

Platt Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Maidstone Road, St Mary's Platt, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 8JY

Inspection dates 27–28 June 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement is not consistently good over time, particularly in writing, despite some recent improvements to rates of progress in Key Stage 2.
- Targets for most pupils, until this year, were not ambitious enough.
- Pupils, particularly younger ones, are not always involved in assessing their own work and this limits their progress.
- Teaching is not consistently good in all year groups because the pace of lessons and the setting of work that stretches more-able pupils are not strong in all classes.
- Not all teachers are skilled at asking questions that help pupils to make extended answers or in reshaping tasks to help all pupils understand new work when necessary.
- Not all activities, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics, have been designed to take account of pupils' different starting points.
- Leadership and management over time have not secured sustained improvement in teaching and achievement. Subject leaders are not fully involved in improving the quality of teaching in their areas.

The school has the following strengths

- Progress in Key Stage 2 is faster than in 2012 because teaching has improved.
- School leaders and governors are now having a positive impact in improving teaching and raising achievement. Checks on teaching are now astute and linked to precise support for bringing about improvements.
- Behaviour is good and attendance has improved in recent years. Pupils are known and valued as individuals, enjoy school and their families are confident that they are happy and feel safe.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector spent a total of five hours observing 12 lessons or parts of lessons taught by six teachers. The inspector made short visits to a series of parts of lessons to observe how pupils were using their writing skills in a range of subjects.
- One lesson was observed jointly with one of the co-headteachers. Additional activities included observations at break time, lunch time and a school assembly.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, representatives of the governing body and the local authority, as well as school leaders and subject leaders.
- The inspector took account of the 51 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as views communicated during informal discussions with parents and carers. The views of staff were taken into account through meetings and 11 staff questionnaires.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and examined the work in pupils' books.
- The school's own attainment records for the current as well as previous academic years were checked in addition to published information on pupil achievement. Planning and monitoring documents, the school's single central record of checks on staff, the behaviour logs and attendance records were also examined.

Inspection team

Patricia MacLachlan, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Platt Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in one Reception class.
- The school works within a diocesan partnership of primary schools called Pilgrim's Way.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium (extra money provided for looked after children, children of service families and pupils eligible for free school meals) is well below the national average. There are no children from service families currently on roll.
- A very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils are of minority ethnic heritage or speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is slightly above the national average. The proportion of pupils supported through a statement of special educational needs or at school action plus is well below the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum standards for attainment and progress expected by the government.
- The school has, since the last inspection, experienced some turnover at the leadership level. There were several acting and interim leaders for a year until October 2012 when the current team of experienced co-headteachers was appointed. A class teacher is currently acting as deputy headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the improvements in teaching so that all is at least good by:
 - enlisting the most skilled teachers in the school and across the partnership to coach colleagues in asking questions and teachers' ability to reshape tasks in lessons when necessary for pupils who need more time to understand new ideas
 - making sure that teachers create a brisk pace in lessons and plan activities that take account of pupils' different starting points and levels of ability, so all remain fully engaged in learning
 - ensuring teachers help pupils to make faster progress by setting challenging activities especially for those who are capable of attaining higher levels
 - making sure teachers ask probing and open-ended questions and that pupils are required to explain their answers in detail.
- Raise attainment by:
 - ensuring pupils, especially in Years 1 to 4, are more fully involved in reviewing their own progress and deciding the next steps needed to achieve ambitious targets, especially in writing.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - training subject leaders to evaluate the impact of teaching on pupil progress in English and mathematics across the school through monitoring lessons and ensuring teachers plan activities which match pupils' different needs
 - ensuring subject leaders check that pupils are challenged to write accurately and in detail across a wide range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not good because it is still too inconsistent across different year groups. Although attainment in reading declined in 2012 in both Years 2 and 6, this issue has now been addressed with accelerated progress in reading across all year groups. Attainment in mathematics remained above the national average in both key stages because teaching was better organised across the school.
- Systems have been strengthened this year to make sure that teachers' assessments are accurate. Consequently, progress in reading and writing is improving. Assessments of the current Year 6 show that pupils are now making better progress in reading and writing. Year 5 pupils are also making faster progress in both reading and writing. Achievement is improving because teachers track progress carefully and quickly give extra support for any who are falling behind.
- Year 5 and Year 6 pupils frequently check their own progress and work out how to meet their improvement targets. In other year groups this process is less well developed because pupils are given fewer opportunities to assess and reflect upon their own performance.
- In Key Stage 2, progress is now improving particularly in reading and mathematics because teaching is now better planned to help pupils to reach more ambitious targets.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children join the school with skills that are in line with age-related expectations and leave the Reception class with levels of communication, language and literacy that meet or exceed expectations. A sound introduction to recognising sounds and letters (phonics) ensures that the number of children who meet the expected standard in phonics screening tests is in line with the national average.
- The extra money provided by the pupil premium is used for support sessions for pupils in the target group. In 2012, the attainment of eligible pupils was in line with classmates in English, but was a term behind them in mathematics. This year, pupils in receipt of the additional funding, particularly those in Years 4 and 5, have narrowed the gap between their English and mathematics scores and those of their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same progress as their classmates across all the year groups, as do pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those for whom English is an additional language, because additional support is carefully planned and regularly evaluated. The majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that their children are making good progress in the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it does not promote consistently good progress, especially in writing, across the school as a result of historic weakness in planning and assessment.
- The school's own evaluation of the quality of teaching shows that some in the past had a negative impact on pupil performance. Teaching has now improved, particularly in the older year groups, but some younger pupils are not yet making good progress over time in all years because teachers are not all providing good opportunities for pupils to develop and assess their writing skills in all years and subjects.
- When the pace is brisk, pupils respond well. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, drawing upon previous science and literacy lessons, pupils were set a time limit to write a persuasive letter to a bee arguing for the pollination of a rare flower. They knew that their partners would assess their work, both for accurate use of scientific terms and the sophistication of their sentence structures. However, not all teachers maintain a rigorous pace nor blend subject knowledge and writing skills so enjoyably. Some pupils consequently do not make the progress of which they are capable.

