

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

Clifton Avenue, Billingham, County Durham, TS22 5BX

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Standards are rising because pupils make good progress in all subjects. All groups of pupils make equally good progress, including those eligible for the pupil premium funding and those with special educational needs.
- Behaviour is good in class and pupils are keen to get on with their work. Relationships are good. Playtimes are harmonious. Instances of bullying are rare and pupils say they feel safe because they get on well with one another.
- The school's mission to encourage pupils to have 'Minds to learn and hearts to care' results in their very good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Interesting and exciting lessons engage pupils in their learning. Teachers' high expectations and their skilled matching of work to pupils' abilities result in good progress.
- Teaching assistants who work with individual or small groups of pupils know them well and provide closely tailored support to help them make good progress.
- The headteacher, supported by other leaders and the governing body, has a very clear view of how successful the school can be. They all show determination in driving forward improvements, including successfully improving the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching still requires improvement. Not all teachers match work well enough to pupils' abilities or challenge them to solve problems and investigate for themselves.
- Marking is not consistently good, especially in mathematics, and pupils are not always given the opportunity to follow up points to help them improve.
- A minority of parents are unhappy with the communication they receive from the school.
- The new leadership team has already helped to improve the quality of the curriculum and teaching but its plans are not always sufficiently sharply focused to drive forward improvements quickly.
- Procedures to check the quality of teaching are also good but are not always precise enough to inform individual teachers about how to improve even further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons taught by 18 teachers and made short visits to observe small groups of pupils being taught separately from the class.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils and heard others read in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6.
- The views of 87 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as informal conversations with parents at the start of each day and the school's own surveys of parents' views, were taken into account.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body, as well as speaking to a representative of the local authority.
- The school's improvement plan and records of achievement, teaching, behaviour and safeguarding were examined.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books and as part of displays around the school.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in and out of lessons; a group of older pupils also showed an inspector round the school and discussed teaching, behaviour and bullying.
- Thirty-seven staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors took these into account.

Inspection team

Susan Waugh, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Philip Scott	Additional Inspector
David Wilson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized school.
- Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage and all speak English as their home language.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of pupils who need extra help with their learning and are supported through school action is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who need extra help with their learning and are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- At the time of the inspection, two classes were being taught by temporary teachers.
- The deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and four middle leaders were appointed in September 2012.
- Since the last inspection, nine new teachers have been appointed to the school.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further by improving the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - always ensuring that teachers set work which is well matched to pupils' capabilities and gets the best out of pupils
 - providing more opportunities for pupils, especially those with the ability to achieve more highly, to investigate and solve problems for themselves
 - making sure that pupils always have time to respond to the points for improvement after work has been marked
 - ensuring that marking in mathematics always tells pupils what they do well and what they need to do next to improve.
- Support the new leadership team to develop their roles further by:
 - ensuring that all plans to help improve the school are sharply focused on priorities which will make the biggest difference to pupils' learning
 - refining improvement targets set for individual teachers so that they are clear about how to support pupils to make good or better progress.
- Further develop communication with parents to ensure they can support their child with any changes which take place within school and make sure that systems for dealing with concerns raised by parents are clearly conveyed and implemented.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school with skills that are typically expected for their age. They do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning and now start Year 1 with above average skills for their age. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Good progress is made by pupils so that by the time they leave school, more pupils reach the standard expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics than is reached nationally. The proportions reaching higher than expected standards are similar to those reached nationally.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding are now reaching standards similar to other pupils in school and they are progressing at rates which are similar to, or more rapid than, other pupils. For example, in mathematics, this group of pupils was the equivalent of four terms behind other pupils in Year 6 last year but this gap has been successfully closed. This is a result of governors approving the recruitment of additional staff to provide well-targeted support, and the purchase of carefully chosen resources, such as a computer program to help with mathematics skills.
- Reading is taught effectively. Pupils now quickly learn their knowledge of letters and sounds to help them read, so that by the end of Year 2 they are confident readers. Older pupils read fluently, with expression and understanding, giving their views on favourite authors and styles.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because of the help they receive from adults who know them well and who can tailor their work precisely.
- Boys and girls achieve equally well in reading and writing. In the past, girls made slower progress than boys in mathematics but as a result of the school's actions, they are now progressing just as well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good overall and a small proportion is outstanding. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Adults are considerate and respectful and, consequently, pupils are eager to do well and settle to learning quickly. Pupils work well together, cooperating and sharing ideas. Because behaviour in lessons is good, time is used well to support learning.
- In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and set challenging tasks which make pupils think deeply about using the skills they have acquired. For example, in Year 5, pupils were investigating the angles of different shapes, using their measuring and calculation skills to work out whether a statement the teacher had given them was true or false. They were fully absorbed by the task, sharing ideas about the best way to solve the problem, and were making rapid progress in their understanding.
- Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly in lessons and correct any misunderstandings as they arise. In a Year 3 class, the teacher used probing questions to refine and clarify children's understanding of persuasive language.
- Lessons are well prepared, interesting and use exciting resources so that pupils are keen to learn more. In a science lesson, pupils explored snowballs to help them learn about solids, liquids and gases. In a Reception class, a group of boys shared information about a car they had made with the other children. Through skilful questioning, this extended children's understanding and vocabulary about how vehicles move, the fuel they use and the children's knowledge of colours.
- Marking in English is usually thorough and regular. It tells pupils what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to respond to these remarks. Marking of mathematics is not as thorough. Pupils do not always know what they have done well and what they need to do to get better.
- Teaching assistants provide good support to pupils, in lessons and when they are working with small groups. Their good knowledge of pupils means that they know how to adapt the task to

support each individual.

