

Inspection of a good school: Priors Wood Primary School

Cozens Road, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 7HZ

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 June 2021

Outcome

Priors Wood Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

'This school is worth getting up early for' is one of the many positive comments pupils make about their school. Pupils are happy here. They say that their lessons are fun and that teachers are caring. Pupils are proud of their school and say that their opinions matter.

There is a lovely atmosphere in the school. Pupils play well together and enjoy playing tag on a large playing field. Pupils say that being kind is very important. They say that it is OK to be different and that there is no unkindness at the school. Bullying is very rare. Pupils say that when friends fall out, teachers help to resolve any issues quickly.

Pupils like the new headteacher. They say that he is very approachable. His calm and cheerful manner means that the youngest children are happy to chat to him as well. Parents and carers are equally complimentary, as indicated by the many positive comments made via Parent View, the Ofsted online survey. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders want all pupils to be fluent readers by the time they leave school. This begins in Nursery, where there is an emphasis on communication. Children listen carefully and start to become familiar with sounds through song. Children in Reception enjoy learning phonics while playing games. Pupils follow a systematic programme of phonics teaching. They read books that match the sounds they know. Adults support well those who struggle to learn to read. A love of books is formed early. For example, Year 1 pupils delighted in telling me about the teacher who was eaten by an anaconda in the book they read in class.

Pupils' love of reading continues to grow as they progress through school. Teachers use books that capture the imagination as well as help reinforce key knowledge they learn from their study of other subjects. For example, when Year 6 pupils read 'Pig Heart 'Boy',

they also watched the teacher dissect a pig's heart. They say that this is a book they will never forget.

The science curriculum is well planned. Pupils study key scientists and have many opportunities to work scientifically. Pupils develop a bank of scientific knowledge and vocabulary over time. Teachers are well supported by the leader of science. They are enthusiastic about teaching science and undertake regular training to deepen their own knowledge. As one teacher told me: 'You can never know enough science.'

Pupils enjoy learning mathematics. The mathematics curriculum is delivered effectively. For example, in Nursery, children sang 'Ten in the bed' using the large picture book and counted backwards as each teddy fell out of bed. Older pupils are fast with mental arithmetic and recall learning easily from previous years. They know how to approach solving different types of problems. Pupils can explain their workings out step by step. Many are adept with verbal explanations of their mathematics. Some are not so strong with their written explanations. Leaders have plans in place to strengthen this aspect.

The curriculum is in place for foundation subjects, except for modern foreign languages (MFL). In previous years, a native speaker taught Spanish to key stage 2 classes. Leaders are moving to a model where all teachers in key stage 2 will teach MFL with the support of native speakers. Clubs are being restarted and leaders have plans for pupils to go swimming again next year.

Staff look after pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities very well at this school. They contribute fully in lessons and teachers make sure that these pupils access the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers and learning assistants know pupils well and this helps them to match appropriate strategies to their individual needs. Staff are well supported by a knowledgeable special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) who provides clear guidance. She liaises with a range of agencies to help families access the support they need.

Children in the early years behave impeccably. They take turns, share, and know the routines of the classroom. For example, when the teacher in Reception talked about quantity in a mathematics session, a child raised his hand and politely asked what the word meant. Manners are instilled early and high expectations for behaviour continue in the older year groups. Teachers praise pupils for their learning behaviours in different ways across the school. This can be confusing for the pupils. A few parents commented that the varying approaches were demotivating for their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils well and are alert to the local risks that face the pupils at Priors Wood. They equip pupils with the knowledge they need to stay safe. For example, they make sure that they and their parents understand what acceptable viewing for their age is when watching television and when gaming. Staff know what to do should they need to report

any concerns. Leaders work well with other agencies to make sure that pupils get the help and support they need in a timely fashion.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have carefully redesigned the curriculum in many subjects. Leaders need to continue to develop the curriculum in all subjects, for example in MFL. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects are as carefully sequenced and capably delivered as learning in more-established curriculum areas such as reading and science.
- Teachers praise and reward pupils in different ways. As a result, pupils are unsure about how the school's approach to praise and reward works. Some pupils find this demotivating. Leaders need to clarify and ensure the consistent application of the school's chosen approach regarding how to praise and reward pupils.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 20 April 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

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.

School details

Unique reference number	117271
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10193987
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Carrie Lewis
Headteacher	Alan Bishop
Website	https://www.priorswoodschool.com
Date of previous inspection	19 and 20 April 2016

Information about this school

- The new headteacher joined the school in January 2021.
- The chair of governors took over the position fully in September 2020. Prior to this, she co-chaired for a year.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority, governors, leaders, staff and pupils about the school's provision. In particular, she asked pupils what it is like to be a pupil at this school.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and how they conducted themselves around school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and science to evaluate the quality of education at the school. She spoke to senior leaders and subject leaders about the curriculum. She spoke to teachers and pupils. She looked at pupils'

work in those subjects. She also looked at the curriculum plans for the other foundation subjects and the early years.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector spoke with pupils about how they are taught about safety. She spoke with staff and leaders about safeguarding. She looked at the school's policies, procedures and records.
- The inspector scrutinised governors' minutes, the headteacher's and the SENCo's reports to governors and the school's website.
- The inspector gathered pupils' views when talking to them in groups. She also considered the 54 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- She considered the 32 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.
- She took into account the 55 responses to 'Parent View and read the 41 free-text comments. She also read a letter from a parent.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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