

Priorswood Primary School

Wedlands, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7AD

Inspection dates

19–20 April 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate. Due to weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pupils have underachieved significantly over time.
- In reading and writing, pupils are working at standards below those expected for their age. The better progress that pupils are now making is insufficient to help them address historic underachievement.
- Teaching has been inadequate over time and its quality varies considerably across the school. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils, and in particular the most able, can do.
- Leaders have not been thorough in checking the quality of teaching or the progress pupils make.
- The school's curriculum does not fully meet the needs of its pupils or prepare them well for the next stage in their education. Writing and mathematics skills are not developed appropriately across a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils' attendance, including that of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is below the national average. There are signs of improvement but rates of absence remain too high.
- In the early years, activities are not accurately matched to the needs of all groups of children.
- In lessons, where work is not sufficiently matched to their needs, some pupils become easily distracted and behave in ways which disrupt the learning of other pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The local governing body, senior leaders and the multi-academy trust have begun to implement the improvements required to ensure that pupils make faster progress. They have the skills required to bring about change. There is effective capacity for improvement.
- The current leadership team has had an immediate impact on improving pupils' behaviour and the quality of the learning environment.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the start of the academic year. These improvements have not been sustained for long enough to have an impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils are well cared for and the school liaises effectively with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the support they require.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards for all groups of pupils so that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that leaders:
 - check that plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning are focused on improving outcomes for pupils
 - tailor the school's curriculum so that it accurately meets the needs of pupils and reflects the school's context.
- Improve teaching and learning across the school by ensuring that:
 - staff have high expectations of what pupils, including the most able, can achieve
 - activities in reading, writing and mathematics are appropriately matched to pupils' abilities and previous learning
 - teachers have a clear understanding of what pupils need to learn next
 - teachers check pupils' learning in lessons and, where work is too easy or too hard, amend learning activities appropriately
 - teachers and teaching assistants consistently address pupils' mistakes
 - teachers' subject knowledge enables pupils to make strong progress
 - pupils' understanding of what they are reading is checked effectively to strengthen their vocabulary and comprehension.
- Improve early years provision by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan activities which are closely matched to the needs of different groups of children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and the most able
 - adults guide children's learning so that they participate in a wide range of activities and address gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding
 - adults have consistently high expectations of the behaviours that enable children to learn.
- Improve pupils' attendance so that absence rates for all groups of pupils, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are at least in line with the national averages for primary schools.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Considerable changes in leadership at all levels have led to weak outcomes for pupils and poor teaching, which have not been tackled quickly enough.
- Following the 2016 national results, the Collaborative Academies Trust board has taken a stronger and more direct role in the running of the school. This involvement, which includes the appointment of a new director of school improvement, has secured the school's capacity to improve. However, the trust board has also been responsible for a period of decline in the past.
- An executive headteacher, appointed by the trust to work alongside the headteacher, is already having a demonstrably positive impact on school improvement. The executive headteacher has overseen the appointment of experienced leaders, including an assistant headteacher and an inclusion manager. Together, they have prioritised their work and quickly brought about an improvement in pupils' behaviour and the quality of the learning environment. Their drive, determination and skill mean that the school now has the capacity for significant and sustained improvement.
- Leaders have a realistic view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have introduced a suitable range of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and have instigated a collective drive to improve pupils' achievement. However, these initiatives have not yet had sufficient impact on the underachievement that currently exists in every year group. Consequently, outcomes for pupils remain too low.
- New leadership arrangements have strengthened systems for managing the performance of staff and for holding teachers to account for pupils' achievement. Leaders are taking decisive action to tackle inadequacies in teaching.
- The recently appointed inclusion manager ensures that disadvantaged pupils receive well-targeted support which is tailored to their needs and removes external barriers to their learning. The spending of additional funds for these pupils, however, lacks precision and leaders do not check closely enough the impact of the support that they have put in place.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and funding is used well so they make good progress towards meeting their personal targets. However, in line with other groups in the school, the progress of these pupils is too slow.
- Leaders have made sure that the school's behaviour policy and school aims reflect British values. They have added a renewed focus on the school's values of PRIDE (positivity, respect, independence, determination and excellence), which the vast majority of pupils exhibit in their conduct around the school. New strategies to promote positive behaviour in lessons are having an impact on pupils' attitudes to learning although some staff feel that these are not yet applied consistently.
- Leaders have made effective use of the sport premium to increase pupils' participation and raise the profile of physical education. This has led to greater numbers of pupils taking part in extra-curricular activities such as netball and rugby clubs. Leaders track the participation of different groups of pupils and add extra provision to address areas

where uptake is lower. An example of this is the introduction of paddle boarding sessions for Year 6 pupils.

