

The Priors School

School Lane, Priors Marston, Southam, CV47 7RR

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, governors and staff have worked well to raise achievement by improving teaching since the last inspection.
- The governing body is effective. Governors ask challenging questions to check that teaching and learning continue to improve and visit regularly to see for themselves.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. It makes sure pupils develop a good appreciation of British values, as well as tolerance and respect for others.
- The school uses very effective procedures to ensure that all pupils are safe. Pupils know the school is secure and how staff work to ensure they stay safe.
- Good teaching across the school enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress. Teachers have carefully developed their new curriculum and are currently exploring what their preferred ways of assessing pupils' progress will look like.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve particularly well because of high quality help and guidance.
- Children in the early years make a good start to school. A range of stimulating, well-taught activities ensures that they make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Pupils behave well, showing good attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school.
- Attendance is consistently above average.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement in mathematics, though good, is not as strong as in reading and writing. The work they do is not always hard enough to stretch their understanding.
- The most-able pupils do not have regular opportunities to tackle mathematics work that requires them to apply advanced reasoning skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in six lessons, which included seeing all year groups.
- Pupils' workbooks were scrutinised by the inspector.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and talked to them about their reading.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, pupils and a National Leader in Education who is working in partnership with the school.
- A variety of documents were examined, including those relating to safeguarding and the school's improvement plans.
- The inspector considered the views expressed in questionnaires returned by 10 members of staff.
- The inspector took account of the 44 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and letters received during the inspection. He also spoke with parents to gather their views.

Inspection team

Jeremy Bird, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Priors Primary School is part of the government's Academy Free School initiative. It is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years are taught in one full-time Reception class. The older pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes, each of which includes more than one year group.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- There are currently no disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium in the school. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school works closely with a National Leader in Education from Sydenham Primary School.
- The school runs a daily before- and after-school club for its own pupils.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2014 to make the usual judgement on whether the government's floor standards were met.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment and accelerate progress in mathematics by ensuring that:
 - pupils work on harder tasks in their mathematics lessons
 - the most-able pupils are regularly given work that requires them to apply advanced reasoning skills.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governors are ambitious for the school. They have made good progress in tackling the areas for development identified by the last inspection and the school is well placed to improve further. Leaders have established a culture in which good teaching flourishes and pupils are expected to behave well.
- The school is accurate in evaluating its own effectiveness and is identifying the right priorities for further improvement. The headteacher is ably supported by a National Leader in Education who makes regular visits to the school. She works with the headteacher to accurately evaluate how well pupils are progressing and what the school needs to do to further improve teaching and learning, focussing on improving the teaching of mathematics.
- The special educational needs coordinator is focused on raising the achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This leader works very effectively with other staff to ensure that this group of pupils makes good, and sometimes outstanding, progress.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. The school uses effective systems for managing teachers' performance. The headteachers' monitoring of teachers' work identifies what they are doing well and how they could improve. Staff have good opportunities to improve their practice through training.
- The headteacher conducts termly meetings to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress, to check how pupils are doing against their targets and to make sure all pupils have an equal chance to engage in school activities, such as drama and music performances. Teachers keep a close check on any possible discrimination and promote positive relationships between pupils well.
- Teachers work collaboratively as a leadership team. They have ensured that the curriculum promotes pupils' achievement well and reflects their abilities and interests. Parents show their appreciation in commenting on curriculum evenings they attend. They talk about how their children are inspired in their reading and writing, for example through learning about Shakespeare.
- When disadvantaged pupils have attended the school, leaders have used the pupil premium appropriately to support them. They have used the funding to employ staff to run support sessions and one-to-one tuition in literacy and numeracy.
- As a result of the effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the school promotes British values well. Pupils are keen to understand the principles of democracy, for example engaging in debate around the current general election. This supports their understanding of the importance of tolerance and respect.
- Pupils find out about the different cultures represented in modern British society, for instance through visiting various places of worship. They hear about other ways of life through visitors from different cultural backgrounds, and understand the needs of others through a strong partnership with a school in Malawi.
- The school uses excellent systems for keeping pupils safe. The headteacher, together with the governor responsible for safeguarding, ensures that careful checks are carried out on all adults who work with the pupils and that staff and governors are regularly trained in safeguarding and child protection. Teachers identify possible risks associated with different activities, for example outdoor play in the early years. The school works very effectively with the local authority to safeguard pupils.
- The school makes good use of its primary school sport funding. It has met its aim of increasing pupils' participation in sport by broadening the sporting opportunities and experiences available to all its pupils. The funding has enabled pupils to take part in more after-school sports clubs as well as a greater range of

competitions, including cross-country running and swimming.

