



Priestlands School

North Street, Pennington, Lymington, Hampshire, SO41 8FZ

Headteacher: Mr C A Willsher BA, MEd

School Reception: 01590 677033
Student Absence Hotline: 01590 613440
Fax: 01590 670398
www.priestlands.hants.sch.uk
email: info@priestlands.hants.sch.uk
Twitter: @PriestlandsSch

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Dear Parent

Ofsted Inspection

I am pleased to write to you on behalf of the Board of Governors to inform you of the outcome of our Ofsted Inspection on 16 November 2016. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in May 2012. The headline is that the school continues to be good.

In his meeting with Governors and the Senior Team, the Lead Inspector told us that the school had continued to make good progress since our last inspection and was now on the cusp of outstanding. As this was a short inspection, we do not receive a formal report. Instead, the HMI who led the inspection has written a detailed letter to the Headteacher. A copy of this letter can be found on the school's website

(<https://priestlands.fluencycms.co.uk/Ofsted>) and on the Ofsted website

(<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/137129>).

In his letter, Mr Murphy says:

- Leaders have maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.
- The Headteacher is determined and passionate about standards, while remaining approachable and warm:
 - “You keep a close eye on the daily workings of the school so that no task is seen as too unimportant to do well, such as serving pupils at lunchtime.”
 - “Pupils and staff clearly appreciate how you encourage them to do their best and how they can learn from their mistakes.”
- Parents describe the school as ‘amazing, with a real family atmosphere’ and how the Headteacher is an ‘inspiration who always makes time for children’.
- The Headteacher and leaders model the school values ‘learn more, do more, be more’ very well. There is a very effective leadership team, who have high expectations and model these in the classroom and in their work with staff.
- The school has rightly focused on improving teaching as its main priority; it has strengthened the leadership team and put in place a range of strategies to improve teaching.
- The school has taken difficult decisions about staffing because they have refused to compromise on the quality of staff employed. As a result, teaching across the school is now strong, with some very strong elements.
- There are good partnerships with the local primary and junior schools to improve the transition for pupils. As a result, staff know the children well when they arrive and they make a strong start in key stage 3. There are also strong links with local teaching alliances to support staff training and the implementation of the new key stage 4 curriculum. There are good links with the local 16-19 providers so that the vast majority of pupils go on to achieve well in their next stage of education.
- The school is also considering developing its own 16-19 provision so that they can provide a more local offer for pupils who currently have to travel long distances.
- Staff are hugely positive about the school and enjoy working there because they are well supported and are part of a highly motivated team.

Learn more... Do more... Be more...

- Staff know what is expected of them because leaders communicate the key priorities well. Staff value the way that leaders have created a climate in which they can take risks and innovate. As a result, staff work diligently to achieve the highest standards for pupils across the school.
- The school has addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection effectively. They have developed a new assessment system that is well used by the vast majority of staff to plan more effectively to meet the needs of the different starting points of pupils. Middle leaders are now using achievement information much more confidently than in the past to evaluate the quality of teaching and achievement in their areas. As a result, pupils, who left in 2016, made good progress from their starting points across a wide range of measures.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff with additional responsibility are well trained and provide useful and regular information to the rest of the staff. These frequent updates ensure that all staff are knowledgeable about how to keep children safe. Governors regularly scrutinise school procedures and check that leaders are taking the appropriate actions to support vulnerable pupils. As a result, these pupils are doing well and are well supported. Leaders also work well with other agencies and resolutely pursue the best outcomes for pupils. Consequently, parents and pupils are very positive about the care and support that they receive, especially those who need additional help.
- Pupils are friendly, polite and respectful of each other, staff and visitors. They are knowledgeable about the risks of social media and confident about who to talk to if they have any concerns. They are proud of their school and the difference they make to school life. The student leaders are especially effective and have brought about significant changes to the school such as the introduction of a house system.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that they:

- further reduce the overall absence of disadvantaged pupils, especially those who are frequently absent
- accelerate the actions to improve teaching in science so that all pupils make stronger progress over time from their starting points.

I am sure parents will agree with me that this is a very strong report. The school is already addressing the two action points which are themselves designed to move the school from “Good” to “Outstanding”.

Inspectors continue to be extremely impressed with the educational experience that is a hallmark of our school and everyone at the school will continue to work tirelessly to deliver the very highest quality service for all of our students. The Board of Governors consider this report another remarkable achievement and a wonderful result for everyone – students, staff and parents.

Yours sincerely

David Thomas

David Thomas
Chair of Governors