

Prestwich Preparatory School

400 Bury Old Road, Prestwich, Manchester, Lancashire M25 1PZ

Inspection dates

7–9 February 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The proprietor does not have an accurate view of the school. The school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is inaccurate.
- Leaders do not measure the effectiveness of their actions to improve the school. It has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection.
- Teachers are not held accountable for the standards pupils reach because there is no system to manage teachers' performance.
- There is no assessment policy within the school. Pupils' progress is not being measured accurately and the most able pupils are not being challenged in their learning.
- Pupils are frequently not aware of what they are learning because this is not explained well enough at the start of lessons.
- Children do not make enough progress in the early years. Attainment is below that of children nationally.
- Progress in Years 1 and 2 is too slow. Pupils repeat similar tasks over time with little progress evident in their work.
- Too little challenge is offered in science teaching, especially for the most able pupils. An over-emphasis on acquiring knowledge hinders pupils from developing age-appropriate scientific skills.
- The arrangements to ensure that the independent school standards are met are not sufficiently rigorous.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is successful in meeting its overarching aim of ensuring that pupils are offered places at grammar schools.
- Opportunities for writing across the curriculum are strong.
- Parents are very positive about the individual care and support that pupils receive.
- The family ethos within the school contributes well to pupils' wider development and their good behaviour.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders secure rapid improvement in the less effective aspects of the school's work
 - ensuring that leaders' planning for improvement identifies measurable steps so that improvements can be accurately measured and evaluated
 - improving senior leaders' questioning and analysis so that they can accurately evaluate the school's performance and identify the correct priorities for further development
 - ensuring that leaders and teachers use effective assessment practices to track pupils' progress across all year groups
 - ensuring that leaders introduce a system of performance management for teachers to raise expectations and standards within the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in early years and key stage 1, by:
 - ensuring that pupils are clear about what they are expected to learn in each lesson
 - ensuring that accurate assessment underpins pupils' next steps so that they do not repeat work and the most able pupils are challenged to excel
 - developing the science curriculum to ensure that pupils develop scientific skills alongside their knowledge of scientific facts
 - improving children's independent skills in the early years to accelerate progress in their learning.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress (paragraph 3, 3(g)).
- The proprietor must ensure that suitable accommodation is provided in order to cater for the medical and therapy needs of pupils, including accommodation for the short term care of sick and injured pupils, which includes a washing facility and is near to a toilet facility (paragraph 24(1), 24(1)(b)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently and actively promote the well-being of pupils (paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b), 34(1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The pace of improvement in the school is too slow. Leaders have not responded well enough to the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. For example, leaders do not track or question the progress that pupils make. Leaders are too generous in their views of the school's effectiveness and improvement planning is not precise enough.
- The school focuses on helping pupils to gain entry into grammar school by the end of Year 6. Leaders are successful in this aim but complacency has crept into the school, especially for pupils in the younger age groups. The proprietor and the consultant directors feel that repetition and practice of the basics provide pupils with a good grounding for future progress. Staff and leaders feel that they are justified by their single measure of success without taking into account the progress that pupils make at other stages in their education.
- Leaders have not fully questioned the slow rates of progress from the early years to the end of Year 2. The results from the early years are below the national average. Leaders have not analysed these results or taken action to improve children's and pupils' attainment.
- There is no formal system of managing the performance of teachers. The headteacher conducts lesson observations and sets targets for improvement but she does not check to see whether these improvements have been carried out. Arrangements are in place but these are very informal. Teachers are not aware of the importance of their own development. They feel that, because a high proportion of pupils successfully gain places at grammar schools, there is no need for teachers to improve their practice.
- Pupils are provided with a variety of activities to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are aware of others and they respect each other's differences. However, in discussion, pupils felt uncomfortable talking about some of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 because this had not yet been addressed in school. Leaders are aware of the need to extend their provision to cover all protected characteristics in a sensitive manner that respects the diverse school community.
- Pupils have opportunities to debate current affairs and the school promotes British values well throughout the curriculum. Pupils are aware of how their actions and words can affect others. One pupil said that the school positively promotes the message that, 'the choices we make now will affect us later on in life'.
- The curriculum is focused on preparing pupils for grammar school entrance examinations. It includes many opportunities for cross-curricular writing. The formal curriculum is complemented by a programme of extra-curricular activities that is becoming increasingly popular with pupils.
- Pupils are positive about opportunities that they have to learn about other faiths and display respect for each other's opinions and views.

