

Priors Hall - A Learning Community

Gretton Road, Priors Hall, Corby, Northamptonshire NN17 5EB

Inspection dates

26–27 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the school opened, there have been a number of changes of leadership and staff.
- The foundation trust has not provided effective support or resources for this expanding school. Leaders have not secured a consistently good quality of education.
- The new headteacher, incoming academy trust and governors have quickly established an accurate overview of the situation in the school. They have put in place plans for improvement. However, these have not yet been implemented in full.
- Other leaders are taking an active role in driving forward improvements to teaching, to raise standards. However, many actions are in the early stages and have not yet been evaluated.
- Pupils enjoy learning through interesting topics. However, leaders have not put in place coherent frameworks to secure consistent progress for pupils across year groups and across a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is variable. Sequences of learning do not consistently build on and deepen pupils' knowledge and skills. Not all teachers are showing pupils how to tackle more challenging tasks.
- Teachers do not make good use of information about what pupils can do to move pupils' learning forward.
- Teachers are not ensuring that pupils develop consistent habits of self-checking to be independent, confident learners.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has a clear focus on improving outcomes for pupils.
- The headteacher has galvanized the new leadership team and staff behind a shared vision of continual school improvement.
- Leaders have established a calm and welcoming learning environment. Pupils are friendly and polite.
- Recent external support has increased access to effective training for staff. Staff are relishing these opportunities.
- Current pupils' work in English and mathematics shows that their progress is improving.
- Parents value the approachable staff. They also welcome the improved communication and clarity of expectations from the new headteacher.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders implement and embed recently introduced systems and plans for improvement
 - all leaders develop their roles and extend their skills, so that they can be held to account for improving teaching and outcomes
 - leaders provide a clear and coherent curriculum framework so that pupils are systematically taught the knowledge and skills they need.
- Improve teaching and learning so that it is consistently good, by ensuring that:
 - teachers deepen their subject knowledge, so that they plan sequences of learning that systematically build and extend pupils' understanding
 - teachers use assessment to move pupils' learning rapidly forward
 - teachers show pupils how to improve their work and tackle more challenging tasks
 - teachers establish approaches to support pupils to be more confident learners.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2018. He is the third headteacher since the school opened in September 2016.
- There have been frequent staffing changes and appointments as the school continues to expand.
- The school is in the process of moving from the Woodnewton Academy Trust (WAT) to Inspiring Futures through Learning multi-academy trust (IFtL). The incoming trust took immediate action to support the school following its education review in November 2018. The headteacher and governing body have embraced the training and support that resulted from this review.
- IFtL has a strong track record of rapid school improvement. The headteacher and governors have been provided with training and support to establish a school leadership team. The headteacher is determined to improve teaching and pupil outcomes. IFtL has also provided access to highly skilled lead teachers to model effective approaches to teaching. This is a promising start to their partnership.
- Until these recent improvements, the drive to move the school forward was overly reliant upon the headteacher. Reorganisation of responsibilities to other leaders is starting to improve understanding of roles and accountability. The headteacher has successfully brought the new leaders together as a team. However, these changes are not yet sufficiently embedded for all leaders to be equally effective at driving improvements to teaching and learning.
- Leaders have provided effective training and an assessment framework to support teachers' planning for learning in English and mathematics. Evidence gathered during the inspection confirmed leaders' self-evaluation that assessment is now accurate. Teachers are starting to be held to account for improving pupils' outcomes through planned pupil progress meetings. However, teachers across the school do not have a consistent understanding of progress beyond the year groups they teach.
- Leaders' use of the school's pupil premium funding has led to some improvements in the progress and attainment made by disadvantaged pupils. Investment in effective pastoral support to improve pupils' social and emotional skills is contributing to improving behaviour for learning. However, as the quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good, gaps remain when comparing the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils with those of their peers.
- The leader responsible for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) knows these pupils' needs well. Leaders monitor the pupils requiring additional help closely. They ensure that parents and pupils are involved in setting and reviewing targets. The leader seeks appropriate external support where necessary. However, the impact of this support on the academic outcomes of pupils with SEND is not yet consistently good. The identification of barriers and next steps for learning is not sufficiently precise for more rapid progress.
- Leaders use the additional funding provided through the primary physical education and sport premium well. In addition to providing good-quality teaching and coaching

skills, more pupils participate in a range of sporting activities and competitions than previously.

- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum provides a wide range of learning activities to enthuse pupils. They enjoy 'Wow Days' and trips, such as to Twycross Zoo, to stimulate their learning. However, the curriculum framework is not yet systematically building up pupils' knowledge and skills as consistently in all subjects as it is in English and mathematics.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education well. Pupils regularly learn about world faiths and cultural similarities and differences. The school's values and important events are explored through assemblies and class discussions. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as being part of the 'sports crew' and class helpers. Overall, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The headteacher has established a clear vision of improvement. Almost all staff who completed the Ofsted questionnaire and who spoke with inspectors were supportive of leaders. All staff are positive about the additional training opportunities they are receiving since starting to work with IFTL. There is now a shared culture for improvement.
- Almost all parents who spoke with inspectors have a high level of confidence in the school. They welcome the positive impact of the new headteacher on many aspects of the school's work. They particularly appreciate the approachability of staff and resolution of concerns. They are happy with the improved communication about how to support their children's learning, including opportunities to visit classrooms for activities like 'come and read' mornings.