■ The governance of the school:

- Since the last inspection, more effective governance has contributed well to the school's improvement. Governors know how well the school is performing as they regularly make purposeful visits, for example to check out safeguarding procedures and to see how well marking is helping pupils to make better progress.
- The Chair of the Governing Body has ensured that new members have appropriate skills, which they have put to good use in challenging the headteacher strongly. For example, a governor who has financial expertise oversees the school's finances. This ensures that finances are spent wisely to benefit pupils, including the way sport and pupil premium funding are used to support pupils' progress.
- Governors' good understanding of how well teachers are performing comes from informative reports from the headteacher. As a result they ask searching questions about the school's performance and so hold the headteacher effectively to account. This enables governors to ensure that any underperformance is addressed and only good teaching is rewarded through pay rises and promotion.
- Governors ensure that all their statutory duties are met in full. They are kept very well informed about how the school works to keep pupils safe. A governor responsible for safeguarding provides termly updates following regular visits to the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school uses effective procedures for settling children in when they start school and they quickly learn the routines and what is expected. Pupils say that behaviour is good and most parents agree.
- In every class and in all year groups, pupils have good attitudes to learning and enjoy school. Pupils' readiness to learn is evident from the high attendance rate that has been maintained over the past two years.
- Pupils get on well with each other. They are good at working together in the mixed-age classes. They value the time given to them to think deeply about relevant issues, for example the recent work on the First World War. This contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- At all times of the school day pupils are very polite and courteous, as they readily apply the school values in their dealings with other people. Such relationships can be seen in the childcare facility run by the school, where pupils respond well to guidance from the play leaders. They say that there are a few occasions during lunchtimes when some pupils do not respect resources such as play equipment as much they should. As a result pupils can use this equipment inappropriately.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. As a result parents, staff and governors are very confident that the pupils are safe and well cared for both in and out of school, for example on school visits.
- Pupils are very clear about how the school supports them to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils listen very closely to teachers and to each other during computing lessons. This helps them to form their own views and understand what to be aware of and what to do if they are worried. This work contributes very effectively to pupils' moral and social development.
- Pupils state that there is no bullying in the school, and are very clear in their understanding of what constitutes bullying. The school's systems are very effective in ensuring all relevant staff are aware of any potential issues, and take immediate action in response if required. This is reflected in the way school records contain no significant incidents this year.