- Parents are very supportive of the school. They value the strong pastoral ethos where 'the children all look out for each other; the older ones looking after the younger ones'. Parents receive regular progress updates and appreciate the fact that teachers are 'approachable, and regularly available to speak to'.

Governance

- As the proprietor, the headteacher is solely responsible for the strategic direction of the school. There are few formal systems for leadership and management in place. This lack of structure means that leaders have no clear outcomes against which to measure the school's improvement.
- There are no formal systems in place for the proprietor to be challenged or questioned about pupils' outcomes beyond the informal support that she receives from the two consultant directors. Leaders do not evaluate the school's effectiveness well enough and improvement plans lack detail. There has not been enough improvement in the areas identified during the last inspection.
- The proprietor and other leaders are not sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that the independent school standards are met. Leaders took rapid action during the inspection to respond to a small number of unmet standards. However, they need to undertake further work to ensure that all standards are met.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's new safeguarding policy has been published on the school website and it takes into account the most recent government requirements.
- The safeguarding procedures in school are shared with staff, who receive regular updates and training. Staff are vigilant and the rare instances of concerns are dealt with effectively. Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Leaders make sure that there is supervision for pupils at all times and, when asked, pupils all agree that they feel safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The school does not have a consistent approach to assessment and the quality of teaching across the school is variable. This means that pupils' progress is not monitored beyond daily informal interactions. The rates of progress seen during observation of teaching and learning and in workbooks for the most able pupils are slow, particularly in Years 1 and 2. These pupils do not receive sufficient challenge.
- Time is not used as productively as possible. Pupils sit through the same introductions in class and complete similar work regardless of their individual ability. This is particularly evident in science where pupils are frequently asked to copy passages from the board. When asked to do so, pupils could not read their work back because they did not fully understand what had been taught. Pupils then use these poorly understood pieces of work to revise for tests. The school's approach to promoting 'the three Rs' through other subjects develops pupils' knowledge but not the scientific enquiry and investigation skills that they will need in their future education.