Governance of the school

- Governors are highly committed to the school. They have a comprehensive grasp of the challenges the school faces and of the needs of the community which the school serves. Governors are frustrated that, despite consistent challenge and requests for support, the qualifying foundation did not respond appropriately. The qualifying foundation trust did not provide governors with the information and appropriate resources for them to manage the expansion and improvement of the school effectively. Scrutiny of governor documentation confirms this to be the case.
- Governors have a range of skills that contribute effectively to the new leadership of the school. Governors are reflective and eager to improve their effectiveness. The incoming trust is implementing systems and training to ensure that the local governing body can fulfil its role to support the new trustees in holding leaders to account.
- Governors receive accurate and comprehensive information from the new headteacher. In addition, the incoming trust has provided governors with detailed review and follow-up reports. This has ensured that they now have an accurate understanding of priorities and share the urgency to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Governors have a good understanding of how well leaders allocate and monitor additional funding received by the school, such as the pupil premium and funding for pupils with SEND. Governors bring valuable safeguarding, and health and safety knowledge to the team. They have used this diligently to monitor and bring about improvements in these important aspects.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There are rigorous systems and procedures in place, which are understood by all staff. Leaders carry out all necessary checks before adults begin to work or to volunteer at the school.
- Leaders keep thorough records to ensure that there is effective and timely work with external agencies. Staff receive relevant training and updates, including on radicalisation and extremism.
- The culture of safeguarding in the school is evident. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said they feel safe. Teaching children about how to keep themselves safe is given a high priority by leaders. Pupils were particularly knowledgeable about how to keep themselves safe on line.
- Case studies and records show that vulnerable children and their families are well supported. There have been exclusions in this academic year, and these have been stringently logged. Leaders worked tenaciously to secure support from external agencies to meet the complex needs of excluded pupils. Leaders are quick to investigate and follow up any concerns.
- The incoming academy trust and safeguarding governor have been thorough in checking and supporting the rigour of school procedures.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is not consistently good. Although actions are in place to improve pupils' progress towards achieving age-appropriate expectations, these are relatively recent and are not yet securing good progress for all pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers' assessments are now accurate, through new assessment systems, effective training, and internal and external moderation. However, teachers across the school do not all have the skills and depth of subject knowledge to adapt their planning for the next steps in learning for all pupils.
- Teachers do not consistently make it clear to pupils what they need to do to be successful in lessons and to understand how they can improve their work. Not all teachers are confident to address pupils' misconceptions within lessons.
- In both writing and mathematics, teachers do not consistently require pupils to apply and extend the skills and knowledge they have learned. Pupils are not consistently required to learn from mistakes as the school's feedback policy indicates they should.
- The teaching of phonics and reading is improving. Pupils' books are well chosen and at the right level. Clear strategies are now in place to encourage pupils to read widely. However, pupils' inference skills are not as developed as their reading accuracy.
- Teachers are successfully developing pupils' calculation skills in mathematics. Also, in English, they are systematically developing pupils' knowledge of grammar and punctuation. Teachers plan effectively for age-appropriate learning, in these subjects.
- Teachers have good relationships with pupils and pupils are keen to learn. Teachers

consistently maintain a calm and focused climate for 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.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils have the skills to be as independent and successful as they need to be. For example, pupils are heavily reliant on adults to remind them about basic punctuation. Teachers do not ensure that pupils consistently take pride in their work.
- Personal, social, and health education is not as well mapped out as leaders wish it to be. They are in the process of providing a teaching framework to improve the development of pupils' knowledge in this aspect of the curriculum.
- The headteacher has involved pupils, parents, staff and governors in reviewing and establishing clear shared values of respect, care, ambition, responsibility, curiosity and resilience. These are now being used to establish an ethos which creates a calm yet positive atmosphere in classrooms and corridors.
- Leaders set a strong example in treating all pupils with dignity and respect and they are very effective role models for pupils. Staff provide sensitive support for pupils with complex needs. Nurture provision at a WAT partner school is used well by leaders to provide specialist expertise for pupils who need it.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe. They know about online safety, road safety and 'stranger danger'. They understand about different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils told the inspector that the headteacher's 'awesome' assemblies help them to learn this and that bullying is rare.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- During the inspection, pupils' focus in lessons wavered when learning was not well matched to their abilities or interests.
- Pupils walk around the school respectfully and hold doors open for others in school. They settle down to work in most lessons quickly and follow the teachers' instructions well. Pupils work cooperatively.
- Some recent uncharacteristic and poor behaviour has affected pupils' and parents' confidence in playground supervision and the consistency of lunchtime behaviour management. Leaders have taken timely action and are promoting the consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policy by all staff.
- During the inspection, playtimes were observed to be well supervised. Pupils were seen to cooperate and play happily together at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Calm and polite routines were particularly well established in the lunch hall.
- The vast majority of pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance has improved this year.

