

Prior's Mill Church of England Controlled Primary School, Billingham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111667
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	356961
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Gordon Potter

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	416
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Eric Hall
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Wild
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 21 lessons taught by 17 teachers, conducted visits to lessons with the headteacher and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and strategic planning, examples of pupils' work, assessment data and monitoring records. They also scrutinised the 167 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as 202 questionnaires from pupils and 13 returned by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Whether teaching is at least satisfactory across school so that all groups of pupils can make satisfactory progress and reverse previous underachievement.
- Whether information about pupils' skills and abilities is well-used to measure pupils' progress and to plan work that offers appropriate pace and challenge for all groups of pupils.
- Whether strategies introduced by the senior leadership team are successfully raising attainment and accelerating progress.

Information about the school

This school is a much larger than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well below average. The school has achieved Healthy School status, the Activemark and Artsmark. The headteacher has been in post since September 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school. The new and highly-effective headteacher has striven to improve school effectiveness, raise attainment and increase pupils' progress. She is supported increasingly well by a rapidly evolving team of school leaders. Accordingly, self-review has improved and the school has a clear picture about its strengths and a vision of how to improve. Strategies have been initiated to develop the curriculum, improve the quality of teaching and the use of information about pupils' progress. These changes are starting to benefit the school and ensure that pupils now make expected progress after a decline in previous years. However, capacity to improve remains satisfactory as many key roles and responsibilities, along with skills in monitoring and analysis, are still developing. Initiatives have not yet had time to impact on attainment, which remains broadly average at the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress as a result of the caring support they receive.

While there is some good teaching, where teachers make clear what pupils will learn, check progress and offer engaging activities, it is satisfactory overall. In less effective lessons, teachers do not ask sufficiently probing questions and give too few opportunities for pupils to cooperatively or independently engage in challenging, open-ended, investigative activities, especially in mathematics. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects across the curriculum. Information about pupils' skills and abilities is increasingly well used to measure progress. It is used less effectively to plan work that is matched to individual needs and when this occurs, the pace of learning drops because work is not sufficiently challenging. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress because, while they are happy and well cared for, the quality of teachers' interventions is inconsistent and activities that children choose for themselves are not clearly focused on developing their skills in all areas of learning. Parents and carers say they would welcome more information about children's progress.

All staff provide sensitive care and support so that pupils are happy and feel safe, have above average attendance, a good awareness of how to help others and how to stay fit and healthy. Pupils have contributed strongly to developments in school. The influential school council and 'playground friends' help pupils behave well and play well together. There are many partnerships with outside agencies to promote school effectiveness and to support pupils with a range of complex needs, although they are not as yet used well enough to impact on pupils' learning. Parents and carers are very supportive of the new headteacher, of the school's work with them and of how it encourages pupils' spiritual, social and moral development, in line with its Christian values.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the summer of 2012, further increase the rates at which pupils make progress and raise pupils' attainment to higher levels, by:
 - improving the consistency of teaching so that all lessons have appropriate pace and challenge
 - providing more challenging opportunities for pupils to answer probing questions and explore for themselves in investigative and open-ended activities, independently or together, especially in mathematics
 - offering more opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects across the curriculum
 - ensuring that data are well used so that work is well matched to the needs of individual pupils.
- Improve the rates at which children make progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:
 - improving the consistency of teachers' interventions with children in the development of investigative, reading and speaking and listening skills
 - ensuring that the activities children choose for themselves are clearly focused on developing their skills in all areas of learning
 - ensuring that data are well used to ascertain children's starting points and their progress, to inform parents and to ensure that work is well matched to the needs of individual children.
- Further develop the capacity of leaders at all levels so that they can effectively monitor the quality of teaching and learning and its impact on pupils' progress and attainment, by providing high quality continuing professional development in lesson observation and data analysis.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils' achievement and enjoyment in their work are satisfactory. However, their enjoyment is higher when they are engaged in lively activities, such as estimating and measuring in the school playground, or researching and writing about animals. They enjoy using information and communication technology (ICT), for example, in writing plays and stories, in creating graphs and in employing the interactive whiteboard to develop their mathematical skills. They are very courteous, form positive relationships and wish to do well in their work

In this large school, children have a wide range of ability when they start school but overall their skills on entry are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Pupils typically make satisfactory progress to attain standards which are average at the end of Year 6. In 2010, pupils had made inadequate progress between the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. Too few pupils attain Level 5 at the end of Year 6, particularly in English.

