

Priors Wood Primary School

Cozens Road, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 7HZ

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| Inspection dates | 19–20 April 2016 |
| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is well led by the headteacher. With good support from the deputy headteacher, governors and the local authority, teaching has improved and as a result pupils are making good progress.
- Governors have effectively reviewed their practice and now provide a good level of support and challenge to school leaders.
- Pupils are developing good attitudes to learning. They work hard and are keen to succeed.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability now make good progress. The careful identification of pupils is accurate and the leader uses this information well to plan support for individual pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points. This is due to strong leadership, close monitoring and effective use of additional funding. The attainment of these pupils is at least the same as all pupils nationally.
- In the early years, creative planning, effective teaching and close partnerships with parents ensure that all children make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils have a good start and end to their school day. A strength of the school is the breakfast club and after-school club. Supervising staff plan, lead and manage fun activities linked to learning new skills.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in mathematics are not as good as those in reading and writing.
- Some teaching does not give pupils enough opportunities to make even better progress.
- The way that the school checks how pupils are doing requires more consistency to be fully effective in monitoring pupil achievement.
- Some subject leaders have yet to have sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making sure that:
 - teachers share their expertise so all teaching helps pupils make maximum progress
 - pupils make faster progress in mathematics.

- Ensure that leaders continue to improve pupils' achievement by:
 - monitoring the assessment system with even greater rigour to ensure consistent, purposeful and accurate use by all teachers
 - developing the leadership of teaching and learning in all subject areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and other leaders set high expectations for both staff and pupils. They are demonstrating that they are very effective at making improvements. For example, since the previous inspection the teaching and learning of writing has improved so that standards are now at national average.
- Leaders record and track pupils' progress well and intervene early to prevent them from falling behind. This has helped all pupils progress well, including those who have special educational needs or disability.
- Procedures for managing the performance of staff are closely linked to school improvement priorities. Leaders routinely check on teachers' work and hold termly meetings to discuss pupil progress. All teachers make pupil achievement a priority and consequently pupils are making consistently good progress in reading and writing.
- The curriculum provides many opportunities to enable pupils to apply their reading, writing and mathematics skills in other subjects. For example, in the Year 1 class, physical education (PE) was being used to great effect in literacy. This approach excited the pupils and increased their enthusiasm and readiness for writing. This led to good outcomes in the pupils' writing.
- Some subject leadership is strong, for example in English, physical education, art and Spanish. The school have correctly identified the need to establish even more strength in all subject areas so that teaching, learning and outcomes continue to improve for pupils in all of the curriculum subjects.
- The leader with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is well informed and knowledgeable. She has used this expertise to develop effective provision for this group of pupils, so that they are now making good progress. The leader has facilitated and led training which has helped staff find out what individual pupils need to do to make better progress.
- The 'Pupil Premium Champion' manages pupil premium funding effectively to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils. The funding is being used very well to provide additional staff training and resources, set up a nurture group and support pupils financially to attend school visits, residential and clubs. The focused spending and close scrutiny of the difference the money makes ensures that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as other pupils nationally.
- The school uses the sport premium funding effectively to develop pupils' skills and well-being. There has been an increase in the range of sports available to pupils through after-school clubs. An increasing number of pupils are participating, and the school has had success at local sports events. The physical education leader has been very effective in ensuring that teachers are well trained in this curriculum subject.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good. Leaders and staff ensure that there are regular opportunities through the teaching in curriculum subjects for pupils to develop this effectively. For example, pupils talked about their links with India and their interest in finding out more about the Indian culture.
- Leaders, including the governing body, work effectively with the local authority. This has supported the school's drive for improvement well. Since the previous inspection, the local authority have deployed specialist advisers to work with the school to further improve mathematics and English. The headteacher and governors have benefited from the advice provided by the school improvement adviser.
- Parents are very positive about how well the school is led and say that they know that their children are taught well and make good progress.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain and have a good understanding of British values. During an assembly they knowledgeably informed the headteacher about the Queen's birthday and different facts about the national vote in June 2016. Pupils explained the relevance of these events accurately. They also talked about being proud to have the opportunity to be a part of the school council, and about how they approach any problem solving with others through debate.
- While leaders have been effective in monitoring teaching and learning, their checking of the consistency of assessment processes has not been as successful. Some teachers do not always use the assessment procedures as well as others to inform their teaching. Consequently, pupils could make even better progress from their starting points.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors contribute effectively to school improvement. The chair and vice-chair are very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas to improve. All other governors have undertaken

extensive training and are determined to move the school forward. This has resulted in the governors working well together and all take responsibility for challenging and supporting the school.