It is currently in line with the national average. A small number of pupils have an adverse impact on attendance figures for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Case studies show that leaders take effective action to support families, in order to bring about improvement.

- Pupils who use the school's before- and after-school club enjoy a range of activities and their time with their peers. Pupils of different ages play well together.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- There are inconsistencies in the progress made by different groups of pupils and in different subject areas.
- Current school performance information and inspection evidence show improved progress in both key stages in reading, writing and mathematics, for most pupils. In key stage 1, improvement is strongest, with most pupils now making good progress. Recent staff training and more consistent school policies are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding in other subjects shows that teachers are planning for a range of curriculum experiences and learning. However, pupils are not attaining as well as they should because teachers' expectations in wider-curriculum work are not as high as in English and mathematics.
- At key stage 1, in 2018, pupils' attainment declined to well below the national average, especially for writing. Disadvantaged pupils attained less well than other pupils.
- Attainment in the Year 1 national phonics test rose in 2018 to be above the national average. This was a significant improvement from being well below the national average in 2017.
- Leaders ensure that the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND is used effectively. Pupils in both of these groups are making increasingly strong progress. However, assessment is not used with sufficient precision to ensure that progress is consistently strong for all pupils.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that provision in the early years is consistently good. Staff do not use assessments well enough to ensure that learning in the indoor and outdoor environments is consistently purposeful. Children do not make the progress they could in applying the phonics and number skills they are learning. Opportunities to build children's stamina and extend their thinking and problem-solving are also missed. Children do not leave the early years as well prepared for Year 1 as they could be.
- The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was just below the national average in 2017 and 2018. Many children enter the Reception Year with skills below those typically expected for their age. The progress made by different groups of pupils in different areas of learning has varied over time. The gap between children's reading and writing skills is much wider than is the case nationally.
- Recent improvements to assessment across the school mean that leaders now have an

accurate picture of current attainment. However, as is the case across the school, the early years leader does not have a clear understanding of rates or patterns of progress from different starting points.

- Plans are in place to make sure that the early years leader receives training and is given time to work with colleagues across all three early years classes. The headteacher has identified that all phase leaders should have a wider understanding of standards and expectations across all year groups.
- Teachers provide a wide range of activities, in which children take part enthusiastically. However, children are often not clear about how to use the resources provided to extend their play and learning. When asked what they were learning, children perceived that they were 'just playing'.
- Adults consistently promote and extend children's language skills. They also respond to children's interests and enthusiasms. All adults model language well, particularly for pupils who speak English as an additional language. However, opportunities to reinforce counting skills and make links to numbers, phonics or writing skills are sometimes missed.
- All adults have clear expectations and model respectful and caring relationships. Children develop positive attitudes and play cooperatively. Staff settle children quickly into routines and ensure that they learn to get along well with others.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Children are happy and confident. Parents appreciate the approachability of staff and are confident that their children are safe and cared for well.

School details

Unique reference number	143656
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10087331

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kane Taylor
Headteacher	Chris Woolhouse
Telephone number	01536 216 090
Website	www.priorshallalc.com
Email address	chriswoolhouse@priorshallalc.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2016, as a foundation school with the Woodnewton Academy Trust (WAT) being the qualifying foundation. The governing body is the responsible body, supported by WAT. WAT has administered the school within its multi-academy structure.
- The current headteacher has been in post since September 2018. He is the third headteacher since the opening of the school.
- The school is being supported by the Inspiring Futures through Learning multi-academy trust (IFtL). The school is due to join the trust imminently.
- The school is currently an average-sized primary school. The school originally had provision for Reception to Year 2, and is expanding year on year to the full age range of Nursery to Year 6. Currently the school has provision for Nursery to Year 4. Consequently, the number on roll is increasing at a much faster rate than national

averages.

- The cohort sizes and profiles of pupils' needs across the school vary widely. For example, there are 18 pupils currently in Year 4, but 59 pupils in Year 3.
- Only four out of 10 current teachers have been with the school more than 18 months. Three teachers joined in September 2018. Currently, the school is in the process of recruiting for three more teachers for September 2019.
- The school provides before- and after-school childcare.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is close to the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- Pupils are sometimes taught in nurture group provision at another WAT school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1 to 4. The inspectors talked with pupils about their school and looked at pupils' books while visiting lessons. The team scrutinised a large sample of pupils' work jointly with the headteacher and leadership team, to gain a view of the impact of teaching over time.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders, including leaders responsible for the provision for pupils with SEND, English, mathematics, the early years and age phases. A meeting was held with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. Meetings were held with representatives of the proposed academy sponsor (IFtL).
- Inspectors spoke with parents informally at the start of the school day and considered 36 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, 'Parent View' and the free text service for parents.
- Inspectors considered responses to paper versions of the Ofsted online questionnaires from 76 pupils and 13 staff.
- The inspectors observed pupils across the school day, including at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plans, academy sponsor reviews, the school's most recent information on pupils' achievement, information related to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, and the information published on the school's website.

Inspection team

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