Pupils care for one another very well, have respect for each other and for the adults in the school, and say they feel very safe. They are confident that they know exactly what to do in the event of a concern. Pupils are well aware of the importance of a healthy diet and of

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taking plenty of exercise. This understanding is reflected in the high take-up of school meals and healthy packed lunches and their enthusiastic involvement in physical education, sport and after-school clubs. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school community through class councils, the democratically-elected school council and by acting as playground helpers. They support a range of charities and participate in competitions with other local schools and in activities with the local church. Pupils have a clear knowledge of different faiths, but their understanding of life in other countries and of the multicultural make-up of society in the United Kingdom are less well developed. Average attainment, above average attendance, developing skills in team work and in ICT, ensure that pupils' preparation for their future education is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers strive to make learning fun. They plan opportunities for pupils to learn through talking to their friends or practical activities, including research and using ICT. They make pupils clear about the purpose of the lessons and questions are used effectively to ascertain what pupils already know and to check that they have made progress. There are positive relationships and teachers and teaching assistants interact with pupils well to support them in their learning. Despite these many good features teaching is satisfactory overall because in many lessons, the pace of learning drops and teachers offer too much information, limiting opportunities for pupils to get on with tasks or explore together. Work

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is not always well matched to pupils' individual abilities because information about pupils' skills and abilities is not yet used well enough to ensure that activities are sufficiently challenging for all pupils. Marking is used increasingly effectively across school to tell pupils how well they have achieved in individual tasks and to ensure they are clear about how to improve their work, although this remains inconsistent.

The curriculum contributes to pupils' satisfactory progress by offering interesting activities which increasingly help them to see the links between subjects and develop and apply important skills. For example, work on the Great Fire of London successfully develops imagination, research and writing skills. However, there remain too few opportunities for pupils to write at length in subjects other than English. The school has well-developed and successful practices which ensure that pupils are confident readers. There are well-planned enrichment activities, including visits from representatives of different faiths, work with the local Sports College and visits to Robinwood residential centre. These help to develop pupils' skills in sport, science and geography and enhance their well-developed understanding and tolerance of other faiths. There are many popular extra-curricular clubs which promote learning and enjoyment in sporting, arts and environmental activities, including choir, ECO club and the development of the school garden.

Pupils' varied emotional and social needs are met well and pupils develop self-esteem, respect and a sense of responsibility. There are supportive strategies to help those pupils who are vulnerable and those with specific learning needs. The school works successfully to encourage pupils to attend regularly. Well-established practices prepare parents and carers for the start of school life when children join the Early Years Foundation Stage. Effective transition arrangements ease the movement of pupils as they move from class to class and when they transfer to secondary school. Despite these many positive features, care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall as pupils' progress remains satisfactory.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has had a significant impact on the school in a short period of time. She has determinedly, rigorously and skilfully pursued and implemented strategies that have brought about an improvement in school effectiveness. She is developing a new leadership team which has introduced initiatives that have improved teaching and increased rates of pupils' progress, although these initiatives have not become sufficiently embedded to have an impact on pupils' attainment. They have developed effective systems for tracking progress and have begun to make the curriculum more stimulating. Leaders at all levels

