

Priors Wood Primary School

URN: 117271 | Inspected: 06 January 2026

Safeguarding

standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

Achievement Needs attention

In the Year 1 phonics screening check, pupils' attainment is below average. Some of pupils' attainment in Year 6, such as disadvantaged pupils' reading and writing and pupils working at a higher level, is below average. The quality of work in pupils' books is variable, with weaknesses evident particularly in writing. Some pupils do not develop some of the essential knowledge that they need in phonics and writing. Leaders have taken action to address these aspects of pupils' achievement, but more time is needed for the impact of their work to be fully seen. Nevertheless, many pupils achieve well. Overall, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress against their starting points. In mathematics and reading, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is in line with national averages. Pupils who need support in phonics receive this promptly and most pupils can read fluently by the end of Year 2. More regular handwriting lessons are impacting positively on the quality and accuracy of pupils' recorded work.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Warm relationships between pupils and staff create a strong sense of belonging at this friendly, welcoming school. Pupils are respectful to each other, staff and visitors. They feel safe at school and trust staff to care for them well. Pupils attend regularly and benefit widely from the rich opportunities the school offers. Staff's high expectations help pupils to behave well. In the early years, the youngest children in the school's Nursery and Reception classes settle quickly each day, thanks to the clear routines staff set up for them. Older pupils act as positive role models for younger pupils, for example in their capacity as play leaders and 'assembly monitors'. Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that staff will help them resolve any friendship issues that arise. Pupils work hard. They are enthusiastic learners and enjoy talking about what they know. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn alongside their peers. Staff know each pupil individually and understand their needs extremely well. They take steps to reduce or remove any barriers to success that pupils may face. Overall, pupils' achievement is improving. Many pupils reach the expected standard in national tests. However, the attainment of some groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, is below national averages. In some subjects, the proportion of pupils working at a higher level is also below national averages. Pupils' needs and interests are carefully considered in the school's impressive programme for personal development. For example, to develop pupils' oracy and confidence in public speaking, the school offered pupils the opportunity to participate in a debating competition run by a nearby university. Pupils have a say in the extra-curricular clubs provided, such as dance, art and a wide range of sports. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND participate fully in this extensive programme. As a result, pupils are extremely well prepared for life beyond Priors Wood.

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Next steps

- Leaders should ensure they continue to develop teachers' expertise in adapting teaching and designing tasks to meet pupils' specific needs.
- Leaders should ensure they increase the precision of the targets set for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that the support provided is well matched to pupils' needs and enables them to achieve more highly.
- Leaders should further refine their detailed analysis of and insight about areas of the school's work, so that their actions to drive improvement are as effective as possible.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Since the last inspection, leaders have strengthened the curriculum. They have developed an ambitious curriculum that is carefully thought through to build pupils' learning over time. In most subjects, the curriculum is well established. In one or 2 subjects, it is newer and leaders are acting to ensure that staff are suitably trained to teach it effectively. There is a strong focus on language development and the key skills pupils need in each subject area. Leaders ensure that pupils' early reading, writing and mathematical understanding are priorities. They check regularly how well pupils are learning, so they can adjust the curriculum if needed. Leaders ensure that teachers' subject knowledge is sound. Typically, teachers model new learning clearly and check pupils' understanding effectively, so that pupils' learning is secure. Teachers know which pupils need additional support, and which pupils have gaps in their knowledge. They adapt their teaching and adjust provision so that all pupils can achieve well. For example, some pupils receive one-to-one support to reinforce their learning of the letters and sounds needed for fluent reading. Other pupils use practical resources that staff provide to support their understanding of numbers. Occasionally, teachers' adaptations of teaching and the tasks they design are not well matched to pupils' needs. This hinders some pupils' progress through the curriculum.

Early years

Expected standard

In the early years, leaders have ensured there is a well-planned, ambitious curriculum in place. It sets out what children need to learn as they move through the Nursery and Reception classes, with a strong focus on the acquisition of new language. Children progress well through the curriculum and, overall, leave Reception well prepared for Year 1. Leaders and staff build relationships with parents and carers before children join the school. This supports children's transition into the early years. Once attending, children benefit from the warm, caring relationships with staff that exist throughout the school. Staff use skilful interactions with children to move learning on. They model new language and give children opportunities to rehearse their use of this. Staff set up activities that allow children to consolidate their learning through play. For example, in Nursery, children develop

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their fine motor skills using cookie cutters to make 'gingerbread men', following a reading of a classic story. Leaders prioritise early reading, writing and mathematics. Stories, songs and rhymes are threaded through children's daily routines. For example, in Nursery, children recognise sounds and clap rhythms, in pre-phonics activities. In Reception, they progress to learning the letters and sounds needed for successful word and sentence reading.

Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders pride themselves on getting to know pupils well and identifying any additional needs they have as early as possible. They plan provision for pupils carefully, so that any barriers to learning are reduced or removed. For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), leaders are quick to seek specialist advice, where this is appropriate. Staff work effectively with pupils' families and external professionals to enable pupils with SEND to access the curriculum successfully. Leaders ensure that staff are suitably equipped to meet the range of pupils' needs. For example, some staff are trained to support pupils' speech, language and communication needs. Others are mental health first aiders. Pastoral care is a priority and the school responds quickly to pupils' wellbeing needs so that they are ready to learn. Leaders have developed clear processes to support the planning and delivery of support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. They oversee provision and check it is working well. Currently, the targets set in pupils' learning plans and by leaders for the support of disadvantaged pupils lack precision. Leaders have plans to address this, so that the support pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils receive is as effective as possible.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Governors have a range of experience and skills. They use these to support their oversight and the long-term direction for the school's development. Governors carry out their roles effectively, including meeting their statutory duties. They share leaders' pupil-centred vision and provide suitable support and challenge to enable leaders to realise their ambitious goals. Leaders and governors are committed to supporting staff's wellbeing and developing their expertise. This leads to a highly motivated staff group and ensures staff are able to fulfil their roles. When making decisions, such as the introduction of new curriculum materials, leaders always consider the impact on staff workload, as well as the benefits to pupils. Leaders and governors carry out a range of activities to check how well things are working across the school. Most of the time, this gives them a clear understanding of the school's strengths, as well as the areas for development. On occasion, leaders' work to improve the school is less impactful because their scrutiny and analysis of some aspects of the school's work are less clear. Leaders are outward-facing. They engage very effectively with parents and carers, who hold a highly positive view of the school. Leaders build mutually supportive links with colleagues in other local schools. These relationships play an important role in leaders' work on school improvement and staff development.

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Needs attention

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard

A well planned and ambitious curriculum for personal, social and health education is delivered expertly by teachers. As a result, pupils acquire deep and secure knowledge of some key issues, such as the risks associated with smartphone use as they get older. Pupils understand the importance of a healthy, balanced diet and how to spot the signs of poor mental health. The statutory elements of the relationships and sex education and health education curriculum are sensitively planned and taught, at an age-appropriate level. Pupils' understanding of issues relating to equality and diversity is excellent. They learn about various belief systems and philosophies through high-quality religious education (RE). This leads pupils to develop tolerance and understanding of religious and cultural differences. Initiatives such as the school council and 'Parliament day' support pupils' knowledge of fundamental British values, for example democracy. All of this means pupils are eminently well prepared for later life. Leaders provide pupils with a carefully crafted range of wider opportunities to enhance their learning and maximise their life chances. Pupils who face barriers through disadvantage or other factors are at the forefront of leaders' minds as they design this offer. For example, pupils in Year 1 travelled by bus and train, some for the first time, to visit a nearby leisure park. Pupils in Year 4 enriched and deepened their learning in RE by visiting a Hindu temple in north London. A wide range of clubs enables pupils to extend their existing skills or discover new interests. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have access to the full gamut of wider opportunities. Participation in optional clubs is high among all groups of pupils. In some instances, leaders set up new extra-curricular activities to provide opportunities for particular groups or in response to pupils' own suggestions, such as art club and some sports clubs. Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard

Overall attendance figures are close to the national average and improving. This upward trend is a result of leaders' actions and their promotion of the importance of regular attendance. Leaders and staff build warm, trusting relationships with pupils and their families, so pupils want to come to school. When a pupil's attendance causes concern, leaders spot this quickly, thanks to their oversight and analysis of attendance figures. They take appropriate action to support improvement, for example by offering free places at the school's breakfast club. Leaders have put in place a 'good learner statement' to support pupils' behaviour in lessons. This reminds pupils of the school's expectations and how to maximise learning opportunities. Pupils try hard to meet these expectations and, as a result, learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils socialise happily at breaktimes and lunchtimes. In the early years, during unstructured times, children play and learn cooperatively. They share resources and work together on common projects, such as retrieving toys frozen in the ice.

Some pupils need additional help to follow school routines and to be ready for learning. Leaders and staff are

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skilled at providing supportive activities that encourage pupils to self- regulate. Staff understand and apply the school's behaviour policy well.

For detailed performance data including disadvantage gap analysis, historical trends, and comparison tables, visit the school's profile on WhatSchool:

<https://whatschool.ai/en/school/priors-wood-primary-school-ware>