- Pupils who find work difficult have good, focused support in class from very capable teaching assistants and make progress. Marking now follows a common policy and is thorough. All pupils are set improvement targets that are assessed regularly to track their progress and this action is helping to bring about the recent improvements in their attainment.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is well planned to combine outdoor and classroom activities. Adults skilfully exploit the children's interests in the circus, for example by posing stimulating questions that extend the children's use of vocabulary
- Pupils' good behaviour means that the pupils work cooperatively when discussing or testing out ideas with a partner. However, not all teachers capitalise well enough on this keenness to learn.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that their children are well taught.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils value the recognition and rewards that come from behaving well. Pupils of all ages work well with each other. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children show good social skills, sharing their thoughts with partners for example. Behaviour is good rather than outstanding because pupils sometimes become distracted or unsettled if the teaching is not stimulating.
- Pupils feel well looked after by the adults around them. Those who have previously displayed challenging behaviour speak of the supportive ways in which they have been helped to improve, 'because the new headteachers made their expectations very clear' and 'they use worship to help us reflect on how to behave better'. Well-mannered, courteous behaviour is typical because the pupils believe that 'we should treat others as you want to be treated yourself'.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils understand what bullying means and speak highly of the effective ways in which adults can be relied upon to stop any incidents of unkind behaviour. School records support this view and pupils are proud of acting as buddies to help and comfort young children.
- Pupils have a good awareness of personal safety, including cyber safety, because it is well covered in memorable assemblies as well as with visits from police officers.
- Pupils are given opportunities in lessons and assemblies to discuss the fair treatment of each other and to participate in lively songs and readings during school services. This reinforces their good social and moral development.
- Attendance is improving steadily because effective strategies are now persistently deployed to reduce absences among a small group whose families find it difficult to maintain good attendance.
- Parents believe that the school provides a safe and caring environment and inspectors agree. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are pleased with the way that the school 'feels like a family'.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management over time require improvement because the positive changes made this year have not yet had a sustained and long-term impact on raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching.
- The areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have begun to be addressed since the appointment of two skilled co-headteachers. Teachers' planning has improved considerably because of their coaching. Attendance is now above the national average thanks to their persistence. The headteachers' evaluation of teachers' and pupils' performance is accurate. Their incisive summaries have helped to steer the governors to a more realistic view of the school.
- The headteachers astutely prioritised the introduction of a robust system for evaluating teaching. Feedback to teachers is now frequent, helpful and followed by classroom checks to ensure rapid

implementation. They have not shied away from difficult conversations about performance and their advice has secured rapid improvement in teaching in the past eight months. Staff appreciate their guidance after the hiatus in school leadership. 'This year the leadership under the co-headteachers has been far more effective and supportive for improving my standards as a class teacher.' This is a typical response from staff members who are unanimous in praising their vision and encouragement.

- Subject leaders are at an early stage of developing their roles but have drawn on the support of the Pilgrim's Way partnership of church schools to help them check that assessments of pupil attainment are accurate. Leaders are aware of the need for further training for middle leaders on making checks on planning and teaching and pupils' progress, especially in writing. This partnership has also supported staff training for the new early years curriculum.
- The curriculum fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils express considered moral viewpoints in religious education lessons and chose to raise money for children in Malawi. Skype sessions with a school in New York and visits to places of historic interest, such as the Chatham dockyards, are relished and widen pupils' cultural horizons. Orchestra performances are anticipated eagerly and the joyously inclusive weekly celebrations highlight pupils' own poems and hymns.
- Safeguarding systems meet statutory requirements and policies are rigorously applied. Leaders promote equal opportunities and are assiduous in tackling any discrimination that may arise.
- The local authority has supported the school by commissioning an external review to assist the co-headteachers' initial analysis of pupil performance and teaching quality. Partnerships with other schools are also encouraged.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- This is a committed and conscientious governing body that has identified, and successfully overcome, previous shortcomings. Governors are now well aware of standards of achievement and the quality of teaching in the school because training and a reorganisation of roles have been undertaken in the past year. Governors know how well pupils are performing compared with national standards and they have attended training on how to track pupils' progress in the school and make comparisons with national standards. Governors have revised the appraisal policy, receive performance management reports from the headteachers and monitor the link between teachers' pay progression and pupils' achievement. Governors confirm that pupil premium funding is spent on the intended groups and receive reports on the impact on attainment made by the additional support provided by the funds. Governors' oversight of safeguarding is systematic and the governors are represented at regular parents' forum meetings. Governors meet leaders regularly to focus on, and ask challenging questions about, the impact of school development planning on learning and teaching.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 118728 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 412278 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary Aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 149 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Paul Vallance |
| Headteachers | Rowena Linn and Laura Pearson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 2627 May 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01732 882596 |
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