- Governors check that additional funds for disadvantaged pupils are used effectively. A designated governor works with the 'Pupil Premium Champion' to plan, review and evaluate the impact of the spending. As a result, provision for disadvantaged pupils is good and they achieve well.
- Rigorous monitoring by the safeguarding governor ensures that statutory regulations for safeguarding are fully met.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All members of staff are trained in child protection procedures and are aware of, and follow, the policies in place to safeguard all. Staff respond quickly to those who may be at risk and, when necessary, report concerns to appropriate agencies. Detailed records show that follow-up action is taken quickly and good monitoring systems are in place. As a result, all pupils are kept very safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is good. Observation of learning, along with a scrutiny of pupils' work and current assessment information, shows that teaching is now typically good across the school.
- Pupils understand and follow the school's well-established routines. Consequently, classrooms are orderly and purposeful places where pupils are able to concentrate and get on with their work. This is having a direct influence on pupil achievement.
- Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and use good subject knowledge to plan relevant teaching and learning activities. This has led to harder work being set, which is providing more challenge for pupils. As a result, the needs of the most able have been considered thoughtfully and current assessment information, supported by pupils' work, shows that more of them are making better than expected progress.
- Achievement in writing has improved. Teachers provide pupils with a good range of opportunities to practise their writing. This is often linked to other curriculum subjects. Pupils are encouraged to apply their understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Work shows that they do this successfully and use these features without support, and with increasing accuracy.
- Younger pupils are increasingly able to apply their knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) well to read words which are not familiar to them. Teachers and teaching assistants provide pupils with good opportunities to practise and apply their skills so that learning is consolidated.
- Older pupils read with accuracy. Their confidence and fluency is developing well. They enjoyed reading to an inspector and were eager to show off their skills. Pupils talked about the wide range of books the school has and how every classroom 'has a nice reading area'. They understand the importance of reading and enjoy the opportunities to do so. The school's focus on this is leading to pupils making quick progress.
- Pupils benefit from specialist teachers in some subjects. In a Year 6 Spanish lesson, the teacher's subject knowledge and ability to build on prior learning ensured that pupils used the language confidently to answer questions in more complex sentences, and translate for one another.
- Pupils are given feedback which is often detailed and provides them with guidance on how to improve their work. They use the school system 'tickled pink and green for growth' confidently and effectively, and this results in rapid improvements in the depth of their learning.
- The work of teaching support staff has improved since the previous inspection. They are more effective in supporting pupils who find learning difficult. They work alongside teachers in class or lead individual pupil or small-group work. The special educational needs co-ordinator monitors this effectively. It has resulted in pupils receiving focused, good-quality support. Teaching support staff are now contributing towards improving teaching and learning for pupils.
- The quality of the homework set for pupils has improved. It develops their thinking skills related to their current learning. In addition to consolidating what the pupils are doing in school, this type of homework is successfully deepening pupils' understanding and developing their ability to explain well. This is clear from lessons and pupil feedback about their learning.
- Some teachers do not use assessment systems well enough to maximise the effectiveness of their planning and teaching. However, the school's approach to assessing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding is

developing effectively. It is contributing strongly to pupils' improving performance over time and is helping teachers to pinpoint the next steps in their learning with greater precision.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- All staff know the pupils very well. This includes the specialist part-time teachers. It is because of these strong relationships that specific care and welfare needs are met fully in classes, no matter who the teacher is.
- Pastoral care is effectively planned to meet the needs of individual pupils. One example is the counselling service that the school has bought into to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are being supported well. This leads to them being able to focus on their learning quickly and consequently achieve well.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of how they can keep themselves safe. This was seen in an assembly when pupils actively talked about their safety network and the different ways they kept themselves safe. They were able to identify numerous adults in school they could trust and talk to if they had concerns or a worry. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View, and those who met with the inspector, agreed that their children always feel very safe and are happy at school.
- Pupils relish the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities and do so with care and empathy. All Year 6 pupils have been trained to support younger pupils during break and lunchtimes, which they do very well. One Year 6 pupil said they 'enjoyed helping the younger children because they themselves were young once and needed that help'.
- An ambassador and a 'health champion' are democratically elected from Years 5 and 6. Pupils who hold this role attend courses and represent the school at meetings with other schools. Older pupils develop effective social skills which are preparing them well for the next stage in their education.
- The well-led breakfast and after-school club provide a very safe, secure and nurturing place for pupils. They offer them opportunities to create their own school allotment, which has led to the pupils recently winning the 'Ware in Bloom' award. There are also various other activities linked to specific areas of the curriculum and pupil interest. This offer is incredibly popular owing to careful planning, good organisation and effective adult support. Pupils who attend this provision are being well prepared for their learning at Priors Wood Primary School.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils move calmly around the school and are very thoughtful of others. They are polite and courteous and show respect to adults and to one another. Good manners are evident and are instinctive in many pupils.
- Pupils look after their school. Displays celebrate pupils' achievement, and are well maintained and informative. Pupils take good care of resources and are very proud of their school.
- Pupils conduct themselves in lessons well. The behaviour management system in place is rarely necessary according to pupils spoken to. Pupils were keen to tell inspectors that it had been ages 'since anyone had got onto red' on the school's behaviour diamond structure. Inspectors' observations in classrooms and around school confirm that adults have little need to use the behaviour system as conduct is good.
- Staff use their learning behaviours model, 'the 5Rs', consistently and pupils apply this to their own learning well. All pupils, even the youngest children, are clear about how this helps them 'improve as people'. For example, in reception class, a child explained why he had independently gone to find 'Robbie Resilience'. He reported that he needed to try to be strong as he felt upset. The whole school focus on behaviours for learning is leading to an increasing awareness from the pupils about the way they learn, and what they can do to help themselves. Pupils are behaving more confidently and are more self-assured.
- Pupils want to attend school. Attendance is in line with national average and improving. This is supported effectively by leaders' rigorous monitoring and rapid response to persistent absence. No groups of pupils are now disadvantaged by poor attendance.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- The majority of pupils are now making good progress from their starting points. Pupils' work, and the school's assessments of achievement, shows a positive trend of improvement.