- Through the multi-academy trust, the school provides a curriculum which covers a range of subjects in a way that engages and enthuses pupils. However, leaders have not personalised this curriculum sufficiently to ensure that it meets the needs of all groups of pupils and reflects the school's context.
- Leaders do not routinely monitor how well pupils are performing in subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result, they do not have an accurate picture of the quality of provision, or pupils' outcomes, in subjects such as science, geography and history.

Governance of the school

- Governors demonstrate a strategic approach to their work and know the school well. They have a good understanding of the school's key priorities and regularly visit the school to check on the implementation of agreed action plans. However, they do not yet have sufficient understanding of the impact that actions are having on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders provide governors with detailed information about the performance of different groups of pupils, including attendance data. Governors ask probing questions and challenge leaders to provide evidence to support their evaluations.
- Governors understand the statutory responsibilities delegated to them by the multi-academy trust. They hold leaders to account for the performance of pupils and robustly monitor the impact of the school's safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff understand and effectively implement the latest guidance to keep pupils safe and therefore know how to deal with any concerns they may have.
- Leaders keep comprehensive records of pupils' needs and the results of any referrals made to social care. They are tenacious in following up their concerns to ensure that all pupils are safe and receive the support that they need.
- Leaders work closely with other agencies to ensure pupils' welfare needs are met. Staff care for pupils well and meet regularly with parents and carers to support the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in school. They report that incidents of bullying are rare but when they do happen, they know what to do and who to talk to. They are confident that adults would take the appropriate action.
- Leaders ensure the appropriate risk assessments are undertaken when pupils take part in educational visits and activities away from the school site.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate because, too frequently, pupils are given work which is not accurately matched to their abilities. As a result, pupils do not make the progress that they are capable of and outcomes remain too low.
- Teaching does not cater well enough for different groups of pupils. Leaders have introduced systems to improve the consistency of teaching and share best practice across the school but these initiatives have not yet had sufficient impact on pupils' progress.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are not high enough. Assessment information is not used to identify what pupils can and cannot do. Consequently, planned work does not challenge pupils well enough. Work is often too easy for the most able pupils, not pitched well enough for middle-ability pupils and too difficult for the least able, slowing pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not routinely check pupils' work and their progress in lessons. As a result, they are not quick enough to intervene to provide support where pupils find work difficult, or provide more challenging work where they find it too easy.
- Writing in pupils' books varies in quality and accuracy. In some cases, low expectations from teachers have led to a regression in basic sentence construction and the fluency of pupils' writing. This is particularly evident for the most able pupils who are not challenged to write with sufficient quality. Pupils do not have opportunities to apply their writing skills across a range of subjects or in different contexts. This is limiting the proportions of pupils who are writing at the higher standards.
- Adults do not consistently pick up and rectify pupils' mistakes. For example, younger pupils form their letters incorrectly, Year 6 children do not consistently use basic punctuation in their writing and pupils across the school frequently repeat simple spelling errors. As a result, pupils do not make good progress in their writing.
- Where teaching is stronger, teachers ask questions which test pupils' knowledge and use resources which support their learning. For example, during the inspection Year 6 pupils were using apparatus to assist their understanding of ratio and Year 4 pupils were studying a real heart. However, strengths in teaching are not consistent across the school and, consequently, provision remains too variable.
- The teaching of mathematics is a relative strength and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have developed their subject knowledge and this has led to improved outcomes for pupils across the school. A focus on basic skills has secured pupils' understanding of different concepts. Workbooks demonstrate that the majority of pupils are now making better progress in gaining new knowledge. However, teachers' questioning, and the activities provided, do not sufficiently challenge all groups of pupils to deepen their understanding.
- In the past, the teaching of phonics in key stage 1 has not been good enough and has not built on individual pupils' early years attainment. However, initiatives to improve phonics teaching are beginning to have a positive impact and the progress pupils are making is better than in other subjects. Teachers challenge pupils appropriately and, in the majority of cases, teachers and teaching assistants display secure subject

knowledge. This enables pupils to gain an understanding of the sounds that letters and groups of letters make and then apply this consistently to their reading. These improvements in early reading skills are not yet extending into pupils' writing, where spelling is inconsistent.