- Pupils' learning is sometimes hampered because the material is not explained well enough and because of this they are not fully aware of what they are learning. Teachers and leaders are unable to evaluate the outcomes of lessons due to this lack of clarity.
- Cross-curricular writing is clearly evident and the quality in pupils' humanities and science books matches that of their other work. However, inspectors found very little evidence of pupils applying their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- For older pupils, learning is highly structured. The school's approach to teaching English and mathematics is successful in ensuring that pupils are prepared for grammar school entrance exams, which is the school's main aim.
- Parents appreciate the homework that pupils receive and pupils understand the need for homework, particularly in relation to preparing them for the next stage of their education. Homework is matched to lesson content and also provides pupils with the opportunity to conduct research for their studies.
- Pupils read widely and often. They enjoy the texts that they read and are confident, fluent readers. They adeptly and accurately apply phonic knowledge and skills to decode words.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and articulate. They show a strong understanding of the need to respect each other and other people's views and opinions.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe and feel that they can rely on adults if they have a problem. They have a good awareness of online safety and are clear about the precautions they take to keep their identity and personal information private.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils generally have positive attitudes to learning, although in some lessons they switch off, often due to the lack of challenge or the repetitive nature of tasks.
- Parents are very positive about the school and the management of behaviour.
- The small size of the school means that all pupils know each other and socialise together well at playtime. Pupils say that there is no bullying in the school. Pupils agree that should this occur, they are confident that the headteacher would deal with this swiftly.
- Pupils conduct themselves well throughout the school day, in lessons and when moving round the school.
- The environment is orderly and pupils are attentive in lessons when the teacher is speaking to the class. Pupils work well together, for example when Year 3 and Year 4 pupils researched the organs of the body and presented their findings to the rest of the class.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes are not accurately assessed across the school. There is a belief in the school that if the proportion of pupils passing the entrance examinations for grammar schools is high, then this is the only measure of success for pupils. Leaders believe that this end justifies the means. In this aspect of its work, the school is successful. However, the progress of children in the early years and pupils in some of the younger year groups is slow.
- In Years 1 and 2, the work provided by the school showed evidence of limited progress. For example, the quality of some pupils' writing between September 2016 and February 2017 showed very limited improvement in sentence structure, punctuation and the quality of vocabulary used.
- The most able pupils do not progress as quickly as possible because teaching does not challenge them to think or work hard. This is particularly true for younger pupils. In too many lessons, pupils do similar work regardless of their ability or prior knowledge. Some pupils commented on the fact that 'they are taught subjects to pass exams'.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to other pupils. Some whose language skills are less well developed receive additional support to help them achieve in line with other pupils. The school provides additional sessions for these pupils to practise their speech and language on a regular basis. These are successful in building their confidence to talk in front of their peers.
- Owing to the relatively faster progress that they make from Year 3 onwards, all pupils who sit entrance exams for grammar schools receive at least one offer of a place. In this respect, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education by the end of their time at the school.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children enter the early years with abilities broadly typical of their age. The proportions of children meeting the early learning goals for the last four years have been below the national average. In an analysis of the results, inspectors found that the areas that children were not achieving in had remained the same over this period. Leaders do not fully analyse the performance of children and there has been no formal plan to improve these areas of learning beyond the informal conversations between the early years lead and the headteacher.
- Leaders have little appreciation of the need to analyse the school's results to identify improvement priorities. They regard the results as a consequence of the structured way of teaching English and mathematics, where children do not fully develop their independent writing and number skills. It is this lack of independence that is preventing children from achieving against nationally assessed goals. Children's skill levels, measured by these assessments, mean that children are not fully ready for Year 1.
- Phonics in the early years is taught well but hampered by limited resources, which restricts teaching, for example in a lesson where the teacher read from a book that children could barely see. This meant that the language could not be effectively explored with children.

- Observations in Reception and Nursery showed that adults interacted well with children to promote their learning. The frequency of this interaction was variable. Children are happy and the work in books shows progress through highly structured work that has been heavily supported by adults.
- There is a range of provision available in the classroom. Children access these areas well and the use of technology is evident throughout many activities, such as the use of programmable toys and tablets with carefully selected applications.
- The behaviour of children in the early years is good. They interact well with one another and there is a good level of cooperation when working together.
- Parents are active in supporting children's learning. Teachers work well with parents and compile learning journeys so that they can see the types of activities that they have been doing in class. Targets for children's learning have been introduced to encourage parents to work with their children at home.
- The school is effective in meeting the independent school standards in relation to the provision in the early years. Safeguarding practice is effective and policy and welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	105997
DfE registration number	351/6012
Inspection number	10026000

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Number of part-time pupils	9
Proprietor	Patricia Shiels
Headteacher	Patricia Shiels
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,760
Telephone number	0161 7731223
Website	www.prestwichprepschool.net
Email address	enquiries@prestwichprepschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 March 2012

Information about this school

- Prestwich Preparatory School is a small independent co-educational primary school.
- The main building is Victorian and is leased from the local authority.
- Pupils attend four classes; Nursery and Reception share the same space but have different teachers.
- Class sizes are small.
- Before- and after-school care is available on the school site.
- No pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.

- A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- No pupils who are known to be disadvantaged attend the school.
- Two consultant directors, both of whom work in the school, advise the proprietor.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in each class. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and evaluated the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Some visits to classrooms were made jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked through a wide range of pupils' work across the curriculum and heard pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally in a group and informally around school and at playtimes and lunchtime.
- Inspectors spoke to parents both at the start and end of the school day. There were too few responses to assess Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors made observations of pupils' behaviour at lunchtime, when pupils were moving in and around the school and during lessons.
- Meetings were held with the proprietor, staff, the early years lead and all Year 5 and Year 6 pupils.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including policies, information on pupils' attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its own performance and its areas for development.
- Inspectors looked at behaviour records, including records of bullying incidents.
- The lead inspector reviewed safeguarding documentation and how this related to daily practice. Inspectors also spoke to staff and children about safeguarding practice.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Shutt

Ofsted Inspector

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