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now have clear roles and responsibilities and are accountable for key areas of the curriculum. They welcome these new opportunities to contribute to decision-making and the school improvement plan and to advance their own professional development. The governing body has been instrumental in supporting the headteacher through a period of difficult change, although it does not as yet monitor the impact of initiatives closely enough.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good, meet government requirements and rigorously secure pupils' safety. The school has close links with outside agencies to support the wide range of individual needs of pupils. While there is a clear commitment to promoting equal opportunities, to ensuring that discrimination against any group is avoided and to raising attainment, current rates of attainment and progress mean that the school promotes equality of opportunity satisfactorily. The school is proud of its inclusive nature and makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. The sense of community in the school is strong and there are good links with the local community and church. There is a clear awareness of other faiths, but pupils' understanding of life in other countries and of the United Kingdom as a diverse, multicultural society is less well developed. The school has introduced a range of initiatives to involve parents and carers in their children's learning, including supporting learning at home and regular information about their children.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make satisfactory progress from their starting points and enter Year 1 with abilities which in recent years have been slightly above the national average. Children particularly enjoy engaging in investigative activities, for example, examining minibeasts, experimenting with water flow or thinking about freezing and melting. There is a good

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range of resources, both inside and outdoors, to support activities in all areas of learning. However, while there is a good balance between teacher direction and activities chosen by the children, these activities are not always clearly matched to learning intentions. Children enjoy lively and effective interventions by their teacher, especially challenging teaching of linking sounds and letters and writing, but these are inconsistent in quality. Satisfactory leadership and management ensure that work is increasingly based on detailed observations of children's learning. However, information about children's skills and abilities is as yet less well-used to offer a clear picture of attainment on entry and overall progress. Staff ensure that requirements regarding children's safety are rigorously met. They encourage children to share, to take turns and to behave well so that they develop into confident and caring individuals. Children show independence and a good understanding of how to stay healthy. There are effective partnerships with parents and carers which enable children to settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes. Homework activities and children's learning records enable parents and carers to share activities with their children and to support their learning. However, parents and carers say they would welcome more information about the progress children are making.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Approximately two-fifths of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The respondents support the school strongly. Most parents and carers are happy with their child's experience at school. Likewise, a very large majority is strongly supportive of the way the school informs them about their child's progress and helps them support their child at home. Most believe that the school helps children to feel safe and stay healthy. The inspection reflects the view that these are positive features of the school.

Most parents and carers believe that teaching is good and that pupils make good progress. While the inspection acknowledges that the school strives hard to achieve these things, inspectors believe that opportunities are missed to make lessons more challenging and this slows pupils' progress. A very small minority expressed concern about behaviour. Inspectors investigated this concern in detail and believe that the school has introduced appropriate and effective strategies to help pupils behave well and minimise disruption to the learning of others.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Prior's Mill Church of England Controlled Primary School, Billingham to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 167 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 416 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	87	52	71	43	6	4	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	82	49	80	48	4	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	41	25	110	66	15	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	34	93	56	13	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	62	37	96	57	3	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	60	36	93	56	11	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	60	36	97	58	6	4	3	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	58	35	95	57	8	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	32	101	60	8	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	26	96	57	19	11	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	24	101	60	17	10	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	66	40	85	51	8	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	70	42	85	51	9	5	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



15 June 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Prior's Mill Church of England Controlled Primary School,
Billingham TS22 5BX**

On behalf of the inspection team, thank you so much for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. You are very polite and helpful and we enjoyed talking to you about your school.

You go to a satisfactory school which is improving because your teachers know what to do to make it better. The team was impressed by your behaviour, politeness and the great care and respect you have for one another. You told us that you look forward to coming to school because you like your teachers and appreciate the way they try to make your lessons enjoyable. You also enjoy the activities the school provides for you, such as visits and clubs. Your teachers look after you well and your parents and carers like the school very much.

Your teachers have agreed with us that they should help your school to improve even more by:

- helping you reach higher standards at the end of Year 6, by providing more opportunities for you to write in all your subjects and to answer probing questions, investigate together and solve problems, especially in mathematics
- making sure that all your lessons have pace and challenge, including in Nursery and Reception classes
- making sure that all the information that teachers have about how well you are doing is used to plan work that is at the right level for all of you
- checking that that your lessons are good and you are making good progress.

You can help by continuing to do your best and attending regularly. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Potter

Lead inspector

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