



## Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

<b>Prior's Mill C of E Controlled Primary School</b>	Clifton Avenue Billingham TS22 5BX
<b>Current SIAMS inspection grade</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>Diocese/Methodist District</b>	<b>Durham</b>
Previous SIAMS inspection grade:	Good
Local authority	Stockton-On-Tees
Date/s of inspection	23 September 2016
Date of last inspection	September 2011
School's unique reference number	111667
Headteacher	Gillian Wild
Inspector's name and number	David Tait Quality Assurance: Lizzie McWhirter 244

### School context

Prior's Mill is a larger than average voluntary controlled primary school situated in Billingham with 483 pupils on roll and 77 in the nursery. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is below average. The proportion of pupils with disabilities or special educational needs is below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British background. The headteacher has been in post for six years. Since the previous inspection there have been considerable changes in staffing. The school is oversubscribed.

### The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Prior's Mill Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The strong clarity of the headteacher's vision is grounded in distinctive Christian values and has led to significant and sustained improvements over time.
- High quality experiences for personal spiritual development, as exemplified in inspirational collective worship, result in significant benefits for the whole community.
- Relationships at all levels are extremely strong as a result of the school's securely embedded distinctively Christian character.

### Areas to improve

- Ensure that training and support offered to the leaders of religious education (RE) brings about consistently high quality practice.

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

Prior's Mill's outstanding distinctive Christian character and ethos underpin all aspects of school life. Christian values, such as service and forgiveness, rooted in Christ's teaching, are shared, understood and practised by all members of the school community. They are given the highest prominence. The way all children are respected, valued and supported as individuals to realise their individual gifts and talents makes this evident. Excellent relationships at all levels, in which the vision statement 'minds to learn, hearts to care' is made explicit, foster an effective collaborative approach to all the school achieves for its children. Children behave very well and are enthusiastic about their learning. Pupils' conversations about their learning are at a highly developed level for their age, even amongst the very youngest children. As one Reception child commented, 'we are learning and growing all of this time here'. Standards are high and a significant percentage of children in all year groups are working beyond standards that which would be typically expected for their age. This is readily attributed to the school's distinctive values, such as love, which are clearly grounded in Christian theology. These values underpin the total sum of the school's work. Parents speak very highly about the ethos of the school, noticing particularly the positive impact Christian values have on children's behaviour, wellbeing and personal development. As one parent noted, 'everything in this school comes back to values'. Children gain very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development through a range of exciting learning and extra-curricular opportunities, a variety of meaningful worship experiences and valuable RE teaching. Displays around school provide excellent evidence of pupils' learning and understanding of Christianity. Leaders have addressed previous development points, resulting in pupils speaking enthusiastically about their role in both the local community and wider afield. Consequently, pupils are aware of diversity and difference within communities and celebrate these. The school correctly identifies the need to increase pupils' understanding of the global nature of Christianity. The status and teaching of RE makes a considerable contribution to Prior's Mill's Christian identity. Pupils believe RE to be both fun and challenging. As one child remarked, 'RE helps you to know about all the big steps you will take in life'. Similarly parents enthusiastically acknowledge its impact, observing, 'children never stop asking questions as a result of RE teaching'.

## **The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding**

Worship is integral to the life of the school and is both inclusive and inspirational. Children know that this is a special time for reflection and celebration. As a result, they are respectful, enthused and engaged. Leaders, through a variety of approaches, most notably through the work of the Children's Worship Group, encourage pupils to participate and to offer their thoughts and prayers. They do so confidently. Consequently, worship in both the whole school and in groups is meaningful, thought provoking, relevant and enjoyable. The impact of worship on pupils is evident because they reflect thoughtfully, share enthusiastically and sing with joyful enthusiasm. Worship is distinctly Christian with themes that reflect the Anglican calendar, Bible stories, relevant whole school themes and topical issues. Pupils have an excellent understanding of Christianity, with even the youngest children meaningfully reflecting on The Holy Trinity and drawing appropriate comparisons with their personal experiences. The school's chosen Christian values, such as love and trust, give a framework for the teachings and life of Jesus. The collective worship leader links themes in worship to topics in RE and topics relevant to the school's context, thereby providing outstanding occasions for spiritual development. Worship is led, planned and delivered by teaching staff, governors, local clergy and by the children themselves. In class-led worship, the children take responsibility for preparing and leading worship. This provides a range of rich, prayerful experiences for the pupils. Worship occasions to which parents are invited are held regularly. Many choose to attend and are unanimously enthused by the experience. Time for preparation for admission to Holy Communion and for Confirmation are highly valued and are of significant benefit to the school, parish and local community. Prayer is an important aspect of daily life in the school. Consequently, pupils know the Lord's Prayer, The Grace and prayers for the end of the school day. Pupils are confident in using Anglican liturgical responses. Pupils use quiet areas for personal prayer, contributing to their developing personal spirituality. The school prayer garden and prayer rooms are cherished spaces for prayer and personal reflection. The values explored in worship impact on the school community. Pupils are eager to resolve conflict, for example, motivated by Jesus' teaching on reconciliation. A formal and regular system of evaluation and review of worship involving staff, clergy, pupils, governors and parents, ensures that worship evolves in response to feedback and is relevant to the needs of all. The school's leaders recognise the need to ensure that the wealth of evaluative information they have on the impact of collective worship leads to continued significant improvements. Recent pupil feedback and surveys show that pupils value the range of experiences for worship and reflection offered by the school. Similar feedback from parents and the clergy, demonstrate the

strong and evolving links between church and school.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding**

The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, aided by the work of key members of her team, promotes a vision of Prior's Mill as a school rooted in distinctively Christian values in which all achieve their full potential. This is evident in terms of academic standards and personal wellbeing, and in the way in which the vulnerable are nurtured. The headteacher is ably supported by the work of a very active and knowledgeable governing body. They are aware of their obligation to hold the headteacher to account as the leader of a church school and are relentless in their focus on excellence. Strategic planning appropriately takes account of the church school ethos. As a result, the school improvement plan is linked to Christian values and Christian distinctiveness and ethos enjoys its own discrete section. The school's self-evaluation precisely measures church school effectiveness. It is robust, comprehensive and accurate. The school has fully addressed key issues from the last inspection. All of the school community were involved in formulating the ethos statement which outlines the school's core Christian values. In light of recent changes to staffing and leadership, the school rightly acknowledge that this should be reviewed. Results from questionnaires to parents regarding the school's church school distinctiveness demonstrate that they overwhelmingly recognise the effectiveness of Prior's Mill as a church school. The website evidences the numerous community events, initiatives and charitable endeavours which enrich pupils' experiences. The headteacher and governors give the leadership of RE and collective worship a high priority. This is evident in the appointment of the new RE subject leader who was specifically tasked with raising standards in RE. The school correctly identifies the need to ensure that this translates into consistently effective practice in RE. Governors are highly involved in evaluating worship and a group regularly feeds back to staff and governors. Consequently, they ensure that RE and collective worship meet statutory requirements. The school is aware of the issue of the future leadership of church schools and the headteacher has been proactive in establishing links with local church schools and the Diocese. Succession planning experiences have been provided by developing staff skills and talents. Staff at all levels have been afforded time to develop themselves as leaders of church schools. The links with local churches are strong and the clergy team are passionate about Prior's Mill as a church school. Leaders and governors have an excellent understanding about the role of their church school in the community, where it offers itself in the service of others for the benefit of all. Importantly, the school leaders and managers have a clear vision of how to move an already outstanding school forward.

SIAMS report September 2016 Prior's Mill Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School Billingham TS22 5BX