

Palmers Cross Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104309
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	355558
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Judith Tolley

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	164
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Bonsell
Headteacher	Carole Fenton
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who visited 13 lessons observing nine teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at records of pupils' progress and attendance, samples of pupils' work, curriculum planning, and documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils. Inspectors analysed responses to questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 46 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following key questions:

whether teaching is meeting the needs of different groups especially the more-able

- whether provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is meeting children's needs effectively
- whether leaders at all levels are using data on pupils' achievement to gain an accurate view of the school's performance and to drive improvement?

Information about the school

Palmers Cross is smaller than the average primary school. A higher than average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. Most pupils come from a White British background, although an above average proportion comes from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. A significant proportion of pupils come from outside the immediate catchment area and high mobility is a concern for the school. There have been several changes of teaching staff since the school was last inspected. The school has a resource base which has places for 21 pupils with speech and communication difficulties, funded by the local authority and managed by the governing body. The school has Healthy School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to safeguarding arrangements.

The care provided for pupils is inadequate because too little attention is given to safeguarding. Policies for safeguarding do not fully meet government requirements and some staff have not received training in safeguarding. Procedures to deal with complaints against staff are unclear and some health and safety requirements are not met. The school does not have the systems in place for senior managers and members of the governing body to monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies in these areas. The governing body is not aware of its responsibility to ensure statutory requirements are met and have not ensured that all staff and children at the school are adequately safeguarded. The school's evaluation of its own performance in this respect is inaccurate. There are however, strengths in the support and guidance available to pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those with specific speech and communication difficulties and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable are supported well. The school works well in partnership with parents and carers, who value the support they and their children receive.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points and achievement is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6 attainment is improving and in 2010 was broadly average. Attainment in mathematics has risen since the previous inspection and is now closer to average. Attainment in English and writing in particular has been slower to improve but now matches that in mathematics. By the time pupils enter Year 6 they are confident, articulate and keen to express their ideas, despite a significant proportion having had difficulties with speech and communication in the past. This is a testimony to the good provision in this area of work in both the main school and the resource base. Pupils willingly take on responsibility and are involved in school decision making through, for instance, the school council, as playground leaders and in the Eco Group. Such opportunities to work together to solve problems and to explain their ideas increase pupils' confidence, develops their respect for one another's views and prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage in their education. However, opportunities are missed for them to work in this way and to develop their independence as learners in lessons.

Assessment information is used well to place pupils accurately in groups according to their ability and needs, but lesson planning does not always ensure that this information is used to tailor activities sufficiently to pupils' needs and so some pupils finish tasks early or find them too easy. Work is marked well in English, but this is not consistent across the

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curriculum and does not always provide pupils with sufficient guidance about how to improve. Some pupils, therefore, are unsure about how they are getting on.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make satisfactory progress from their starting points. They respond enthusiastically to adult-led activities and make satisfactory progress. Learning through child-initiated activities and outdoor play is less well developed.

School leaders carry out a comprehensive scheme of checks on teaching and progress that provide them with a clear picture of the quality of provision. Better use of assessment has led to more effective challenge and support for individual pupils, accelerated progress and a rise in attainment in English and mathematics. Strategies to improve the quality and consistency of teaching are proving successful. Attendance has improved slightly over the last year, but it is still low overall, mainly because of holidays taken during term time. The improvements are an indication of the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure, with immediate effect, that the school meets all requirements for keeping pupils and staff safe with particular respect to:
 - making sure that school safeguarding policies meet government requirements
 - ensuring risk assessments are completed fully
 - ensuring all staff undergo up-to-date training for safeguarding
 - ensuring there are clear procedures for dealing with complaints against staff
 - implementing procedures to ensure that the governing body and senior staff monitor and evaluate the safeguarding practices across the school.
- Improve the rate at which pupils make progress in lessons by:
 - improving the consistency with which assessment information is used in all lesson planning to better meet the needs of groups of differing abilities and, in particular, to better challenge the more-able
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and independently to solve problems
 - improving the quality of marking and feedback to that of the best in the school.
- Improve outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing more structured play activities, both indoors and outside, which engage children's interest and move their learning on more rapidly.
- Improve attendance further by:
 - discouraging parents and carers from taking their children out of school in term time.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Many pupils start school with skills that are below average for their age. Work seen during the inspection indicates that the trend of improvement in writing continues and that all

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pupils are now on track to reach, and some cases, to exceed their targets. Almost all pupils, including pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language and pupils in the resource base make satisfactory progress. However, more-able pupils are not making the progress they are capable of and too few pupils reach the higher levels in English and mathematics. As a result of the well targeted support they receive from speech therapists and teaching assistants, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who have speech and communication difficulties join in whole class activities and by Year 6 also make satisfactory progress and express their ideas with clarity and confidence.

Behaviour is sometimes boisterous in the playground because pupils do not always have access to equipment to play with. It is often good in lessons and pupils are usually keen to learn. When they are given the opportunity to explore ideas with a partner or work with others to solve problems, for instance being 'detectives' in mathematics, they respond enthusiastically.

