoeuvring large wheeled toys. Older Nursery children are developing varied speaking and listening skills, for example through shared discussions about families in a religious studies lesson. The children in Reception are learning about blending letter sounds to build words during a variety of well-planned activities and, by the end of the Reception year, children can write simple sentences with a high degree of accuracy, as part of their extended writing. These skills are further enhanced through daily reading and writing practice at home. They are also able to use positional mathematical language and confidently write, understand and manipulate basic numbers. Children are learning skills for the future by operating a suitable range of information and communications technology equipment, for example taking pictures of the animals found in the outside wooded area.
- 3.12 The learning and care provided by key people ensures that all of the children's needs are identified and met. These are highlighted well through the staff's comprehensive evaluation and planning processes. Children who have been identified with SEND have their needs met very effectively through additional support by a speech and language therapist and the local authority SENCO.
- 3.13 All of the children's personal, social and emotional development is fostered well through their positive interactions with very caring and supportive staff. Children display exemplary behaviour, they are courteous and respectful towards each other, and towards visitors and staff, and they know how to stay safe. They take delight in receiving praise through a wide variety of rewards for their behaviour and work, as seen in their personal 'sticker charts' and receive certificates during assembly. Secure leadership and management ensure that safeguarding and welfare requirements are met.
- 3.14 Regular and effective evaluations, also improvements since the last inspection, have all made a positive impact on outcomes for children.