

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools Report

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

Clifton Avenue,
Wolviston Court,
Billingham,
Stockton-on-Tees,
TS22 5BX

Diocese: Durham

Local authority: Stockton – on -Tees

Date of inspection: March 11 2008

Date of last inspection: May 7, 19 and 20 2003

School's unique reference number: 111667

Headteacher: Mrs. Judith Duell

Inspector's name and number: Mr. Andrew Lumsden No 392

School context

Prior's Mill C E Controlled Primary School is a larger than average size primary school situated in the Billingham area of Stockton-on-Tees. Few pupils receive free school meals and only a small number of pupils come from minority ethnic families. Those with learning disabilities are well below the national average.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Prior's Mill Primary School as a Church of England school is good

This school is a good school with a very strong Christian dimension to its practice. It is well led and managed. Pupils are valued as individuals whether they have a faith or not. Issues arising from the previous inspection have been fully addressed.

Established strengths

- A very positive ethos, reflecting the quality of relationships founded securely on Christian values
- Pupils' needs are well addressed for those with faith or none, with good quality teaching enabling them to make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Worship provides a strong impact on the Christian ethos of the school.
- The headteacher presents a strong distinctive Christian vision for the school, supported effectively by the deputy headteacher, encouraged and underwritten by the Foundation Governors and staff, to take forward the mission of the school

Focus for development

- Ensure that staff evaluations of collective worship are fed back to the worship group for consideration and action
- Introduce pupils' evaluations of collective worship
- Involve more staff, particularly at KS2, in the leading of collective worship

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is good at meeting the needs of all learners

Prior's Mill School is marked by a very positive ethos, reflecting the quality of relationships throughout and emphasising the distinctiveness of Christianity and love of Jesus Christ. Pupils are respected and flourish as unique individuals with their needs and their successes, irrespective of a personal faith, recognised and valued. Christian displays around the school, worship and strong links with the local church of St. Mary Magdalene impact strongly upon learners and their parents. The effective use of personal development programmes develops pupils mentally and emotionally who show very good behaviour. Their attitudes demonstrate Christian values of trust, honesty, fairness, care and concern for others, and support achievement and enjoyment for all. Their understanding, tolerance, forgiveness and love for one another is very evident. Well planned lessons highlight social and moral values of right

and wrong and encourage high levels of responsibility and independence. Bible stories feature strongly and along with worship, including the termly celebration of the Eucharist, are a significant and powerful element in the distinctiveness of Prior's Mill as a Church of England school. There is good quality teaching across the school which enables pupils to make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school, the church, by fund raising in support of the local hospice, NSPCC, and the third world through recently established links with a school in Kenya. There is a very good wide ranging programme of extra curricular activities supported by good home school links. Through the good buddy system and School Council, pupils positively contribute to the distinctive character of the school.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is good with some outstanding features

Worship impacts strongly on the school's Christian ethos. It links themes such as hope, faith, love to appropriate Biblical accounts, to famous leaders such as Martin Luther King and links closely to the Church's year for key festivals such as Easter and Christmas. Local churchwardens are involved weekly in collective worship and the termly celebration of the Eucharist is led by local clergy providing very strong links with the church. Pupils attend special services six times a year in the local church of St Mary Magdalene as well as annual attendance at Durham Cathedral. Harvest Sunday service in church for example, used drama, dance, singing, prayers and readings. Gift services are a special part of the Christmas events at the church. Most staff are now involved in the organisation and leading of worship which uses Anglican symbolism such as a lighted candle to signify the start of worship and Christian artefacts and symbols are strongly in evidence. Learners' understanding of the Anglican faith and practice is good, as is the inspiration, spiritual growth and affirmation obtained from worship. They enjoy worship and participate readily with due solemnity and respect marking those aspects requiring a more thoughtful response. High quality singing of songs and hymns shows pupils enthusiastically engaged along with staff. Good use is made of Biblical quotations such as, 'Because you are precious in my sight, I love you.' Isaiah 43. Drama is used well to emphasise key messages such as forgiveness and love as in Luke 15, the Prodigal Son. Many pupils are provided with opportunity to write their own prayers, some of which are then used in class or in the wider forum of school worship. Prayer is fully used at the end of sessions across the school. There is good development of places for reflection in classrooms although some rooms are constrained through lack of space to develop these as much as other classes are able. Staff evaluation of collective worship is thorough and focused but there is more scope for pupils to evaluate the impact of collective worship. The worship group meets termly focusing on practice to services in school and at church. It correctly identified increasing staff involvement but so far has not used evaluations of collective worship sufficiently.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is good

The headteacher presents a strong distinctive Christian vision for the school, supported effectively by the deputy headteacher and Foundation Governors. They challenge the school well to realise this vision. Recent questionnaire responses from parents and pupils show high levels of satisfaction and support and the progress of the school and the partnership of the school, the local church of St Mary Magdalene and local community is judged as good. The vicar, although not a governor, plays a significant part both in worship and teaching. There are separate leaders for collective worship and for religious education, both of whom show good levels of understanding of the potential developments in their areas of responsibility. The School Improvement Plan correctly evaluates progress and identifies objectives in RE and for enhancing the spiritual development of pupils. Recent professional development resulted in the enhancement of reflective areas in classrooms. Communications with parents and wider community are good and the latest Praise newsletter highlights events connected with school worship as well as the calendar for Lent and Easter. The School Council and the Pupils' Voice project are developing effectively pupils' contribution to the life of the school. Positive leadership and management influence strongly the school's ethos and distinctiveness as a Church school.