- Some teaching requires improvement because pupils spend too long listening to the teacher so there is not enough time to work independently. Where this is the case, teachers do not plan their work well enough to get the best out of different groups of pupils, especially those who have the ability to achieve higher than expected standards. Pupils are not given opportunities to think for themselves about how to solve or investigate problems.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are polite, friendly and helpful. They show consideration for one another, and work and play cooperatively. Sometimes their working together, such as in a lesson about developing a podcast, is exceptional.
- Relationships between adults and children are mutually respectful. The school is a calm and orderly place to be. Pupils hold open doors for adults and greet them cheerfully. They settle quickly when they come into class. Behaviour in collective worship is exemplary.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Most parents who responded to the online questionnaire and the school's own survey agree that pupils feel safe in school. Pupils say that, typically, incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are rare and resolved quickly, although a small minority of parents feel that this is not the case. School records show few behaviour incidents and these were followed up swiftly with appropriate action.
- Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe out of school. For example, they know about the dangers of cyber-bullying and what to do to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Pupils willingly take on responsibilities such as house captains, reading buddies and playground helpers. This develops their confidence, independence and pride in their school.
- The vast majority of pupils attend school regularly. The school has effective procedures in place to improve attendance and has been successful in reducing numbers with poorer attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- All leaders and governors are united in their desire to ensure that pupils leave school as well-rounded individuals who have achieved as well as they can, have been nurtured to excel in any special gift or talent they have, and who show responsibility and maturity. Leaders are proud of the improvements in teaching and the curriculum which have led to increased rates of progress and rising standards, but they know there is more to do to. Leaders' commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils is demonstrated in their effective use of the pupil premium funding to boost the performance of eligible pupils.
- Leaders have a very accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the school because of effective procedures to check all aspects of the school's performance. These factors demonstrate leaders' ability to carry on making improvements.
- Nearly all leaders, apart from the headteacher, are recently appointed but they have already shown they can make a difference. For example, the reorganisation of classrooms and routines in Reception and Nursery classes has improved the quality of teaching and increased the rate at which children learn the links between letters and sounds. The changes to the curriculum mean that pupils are more interested and stimulated to find out more about what they are learning. However, the plans leaders have for further improvements do not target precisely what needs to be done to reflect the ambition of the school.
- The curriculum is evolving to match pupils' interests and is successfully capturing their enthusiasm for learning. It is effective in developing pupils' skills. For example, topics such as 'Captain Cook' are used well to develop pupils' writing. Studies of different religions and cultures

prepare children well for living in a diverse society.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Each classroom has a display which prompts pupils to think and reflect on hopes and dreams. High quality collective worship is thought-provoking for pupils and parents alike. Strong relationships and consideration for one another pervade the school.
 - Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Policies and procedures are thorough and regularly checked.
 - Rigorous procedures to manage the performance of staff, allied to professional development, have contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching. However, targets for individual teachers do not indicate precisely what needs to be done to make teaching good or better; consequently, teachers are not always clear what the priorities are to help them improve.
 - The local authority has until recently provided the school with intensive support, which contributed to the school's successful efforts to improve the quality of teaching. The local authority now provides support at the request of the school.
 - A large majority of parents are positive about the school. They feel they are well informed about the progress their child is making as a result of termly meetings to share targets for improvement, and the termly newsletter about what their child will be learning. A minority feel this information is insufficient. Similarly, a minority feel that the school does not inform them enough about staffing changes which have taken place or that their concerns are not dealt with effectively. Leaders and governors are aware of these issues but have yet to implement procedures which satisfy all parents equally.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors support the school effectively and care about the success and development of pupils. Through training, governors are well informed about their role. Their good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, gathered through visits and thorough analysis of data, ensures that they offer appropriate and timely challenge to leaders, including the management of the headteacher's performance. Governors have a clear understanding about strengths and weaknesses in teaching. This information is used well to reward effective teachers and to support school leaders to improve the teaching of individuals. Governors regularly consult parents about their views, such as at termly parents' meetings. They are diligent in their management of school funds, including use of the pupil premium, which are well targeted to support rising standards and improved teaching.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	111667
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	405351

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	528
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eric Hall
Headteacher	Gillian Wild
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2011
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