

Plaxtol Primary School

School Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 0QD

Inspection dates

24–25 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is good. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen since the previous inspection.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school and generally reach above average attainment by the time they leave.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to others, as do pupils supported by the pupil premium funding.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Lessons are fun and interesting. There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils.
- Pupils' excellent attitudes and good behaviour help them to learn well and work hard.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school as shown in their above average attendance. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that they are looked after well and treated fairly.
- Leadership and management are good. The school has improved from its satisfactory position at the previous inspection.
- Regular checks are made on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- The governing body is effective in supporting the school and driving improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- There is not enough outstanding teaching, so not enough pupils are making more than the expected progress.
- Work is not always sufficiently demanding for more able pupils and so they do not always make the progress they are capable of.
- Pupils are not always clear about the next steps they need to take to improve their work.
- Not enough pupils reach the higher level of attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 1.
- The systems for recording and monitoring the support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are not as rigorous as the rest of the school's monitoring procedures.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons or part lessons, including four joint observations with the headteacher and senior teacher. In addition, the inspector talked to pupils about their work and made shorter visits to some classes as well as listening to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and senior teacher, other staff with key leadership responsibilities, groups of pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information and the safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector took account of 45 responses to the online Parent View survey and 10 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Plaxtol is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (the pupil premium), because they are known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. There is a nursery on the school site, which is managed by a private provider and not included in this inspection.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils consistently make the progress of which they are capable by:
 - planning work that is demanding enough for those pupils who are more able
 - making sure that pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning so they know how to improve
 - making sure that pupils have the skills and knowledge to reach the higher level in reading by the end of Year 2.
- Improve the systems and procedures for setting individual targets and the recording and monitoring of the support provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils achieve well because they make good progress from their starting points and reach above average attainment by the time they leave at the end of Year 6.
- When children start at school in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their skills and knowledge vary from year to year but are generally at the expected levels for their age. They get a good start to school in the Reception class, achieve well and meet the expected goals for their learning by the time they start in Year 1.
- Most pupils continue to make good progress overall throughout Years 1 to 6 although it is sometimes a little uneven. By the end of Year 2, most pupils reach the expected level and the proportion reaching the higher Level 3 was above average in writing and mathematics.
- In 2012 by the end of Year 6, standards rose from the previous year. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 and the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics was above that found nationally and notably so in reading.
- Different groups generally make similar progress from their starting points. There is, however, a slight dip in the progress pupils make as they move from Key Stage 1 into Key Stage 2, and progress in writing, though considerably improved, is not quite as strong as in reading or mathematics, particularly for boys. The school has identified these aspects and is taking positive action to improve them.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are mostly supported well by teachers and teaching assistants in class lessons.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make similar progress to others. The average point score for their attainment is 28.5, which is above that found nationally. It is a little below the average point score of 30.8 for others in the school but the gap between the two groups has narrowed from the previous year. The school has taken successful steps to ensure that they are supported in their academic and personal needs.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 have a secure knowledge of phonics (linking letters to the sounds they make), which helps them read unfamiliar words. In the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2012, taken by the current Year 2 pupils, the proportion achieving the expected results was similar to that found nationally. However, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 by the end of Year 2 was below average because pupils' understanding of what they read held them back. Nevertheless, by the end of Year 6, all pupils reach the expected level and the proportion reaching the higher Level 5 was above average. Reading is promoted well across the school and pupils enjoy reading and talking about a range of fiction and non-fiction books. Many pupils are confident, fluent readers.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers plan lessons that are fun and interesting and as a result, pupils want to do well and work hard. They enjoy tackling challenging work and show great determination and concentration.
- This was seen to good effect in mathematics lessons: for example, in one where pupils were learning about probability and in another, where pupils were using multiplication and division to solve problems. Pupils persevered with the tasks, supported each other well and made good progress.
- Notable strengths in teaching are the excellent relationships between teachers and pupils, skilled questioning that encourages pupils to think more deeply to extend their learning and the opportunities teachers provide for pupils to work together and learn from each other. In an English lesson, pupils worked exceptionally well in small groups to write, prepare and perform a poem. In the Reception class, children enjoyed working in pairs to investigate weighing and

balancing different objects and in Key Stage 1 pupils helped each other to estimate, measure and compare length, weight and capacity. In all of these lessons, the opportunity for pupils to work together made a considerable impact on their learning and as a result, they made good progress.