- The teaching of higher-order reading skills is not consistently effective. This limits the progress that pupils make. There is a focus on pupils applying their phonics knowledge; the pupils heard reading during the inspection did so with accuracy and displayed an ability to sound out unknown words. There is not, however, a strong enough focus on developing pupils' understanding of what they are reading. Consequently, pupils are not able to answer, in any depth, questions about texts or analyse characters' actions or the author's intent. This is limiting pupils' achievement at the higher standards.
- In a range of subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is not consistently strong enough to ensure that the skills pupils require are built on progressively. This leads to weak planning and learning pathways which do not follow a logical sequential order.
- As a result of training from senior leaders, teachers have created a vibrant and engaging learning environment. Pupils say this is proving helpful in supporting their learning.
- Relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils, are warm and friendly. Pupils feel comfortable to answer questions and confident to attempt new learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Procedures to meet the emotional and behavioural needs of the most vulnerable pupils are not fully embedded across the school or followed consistently by all members of staff.
- The presentation of pupils' work is not good overall, with too much variation across and within classes.
- A focus on early help and training for staff in techniques to reduce pupils' inappropriate behaviour is improving adults' confidence in dealing with the most extreme cases of disruptive behaviour.
- Relationships between adults and the vast majority of pupils are positive and, consequently, pupils report that they feel safe and cared for. Pupils are looked after well and with care and sensitivity.
- The school works effectively with a range of outside agencies to support the needs of pupils. Where pupils do not meet thresholds for external support, for example around mental health, leaders provide support in school to address their needs.
- Pupils enjoy the roles and responsibilities that they are given and talk positively about the positive impact they are having. For example, Year 5 and 6 play leaders are good

role models and support the play of other pupils effectively.

- Pupils say that although bullying does still happen, it is much reduced. They know to tell an adult if they or their friends are being bullied and are confident that any issues would be resolved quickly.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. They say that they feel safe in school and parents indicated that they believe their children are happy, safe and well cared for.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In lessons, pupils lose focus and concentration when activities are not challenging enough or well matched to their needs. Teachers do not manage the transitions between different parts of lessons effectively enough.
- Inspectors found the school to be calm and orderly. Pupils moved around the school respectfully and quietly. They were courteous and polite to adults and to each other. Behaviour observed at breaktimes and lunchtime was appropriate; pupils played well together in a variety of well-resourced activities.
- Pupils say that behaviour is improving and this view is supported in the school's records. However, parents and staff feel there is still too much inconsistency around how poor behaviour is dealt with. Some staff also commented on historical deficiencies in the behavioural support provided by school leaders.
- Although slowly improving, pupils' attendance is below the national average and levels of persistent absence are above the national average.
- Rates of absence are particularly high for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. School records show the main cause of this to be regular incidences of lateness. Systems put in place by leaders to improve punctuality, for example funded places at the breakfast club, are relatively recent and are not yet having a noticeable impact on whole-school figures. Leaders are working closely with external agencies to develop strategies to support pupils and their families to improve attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Weak teaching over time has not prepared pupils effectively for the next stage of their education.
- In reading and writing, there has been a significant decline in standards since the previous inspection. In both 2015 and 2016 national results, outcomes at the end of key stage 2 were below the minimum expectations set by the government. Significant numbers of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, did not make sufficient progress from their different starting points. Outcomes in mathematics are improving as a result of leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching in this subject.
- Leaders have focused on improving weak teaching. Current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are making better progress than in the past. However, this

progress is not sufficient to enable pupils to make up for their considerable underachievement in the past. It is too early to see the impact of leaders' actions on raising standards across the school and, therefore, outcomes remain too low.