- Governors' visits to school often have a focus on safeguarding. This, together with reports from the headteacher, ensures that the governing body is kept up to date with any related issues. Minutes of governors' meetings show that any issues raised are followed up with agreed actions taken. Feedback at subsequent meetings ensures any such issues are resolved.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good in every year group. It has improved as a result of effective training and teachers benefiting from visiting high performing schools and sharing their own effective practice with each other.
- Teachers ask pupils questions skilfully to check and develop their understanding. Where this is most effective teachers do not ignore pupils' incorrect responses, but probe deeper to find out why they have made such a response. This then helps teachers to determine how subsequent teaching can help pupils to improve their understanding.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is very effective. This is because teachers and teaching assistants know precisely what these pupils need to do to make at least good progress and have the skills to enable this to happen. Their careful planning and setting of work for the mixed-age classes results in good progress in every year group.
- Teachers and teaching assistants show that they have strong subject knowledge and as a result teach reading effectively. Children in the Reception class are quick to secure their understanding of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) and effective practice is maintained through Key Stages 1 and 2. All teachers are skilled at showing pupils how good grammar can be used to create strong effects, so pupils then remember what to focus on when they come to write for themselves.
- Pupils' books show clearly that staff use agreed marking practices to help them make good progress. Staff do this by giving pupils time to respond to their written comments, which helps pupils to embed new skills. Examples are seen in reading and writing homework activities, with pupils responding to the advice given to improve their writing about books they have read. When work does not sufficiently challenge the pupils, the marking is less effective. This is because teachers cannot readily see where the pupils are making errors and so are restricted in the support they can offer.
- The school has improved the teaching of writing since the last inspection. Teachers make sure that pupils plan their writing carefully, which leads to final pieces showing effective use of grammar and punctuation. Pupils enjoy exploring issues related to topics they are studying, and imaginative writing results from this invested time.
- Pupils in all classes have a wide range of opportunities to develop their mathematical skills. There are times when work is not as challenging as it could be for all ability groups. As a result progress slows. There is not always sufficient challenge for the most-able pupils because some tasks do not require them to apply advanced reasoning skills in order to solve problems. This means that pupils do not consistently show 'mastery' of skills as defined in the new National Curriculum.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in Reception with skills and understanding that are broadly at, or slightly above, typical levels for their age. Last year children began school with higher skills in their personal, social and emotional development. They make good progress, and are making better progress this year than in previous years, particularly in writing.
- Over the last two years, the school's results in the Year 1 phonics screening test have been above average, reflecting good achievement in pupils' understanding of letters and sounds in the early years and Key Stage 1. Achievement in reading is a strength throughout the school, and pupils are able to apply their advanced skills in writing. This means that pupils achieve well in a variety of subjects. For example,

in science they show their understanding well using correct scientific terms in their factual writing.

- Pupils continue to achieve well through Key Stage 1. Their attainment in 2014 was well above average. High attainment was also seen in Key Stage 2, particularly in reading and writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good and sometimes outstanding progress due to the high quality support and guidance they receive. Such rates of progress are enabling this group to catch up with their classmates.
- There are currently no disadvantaged pupils in the school, and there were too few in last year's Year 6 to compare their results with those of their classmates without the risk of identifying individuals.
- The school has taken effective action to improve writing standards over the past two years. Leaders have reviewed the curriculum and as a result pupils now have more time to develop their ideas and to write. They write for a range of purposes and different styles, and their grammar, punctuation and spelling are well developed by Year 6.
- In all year groups pupils make good progress in mathematics as a result of being able to successfully use their secure strategies in different tasks, such as using coordinates to help solve problems involving properties of shapes. There are occasions when the tasks are not challenging enough, and this leads to pupils spending too much time on work they are already secure with.
- The most-able pupils do well in reading and writing, with an increasing number attaining the higher levels in their work. As a result of the improved training given to teachers, these pupils make good progress as they are suitably challenged. In mathematics they are not making such strong progress, as they are not always shown effectively how to use harder skills as required by the new curriculum.

The early years provision

is good

- Leadership and management of the early years are good. The staff use good systems for checking what children can do when they start school. Parents are kept well informed about what their children are doing at school and how they could help to support their learning at home.
- Children's achievement is good and improving. The proportion who reached a good level of development in all aspects of learning except writing was above average in 2014. This year children are on track to attain even better results, with progress in writing much stronger as a result of more time given to this activity. This means they will be even better prepared for the work in Year 1.
- Good teaching enables all children, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, to make good progress in developing their basic skills. The effective teaching of phonics gives children a clear grasp of letter sounds and opportunities to read and spell new words. In mathematics, teachers ensure that children have a secure understanding of addition and subtraction before recording their work on paper.
- Children behave well and the trusting relationships they have with staff help them to feel very safe. They are enthusiastic learners who pay good attention in lessons. Children play well together and show consideration for one another. The well-designed indoor and outdoor learning environments ensure they feel, and indeed are, safe.
- Occasionally, learning activities in areas such as mathematical development are not sufficiently challenging, especially for the most able children. When they lack a clear learning purpose, children do not progress as well as they could.

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	137488
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	462538

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Scaife
Headteacher	Gary Murrell
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2013
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