- Not all lessons, even though they are good overall, provide the same level of demanding work, particularly for more-able pupils and so they do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- Reading is taught well. On occasion, however, phonics teaching is pitched at one level and does not enable more competent pupils to make faster progress and work at the pace that they could. Small-group guided reading sessions with teachers are helping pupils of all ages to develop comprehension and higher-level skills.
- Teachers and pupils make good use of information and communication technology. For example, pupils created PowerPoint presentations in their topic work on fashion and made video recordings of their poetry performances, so they could reflect on their work.
- Pupils know their targets and teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Comments are positive and reflect on how well pupils have succeeded in a particular lesson but there is not always enough detail of what pupils need to do for the next steps in learning to improve the quality of their work. There are some excellent opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own and others' successes and provide constructive comments for improvement. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 demonstrated this very effectively but this is not consistent in all lessons.
- Teaching assistants provide good support in class lessons that meets the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs well.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are happy and settle well into the routines of the day. There is a good focus on developing children's language, communication and number skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Most parents and carers who used the online questionnaire agree that behaviour is good and almost all feel that the school keeps their children safe. Inspection findings support this view.
- The school is a friendly, calm and welcoming place. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, for example in the playground and at lunchtime, and records show that this is typical of behaviour over time. In only a very few lessons, some pupils become distracted and inattentive if teaching does not fully engage or motivate.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and kind to each other and adults.
- In discussions, pupils said they love coming to school and feel happy and safe. They said they were not aware of any bullying in school but have a good awareness that bullying can take different forms including cyber-bullying, name calling and physical bullying. They feel confident that if any problems were to arise they could talk to staff who would take their concerns seriously.
- Pupils are enthusiastic learners and thoroughly enjoy most lessons where learning is exciting, memorable and influential. In a science lesson, pupils were cooking muffins to learn about reversible and irreversible changes. Many pupils agreed with a boy who said, 'I've never cooked anything before, but this is great. I'm going to do it again.'

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good and well-focused, positive leadership and with the governing body has raised expectations and improved the school in many aspects since the previous

inspection.

- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, are very clear about the school's strengths and the school's priorities. A strong team of staff shares the ambition and determination to raise pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' progress is checked thoroughly and leads to the school's accurate self-evaluation. Senior staff recognise what aspects of teaching work well and what needs improving. Targets are set for teachers that are linked well with staff training. This has led to improvements in teaching since the previous inspection and ensures that the school is continuing to improve. Teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress and that this is linked to decisions on pay and salary progression.
- Although the disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs mostly make similar progress to others, leaders and managers have correctly identified that the systems and procedures for setting individual targets and checking progress, particularly when pupils are working out of their classroom, are not sufficiently detailed or rigorous.
- The subjects taught are well planned, give appropriate emphasis to learning basic skills and provide good opportunities for pupils to use literacy, numeracy and communication skills across different subjects. Visits and visitors to the school enhance pupils' learning and experiences and help pupils to develop personal and social skills that prepare them well for their next schools. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school ethos of care and support, valuing all pupils and promoting their self-esteem and aspirations, ensures that there are equal opportunities for all.
- The local authority provides good support to the school especially in strengthening the role of middle managers and focusing on successful teaching.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements and are well known and implemented by all staff to ensure that pupils feel safe in school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors provide experienced and valued support for the school. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses and how the school's standards compare with those of other schools nationally. They have a good, well-informed understanding of the school data. The governing body challenges the school on its performance and itself on its effectiveness, which led to a change of its organisation and structure. There is a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. Governors check teachers' performance and ensure that the salary structure is closely linked to pupils' progress. They have a good knowledge of the use and impact of the additional funding of the pupil premium and agree how it is spent: for example, in additional support and training for teaching assistants and the resources to implement the International Primary Curriculum, which has benefited all pupils as well as motivating and inspiring teaching. Governors undertake regular training, for example in safeguarding and performance management.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118309
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	401740

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	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rodney Willingham
Headteacher	Jan Hovey
Date of previous school inspection	6–7 October 2009
Telephone number	01732 810200
Fax number	01732 810200
Email address	headteacher@plaxtol.kent.sch.uk

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