- In the 2016 statutory assessments, outcomes in reading were below national averages across the school. Pupils did not build on their previous learning and, consequently, the progress they made, especially at key stage 2, was significantly lower than that made by other pupils nationally from similar starting points.
- Standards in the Year 1 phonics check were below the national average in 2016. This is despite pupils in this group having stronger than average outcomes in reading at the end of the Reception Year. The school's internal assessment information indicates that outcomes are set to be higher for current Year 1 pupils but are still likely to be below the national average.
- In English, weak teaching has led to basic punctuation skills, such as the use of capital letters and full stops, not being embedded in pupils' writing. As a result, writing across the school is below expected standards.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress towards meeting their personal targets. However, in line with other groups in the school, the progress of this group is too slow.
- There is a limited focus on the needs of the most able pupils in the school. These pupils lack teaching that stretches and challenges them to attain the higher standards. Historically, very few of these pupils have made the progress they are capable of and work in pupils' books indicates that outcomes for these pupils are still not high enough.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The early years provision requires improvement because not all groups of children make the progress of which they are capable. Children start school with skills that are below those which are typical for their age. Children's progress from these starting points is too variable. This is particularly the case for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and the most able.
- Although there are opportunities for children to participate in a range of activities covering the breadth of the early years curriculum, not all choose to do so. For example, children overlook tasks requiring them to read and write in favour of those which they consider to be more exciting. In addition, boys and girls choose gender stereotyped activities and frequently play separately from each other. Adults working with the children do not adequately challenge this, nor do they guide children's choices so that they benefit from the widest possible range of learning activities. As a result, gaps in children's knowledge, skills and understanding are not addressed quickly enough.
- There is a lack of challenge for the most able children. Both adult-led and independent activities do not build on prior learning and, consequently, these children do not make the progress they are capable of. For example, children capable of writing sentences are not given opportunities to extend their skills. This limits the progress they make.
- All areas of learning are catered for, both indoors and outdoors. The environment is vibrant and stimulating and staff provide a range of activities to encourage children's

creativity and promote learning. For example, during the inspection some children were enjoying making play dough while others were drawing around each other with chalk and discussing the different body parts.

- Children are safe. Adults demonstrate strong pastoral care for children and deal sensitively with their personal needs. Children play responsibly and sensibly together. They show respect for each other and for resources.
- Children usually behave well when working independently. However, staff do not have consistently high expectations for children's behaviour when they are engaged in whole-class or group activities. Consequently, children who find it more difficult to concentrate or listen attentively disrupt learning for all.
- The new early years leader has swiftly evaluated the quality of provision and identified what needs to be done to strengthen it. She has an accurate picture of children's attainment and a clear vision for the future.

School details

Unique reference number	139388
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10033135

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	Collaborative Academies Trust
Chair	Christine Pyke
Headteacher	David Fielding
Telephone number	01823 284897
Website	www.priorswoodprimary.co.uk
Email address	office@priorswood.somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 March 2015

Information about this school

- Priorswood Primary School is smaller than the average primary school. There are eight classes including the pre-school.
- It is part of the Collaborative Academies Trust (CAT), a multi-academy trust for primary, secondary and special schools. The work of the trust is overseen by a board of directors with each individual school having its own local governing body.
- There is an executive principal who works strategically across the trust's five schools in Somerset.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection, including at senior leadership level. The school has had three headteachers in this time, with the current headteacher joining the school in April 2016. The leadership of the school is currently being supported by the executive headteacher from the trust. During the inspection, the headteacher was not in school.
- The majority of pupils are White British and the proportion who speak English as an

additional language is slightly below the national average.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average. There are currently no pupils with an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than at the beginning or end of the school year is higher than the national average.
- The school provides a breakfast club, an after-school club and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs for pupils.
- In 2015 and 2016, the school did not meet floor standards. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited classrooms and some of these visits were made jointly with the executive headteacher and assistant headteacher. Pupils' learning was observed in all year groups.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, staff, the chair of the local governing body and the director of school improvement from the Collaborative Academies Trust. Inspectors also took into account responses to questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at the school's evaluation of its own performance, its improvement plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of meetings of the local governing body. They also considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to seek their views and listened to a selection of them read.
- Inspectors took account of 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including a number of free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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