Pupils feel safe and know who they can go to with problems. They are confident that issues such as rare cases of bullying are addressed promptly and effectively. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Extra-curricular activities, including physical exercise and 'Cool Kids' sessions, are well supported. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community through their work as school councillors and by fundraising. They display respect for one another and their teachers, take time to reflect on their own actions and have a good sense of right and wrong. They have a good understanding of the variety of cultures represented within the school but are less sure about the diversity of cultures beyond their own community.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and its consistency is improving.

As a result, pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Teachers present new ideas clearly and they and teaching assistants use questioning to good effect to support and challenge pupils both in whole-class discussions and during class work. When pupils are given the opportunity to discuss ideas with a partner their confidence increases and they are keen to share their ideas with a wider audience. Activities are well sequenced so that pupils build effectively on previous learning but opportunities are missed to enable pupils to explore ideas for themselves or to work collaboratively. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour, pupils respond well and relationships are good. In a minority of lessons the pace slows and pupils become restless or lose interest when teacher-led activities are too lengthy. Assessment information is usually used effectively to meet the needs of the majority of pupils and teaching assistants are skilful in supporting individuals and small groups in lessons. However it is not used consistently well. As a result planning is sometimes not detailed enough to ensure that the more-able pupils are sufficiently challenged. Pupils know their targets but are not routinely involved in evaluating their own progress.

The curriculum adequately meets pupils' needs and interests. The introduction of the 'Big Write' for instance is proving successful in raising attainment in English. The school is working towards a creative curriculum to provide better opportunities for pupils to practise

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their skills across a range of subjects and to engage their interest more effectively. Although this is at a very early stage of development, for example through the project on the weather and climate, it is already proving successful in engaging pupils. The Breakfast and After School clubs provide a good range of activities and have a positive impact both upon improving attendance and pupils' understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

The school provides a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are supported well. There are comprehensive systems in place to identify concerns at a very early stage, and follow up actions are quickly implemented using a wide range of appropriate agencies. Links with partner institutions ensure that pupils make a smooth transition to secondary schools and induction procedures ensure that they settle quickly when they begin school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has taken decisive action to eliminate inadequate teaching, implement clear systems to track pupils' progress and ensure staff are accountable. There have been significant changes in staffing and in the leadership structure since the previous inspection. Middle leaders are fully involved in the processes of self evaluation and improvement planning, although some are still at an early stage of developing their roles in this area. Gaps in attainment of different groups have largely been eliminated. Due to the inadequacies in safeguarding, the effectiveness of the governing body is inadequate.

Parents and carers are well informed and greatly value the close working partnership they have with the school to promote their children's learning. Effective partnerships are maintained with specialist agencies to support those pupils in need of extra care or guidance, which then allows them to play a full part in the life of the school. The school is a harmonious community as a result of the satisfactory provision for equality. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily through its links with the immediate community and is developing links with schools in different contexts to broaden pupils' understanding of the diversity of culture in the United Kingdom.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding often below those expected for their age. All, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress during their time in the Reception class. Behaviour is good and children respond positively to adults, play well with their classmates and enjoy learning. Liaison with the nursery and other settings ensure children settle quickly.

Children's progress is closely monitored on a daily basis and planning for next steps is based on regular tracking of children's progress. However, this is based predominantly on adult-led activities. These are well planned to engage children's enthusiasm and provide opportunities for them to extend their learning; for example, during the inspection children were absorbed by role play activities in the 'vet's surgery'. Children do not always get enough opportunity to express their own ideas or to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world and build their confidence through child-initiated activities. Similarly the use of the outdoor area to promote children's learning is underdeveloped.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

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Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire was broadly in line with that typically received during primary school inspections. Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire held overwhelmingly positive views of the school. They are pleased with the progress their children make and say their children enjoy school. Written comments included several testimonials from parents and carers about the high levels of support given to their children. Inspectors' findings support these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Palmers Cross Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 164 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	72	13	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	83	8	17	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	27	59	18	39	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	43	23	50	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	26	57	19	41	0	0	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	52	20	43	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	63	16	35	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	24	52	18	39	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	65	14	30	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	26	57	19	41	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	50	22	48	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	28	61	16	35	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	78	9	20	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



14 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Palmers Cross Primary School, Wolverhampton, WV6 9DF

Thank you on behalf of all the inspectors for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed talking to you all. Many of you enjoy coming to school, and more of you are coming to school as often as possible. Well done, and keep it up.

You make satisfactory progress but we think you can do even better. We observed how well you got on when you worked together to solve problems so we have asked the school to make sure you have more opportunities to do this. Pupils who have difficulty, for instance with speech and communication, also make satisfactory progress as a result of the extra help they receive. We also observed that some of you find tasks too easy so we have asked the teachers to make sure you are given the right level of challenge in your work. Some of you told us that you are not sure how well you are doing. Some of your work is marked well so you know how to improve. We have asked your teachers to make sure that all of your work is marked to this same high standard. You can all help by making sure you improve your work as your teachers suggest.

Younger children in the Reception class make satisfactory progress and enjoy their learning too. We have asked the school leaders to make sure they make the most of the outdoor area and help children in the Reception class learn through their play so that they can even make better progress.

We have given the school a 'notice to improve' because the people who manage the school could do more to ensure that they keep you as safe as possible. We have asked them to put this right straight away. Inspectors will come back to check it this has been done. I wish you every success for the future and hope that you all continue to enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Judith Tolley

Lead Inspector

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