- In the Nursery and Reception Years children enter school with skills and understanding that are broadly typical for their age.
- Early reading development in the school is good. Pupils in Reception and key stage 1 use their knowledge of phonics to read unfamiliar words. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in phonics screening checks at the end of Year 1 is above average and has risen in the last three years.
- The achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has improved for pupils in key stage 1. Current Year 2 pupils are making good, and sometimes better, progress in these areas. This is due to consistently strong teaching in key stage 1 over time, and a curriculum that builds on prior learning well.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils in Year 6 reaching the expected standard in reading and writing was in line with national average. Achievement in mathematics is improving, although in 2015 it was behind that of reading and writing. This is because previous assessment information was not used effectively. Senior leaders are addressing this and acting quickly to support those pupils who need extra help. Consequently, the progress of pupils is now accelerating.
- In all year groups, the progress disadvantaged pupils make is as good as, or better than, other pupils within the school and nationally. This reflects the improvements in the quality of teaching, timely intervention, effective use of additional funding, and the school's close monitoring of disadvantaged pupils' progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make at least good progress from their starting points. Leaders ensure that pupils with more complex needs are effectively supported and this ensures that they, too, make good academic progress.
- Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for their next stage in education. Staff expectations are high, pupils respond well to the numerous leadership responsibilities that are offered to them and they are increasingly able to make decisions about their own learning and the relationships they develop. Pupils speak highly of the school's transition work with their chosen secondary school. They say that it makes them feel confident that they will settle quickly and continue to do well.

The early years provision

is good

- The leadership in early years is good. The leader role-models what good teaching should look like and provides accurate and insightful feedback to other adults on the quality of their teaching. Her monitoring and assessment of children is thorough and ensures that no child gets left behind.
- Children enter school with abilities that are typical of their age. They make good progress in the early years to reach a good level of development. This is above the national average. This gives them a secure foundation for learning in Year 1.
- The curriculum is planned to give children effective strategies to communicate about their learning. Good-quality and well-planned activities enthuse children and they are really eager to learn. The children kept asking when they were able to 'get busy' and when talked to by an inspector they explained it was the phrase they used when they were ready to get on with their learning.
- Children care for one another and trust the adults who work with them. Successfully established routines help children understand what is expected and encourage them to behave well. They listen carefully to each other, cooperate well and are motivated to learn.
- Well-designed, creative indoor and outdoor learning environments ensure that children learn a wide variety of skills in different situations. Children approach the activities with excitement, and are keen to have a go at everything. Staff use these purposeful activities to skilfully develop language and learning skills, particularly in the Reception class.
- 'Learning journeys' show that children make good progress in all areas of their development. These assessment records are used to good effect to review children's learning and achievements over time. Parents have daily access to these books and contribute regularly. This establishes the strong links between home and school and reinforces children's learning.
- The leader has correctly identified that further work is required to ensure that all adult interaction with children in the Nursery moves children's progress on as swiftly as it does in Reception.
- Staff are extremely vigilant and keep the children safe. Safeguarding procedures are effective.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117271 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10011783 |

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 228 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Louise Rudd |
| Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge | Rebecca Collins |
| Telephone number | 01920 464135 |
| Website | www.priorswoodschool.com |
| Email address | head@priorswood.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6–7 February 2014 |

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized one form entry primary school. The early years consists of a nursery and a Reception class.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is below average and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is low.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability and receive support is low. However, the proportion with education, health and care plans or statements of special educational needs is broadly average.
- A breakfast and after-school club is led by the school and provides before-school and end-of-school care.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding provided by the government to support disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils from the armed forces and pupils who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the current government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupil's progress and attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 16 lessons, some of which were observed jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- Both inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and looked at the work in pupils' books. They observed pupils during assembly, at playtimes and lunchtimes and asked them for their views on the school. One inspector also listened to some pupils from Year 1 and Year 6 read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the SENCo and other staff with specific leadership responsibilities.
- Discussions were held with the chair of governors and four other governors, and also with the school's local authority representative.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: the school's self-evaluation; the school improvement plan; leadership monitoring; information on pupils' progress and achievement; and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at 37 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, spoke to some parents at the start of the day and held a meeting with parents towards the end of the school day.
- Inspectors took note of the 36 responses they received to the inspection questionnaire for school staff. 31 responses were received from pupils and these were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Karen Woolhouse

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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